Good Enough Sculptures: What Happens When Sculptures are Made to be Filmed?

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Note to Readers

This PhD consists of a number of elements; two written texts and two posters, as well as six films, two sets of animated gifs, a series of short films made by workshop participants and four sets of images. These elements appear throughout the text either as images or as active hyperlinks to online content.

Abstract

This PhD proposes the camera as a tool in the creation of sculpture. Exploring the ways in which the sculptural process is transformed by its relationship to the moment of filming, it aligns itself with artistic practices and theories which foreground material exploration, uncertainty and improvisation, and draws on a number of key artists who have used film and video to extend and explore sculptural practice. It situates fine art practice as a vehicle for exploratory and open-ended research, forging strong links with contemporary art educational theory which sees the creative process as heuristic and immersed within a social context. Using Winnicott's theory of transitional objects and conception of psychoanalytic practice as a specialised form of play, the PhD forges strong connections between the engaged, responsive and explorative work done by the artist, analyst, teacher and student.

The research presents a form of artistic research which facilitates encounters between objects and cameras, through which learning can take place and knowledge can be created - knowledge, which is not discrete or abstracted, but contextualised and embodied. The aim is to involve people in its processes and methods, as opposed to presenting finished works and findings, inscribing the reception of the work into the making process thereby producing active viewers and participants who are thoughtfully and practically involved within the making process.

The artistic research method revolves around a collection of objects made to prompt physical, material and imaginative exploration in front of the camera. The camera's field of vision is re-considered as an arena or situation structured in order to facilitate exploratory activity. 'Filming sculpture' becomes the

situation/set-up which organises the production of objects-as-sculpture in ways that open up questions around sculpture as a particular category of object, the nature of film experience, and objects more generally.

The PhD submission comprises a series of films and gifs, documentation of exhibitions, screenings and discussions undertaken during the research, experimental workshops, and photographs of each of the sculptures. The main written element consists of a series of aphoristic texts and a contextual document, which both draw on ideas and concepts from art and film theory, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, object- oriented ontology and anthropology, outlining the development of the research and situating it within a wider network of practices.

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A Territory – Preface

The ideal environment for encountering this research might well be in my studio, or similar space, with the objects spread out on surfaces, cameras mounted on tripods ready to use, projections upon the walls and numerous smaller screens scattered around the place. Likewise the pieces of writing, including the loose leaves of the 'Aphorisms' text included in this research would be spread around allowing the reader/viewer to linger with the material, dwelling amongst the writings, objects and moving images: reading, looking, handling, reading again, watching from a different perspective, trying out some ideas, having a go at exploring the objects in front of the camera.

Sadly, perhaps, we must content ourselves with the present document in which the written material has been sequenced and is accompanied by a number of video and image files with pointers throughout the text of where and when the reader may wish to view them. However, I would like you, the reader, to feel free to approach the material in whatever way you see fit and encourage you to go back and forth: spending time amongst the work, rather than moving through it from start to finish. For whilst the research had a beginning and an end, the material produced does not seem to me to function best in this way. Over the course of the research a territory has been uncovered, experiments have spread out in different directions, by no means covering all possible interactions of possibilities, but nevertheless making some sense as a whole. The argument, if such a thing can be articulated, resides in the interconnections between elements and the possibilities for thought and inspiration which they produce; a network of meanings which will shift subtly depending on the way in which the material is approached. The intention is not to make some grand and singular claim but to uncover the nuances, intricacies and complexity of the

creative process itself when turned towards a particular focus. In this case the practice of making sculpture to film. I hope you enjoy it. I hope it is useful. Above all, I hope it makes you want to do more.
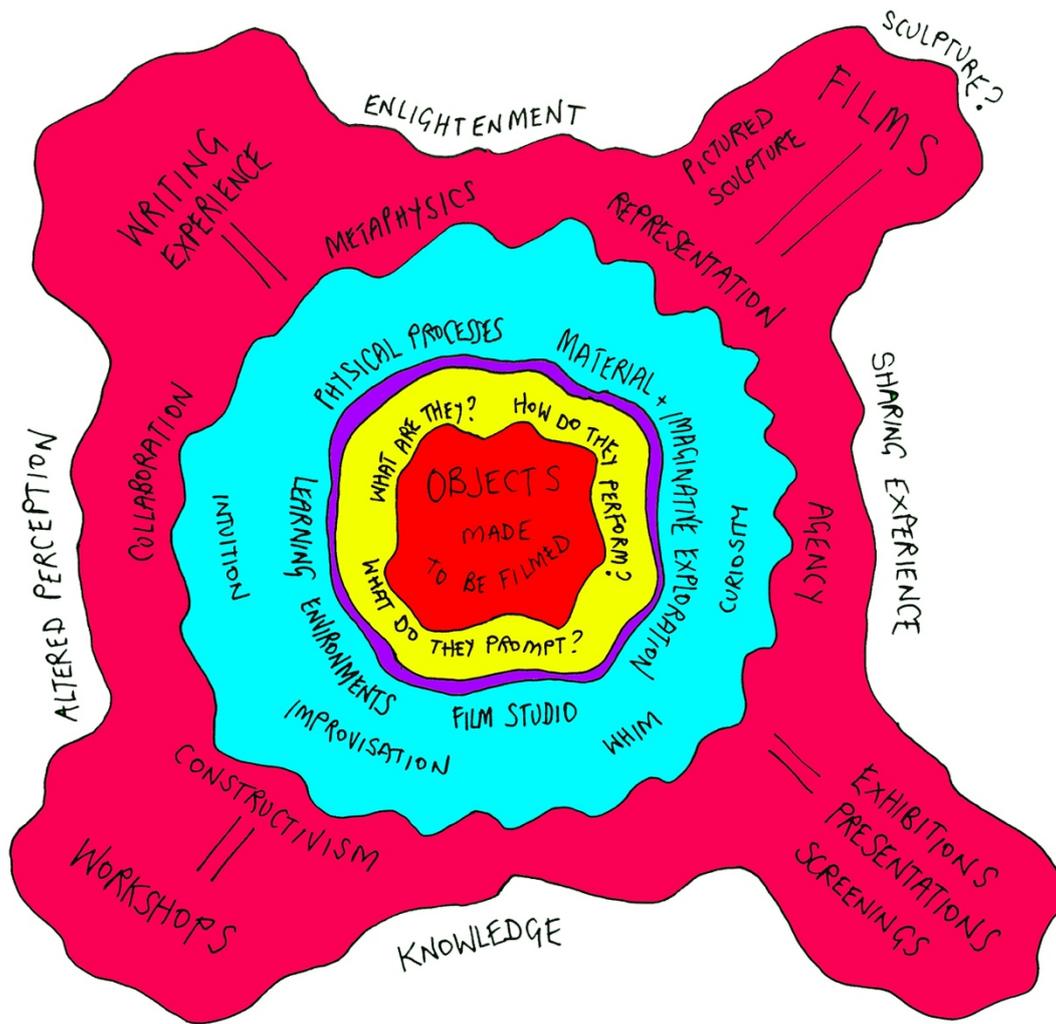
Figure 2: Bill Leslie, Research Diagram, 2019

Introduction

This enquiry proceeds from the idea that the camera is not a passive and faithful recorder of the visual, but has the ability to transform its subject, giving to it unexpected qualities, producing novel viewpoints, altering the perceived size and scale of the thing reproduced. This has led to consideration of the camera as an active presence within the filming situation, a tool that can be wielded by the artist to transform sculptural objects, but also as one which

structures a type of artistic activity happening both in front of the camera and in anticipation of the event of filming.

The focus of the research is two-fold. Firstly, it looks towards the camera's ability to transform perceived qualities and put the status of objects into question. Secondly, it looks towards the sculpture and what its particular physical, aesthetic, symbolic and associative attributes afford or suggest in the filming situation. The art practice constituting the core of this research therefore falls into two parts: that of filming sculpture and of making sculptures to be filmed. Both of these activities are in some sense perverse. Why film sculptures? Why not exhibit the things themselves? And similarly, why make sculptures to be filmed? Why not make them to be physically encountered? This is the beginning of an ontological questioning that runs throughout the research. Does the intention to film and not exhibit the objects invalidate their status as sculpture? Should they be more appropriately considered as props or models or pieces of set? Although there is some knowledge to gain from this type of questioning, what is really at stake is what filming can enable. The questions would then be: what can be revealed that might otherwise go unnoticed? And how does creating sculptures to be filmed effect the process of making? What happens that otherwise would not?

The process of filming is seen as a productive dynamic between sculpture, camera (filming situation) and artist; the camera and the process of filming constituting an integral part of the making process through which the form and meaning of the sculpture is discovered and articulated. Acknowledging that a research project of this scale could not interrogate every aspect of this dynamic the practical research has explored a number of possibilities including the

following: the creation of reified and enigmatic images, the conflation of two and three dimensions, anthropomorphic or theatrical appearances, the ways in which certain formal qualities and surface textures respond to lighting and camera angle, and sculptures which suggest movements and, extending from this, collections of sculptural objects which can be 'played with'. This has been accompanied by the use of a number of different analogue and digital film and video formats – 16mm, VHS, SD, HD, Slow motion - and the creation of sculptures in a number of traditional materials – wood, plaster and ceramic.

Two types of sculpture-camera relationship have emerged as central to the research practice. The first is one in which the sculpture is explored by the camera as a mode of visual experience. How the 'look' of the sculpture might be transformed in scale, or texture or colour through different modes of filming – oblique camera angles, close-up and distance shots, slow motion, lighting effects and tracking shots. This might also be phrased as an exploration of the ways in which certain types of filming express the reality of the sculptures and which aspects they emphasise or transform – how for example, when lit from the side, the industry standard high definition camera expresses the texture of chiselled plaster objects offering a heightened awareness of the tactility of the sculptures' surfaces and making this the focus of the viewer's attention.

The second significant sculpture-camera relationship developed directly from the work in the film studio and concerns the practicalities of handling different kinds of camera equipment and the ways in which these affordances or constraints enable and inflect creative practice. For example, when shooting 16mm film, a clockwork Bolex camera must be wound-up and only shoots in thirty second bursts, the focus being set manually using a tape measure,

producing a particular rhythm and working speed. Conversely a hand-held VHS camera begins recording with the touch of a button and will run for an hour allowing for extended periods of uninterrupted improvisation and exploration. Kingston School of Art's Phantom slow motion camera is cumbersome, must always sit upon a fixed tripod and requires so much light that it must always be set with a fully open aperture meaning that only a very short depth of field is available. Equally video formats record in different ways, some onto tape enabling in-camera editing, whilst others produce individual video files which must be strung together, or perhaps suggest different ways of sequencing when in the editing suite. Some cameras respond well to highly contrasted lighting, others produce a flattened low contrast image, meaning that certain formal and material qualities are rendered in vastly different ways.

Similarly the practical work in the film studio has looked to the affordances and qualities of the sculptures themselves, employing a range of forms and materials intended to prompt various types of exploration. From this stems a further understanding of the camera/sculpture relationship linked with performance, in which the camera is understood to delineate a temporal and spatial arena in which action can take place. Action which is inflected by the camera's presence and is responsive to the particularities of the situation and the qualities of the objects, which shift attention away from the technicalities of visual reproduction towards a very human negotiation with physical objects and equipment.

It was an early assumption during this research that my experience of working practically in the film studio would allow me to make better, more sophisticated or strategic decisions when constructing sculptures to be filmed. That the

sculptures would in a sense 'improve' as my own knowledge and skill developed. In the event what this produced were filming situations in which the outcomes were already envisioned and to a large extent pre-determined. What could be seen as the success of the sculptures did not lead to genuine discovery but rather showcased existing knowledge. This was particularly evident in the film *Pieces of Wood* (2016) for which I constructed small wooden sculptures which could be thrown through the air in spinning trajectories and filmed by the Phantom slow motion camera creating images in which the sculptures appeared to float and slowly revolve. Subsequently it was felt necessary to create sculptures with less narrowly defined and pre-determined qualities in order that the process of filming could maintain an unexpected, non-strategic and symbiotic character leading to genuine surprise and discovery.

In this sense I have used my developing knowledge and experience of working with particular camera and film/video formats and the ways in which they interact with certain materials and formal qualities in order not to predetermine how a given sculpture will interact with the camera, nor to create objects which I am confident will do a particular job when filmed – as if the sculptures were an excuse to explore the technical possibilities of the media – but to create sculptures which act as open-ended propositions or prompts for action in order to discover the possibilities of the sculptures through filming.

THE CONTEXT

A number of key artworks, modern and contemporary, have been pivotal in articulating these ideas and form a field of exploratory practice to which this

enquiry contributes. These include the 16mm film *Made in 'Eaven* (2004) by Mark Leckey which pictures a highly polished Jeff Koon's bunny that reflects the room around it curiously absent of the camera that would seem to record the image; Laure Prouvost's *Wantee* (2013) in which the artist creates a film set - supposedly the home of her Grandparents - in which sculptures referencing the work of Kurt Schwitters are reframed as household objects within a bizarre yet compelling fictional narrative; and Lazlo Moholy-Nagy's use of the camera in the film *A Lightplay: Black White Grey* (c.1926) to explore the sculptural construction that became *Light Space Modulator* (1930) creating shifting patterns of light and shape. All these artists, it is proposed, have used the camera and the moving image as a means to explore and transform sculptural form, to give sculptural qualities to everyday objects, and to extend or put into question the reality of the things pictured.

As the practice of filming sculpture is not usually articulated as a distinct movement or genre within art history, my research necessarily intersects with a number of distinct historical periods and art practices including artists' film and photography, expanded forms of sculpture and performance art. The research gathers these diverse practices within its frame of reference whilst acknowledging that the artists cited did not dedicate themselves purely to the practice of filming/photographing sculpture. What links them all is that they have used the camera to explore and extend sculptural form rather than seek to straight-forwardly document pre-existing works.

Equally important to the early development of the research was the creation of typology poster which brought together images taken from the many books and articles on sculpture and photography which were initially consulted. This

poster allowed for an initial consideration of the ways in which sculpture has been pictured since the early days of photography and the priorities and agendas these forms articulate. This poster was a useful means of visually grouping the images I had discovered and formed a palette of forms with which to begin creating my own objects.
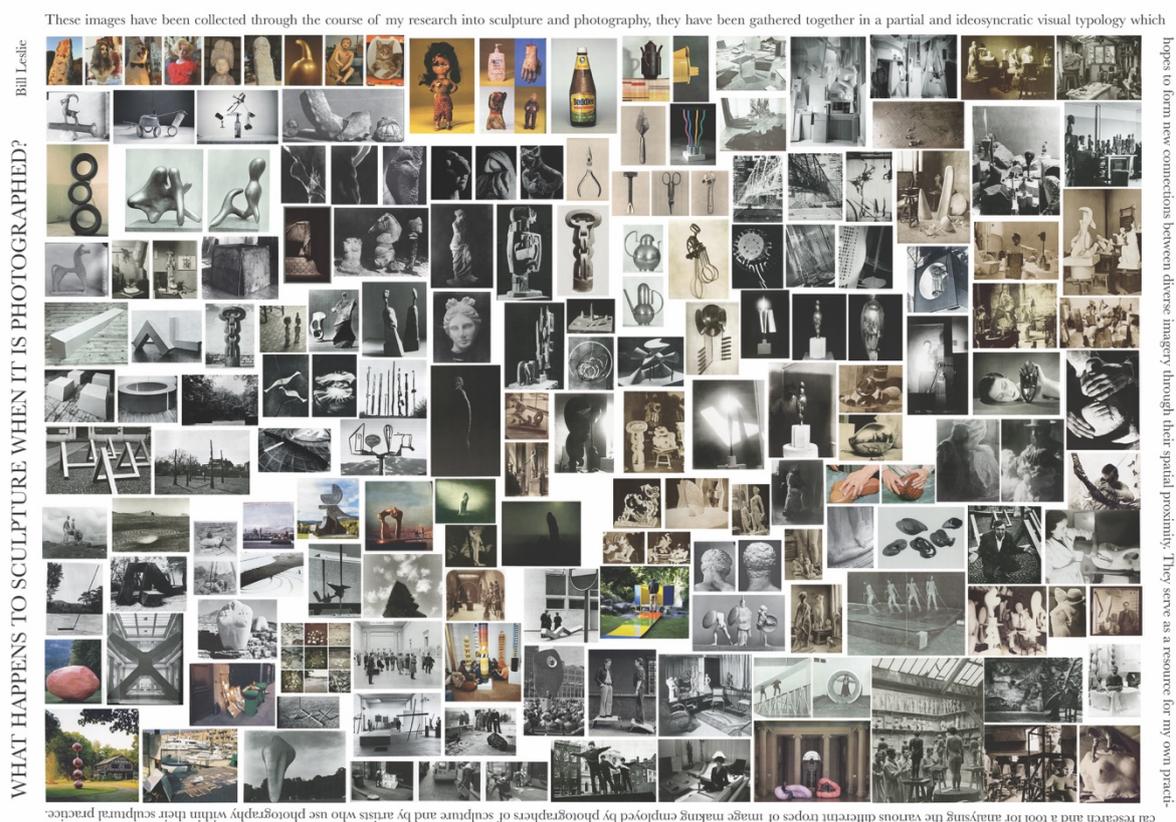
Two films by John Smith, *The Black Tower* (1985-7) and *Dad's Stick* (2012) have been informative. Whilst not addressing sculpture directly, they explore the reality of pre-existing objects within fictional and autobiographical frames. Equally his film *Blight* (1994-6) in which objects on a demolition site appear to move autonomously, the presence of human endeavour concealed but lingering around the edges of the frame, has had significant impact on the research.

Eva Rothschild's film *Boys and Sculpture* (2012) is also an important point of reference, showing a room full of modernist-style sculptures into which enter a group of young boys who progressively dismantle, destroy and reuse the elements of the sculptures for their own devices. The camera allows for a capturing of this sculptural manipulation in progress, at a point of exhibition which would, under standard gallery conditions, have been considered finished and closed to further physical engagement. This is not simply an effect created by the situation, but also by the sculptures themselves. Whilst they initially appear to be made of solid, hard materials, when touched they yield and bend and easily fall apart, in a way that might be seen to encourage the boys' tactile curiosity. This intersects with developments in this research in which the camera is discovered not only to be a tool for visually exploring sculptures but as enabling a space in which action can take place: a presence that can be performed to, or in front of. This has enabled a certain type of sculptural object to be made, which prompts or affords different interactions, movement or handling, through its formal, material and kinetic qualities. More profoundly the camera produces a space in which a new type of sculpture comes into being. One which is not tied to a particular gallery context, nor delineated by conventional art gallery etiquette, imbuing it with the aura of the 'art object'. Rather the joint practices of creating, filming and presenting sculptures made to be filmed offer spaces in which to rethink our relationships to sculptural objects, to think about what sculpture might be and to produce artworks which are neither tied to a gallery context, nor finished and fixed but which are mutable invitations to further practical investigation and thought.

Three 'Finished' Films

Three films are included in the submission at this point:

9 Objects (2016)
https://vimeo.com/163747550

Pieces of Wood (2016)
https://vimeo.com/169162899

Some of my sculptures move from left to right (2016)
https://vimeo.com/169651572

The PhD began with a flurry of artistic activity as I set about making objects and 'testing' them in front of different types of camera. Three stand-alone films were created: one (*9 Objects)* a single reel of reverse processed black and white 16mm, another (*Pieces of Wood*) a series of shots of flying objects shot at one thousand frames per second using a Phantom slow-motion camera, and a third (*Some of my sculptures move from left to right*) shot with a studio grade Canon C3000 camera mounted on a motorised slider which pictured a series of plaster objects slowly moving across the screen.

At this point in the research (2015/16) my expectation was that I would create a series of individual films, each using a different film format and each responding to the specific type of image afforded by the equipment. Therefore, each of these three films might be seen each to represent a specific line of practical enquiry.

9 Objects (2016) was the culmination of a period of exploration using a wind-up Bolex 16mm camera and hand processing the film in buckets. This rough and ready mode of filmmaking produced a highly particular, and for me, an incredibly exciting way of working. The whole process had an intensely manual and joined-up character as I was able to shoot short sequences and develop them in the studio, seeing the results within minutes. This enabled me to play with the camera's settings, as well as make and develop objects alongside filming. The developing process meant that rather than seeing the results immediately (as with digital) there was a sense in which they emerged (literally and figuratively) through the process, allowing me to spend time and get to know them in what for me were unfamiliar conditions – reeling out the filmstrip in the dark and feeling the physical stuff of the film as I scrunched it into buckets of chemicals. The images were also things in the world; tiny squares on the celluloid which I could handle and peer at. in sharp contrast to the technical ease of reviewing digital footage the 16mm, when projected, had the exciting sense of an event taking place.

I was invited to submit a work to the film night *Analogue Recurring* in 2016 run by artist filmmaker Bea Haut. As only analogue films were to be screened, there would be no transfer to digital, and a single length of celluloid, which could be projected, had to be produced. I began working with reversal chemicals – a slower and more toxic process which produces positive images that can be projected. I had no means of splicing and therefore decided that the film should be made in one go, as a series of takes filling an entire three hundred foot reel. Shot on a wind-up camera, each sequence could be a maximum of thirty seconds in length. After each shot the camera had to be wound up and its settings adjusted before the next thirty second burst. The filming then became

highly orchestrated, with a detailed schedule produced which included the order of objects and actions – developed over multiple test shoots – aperture and focal length settings and timings. The whole thing had to be run through without mistake. Several attempts were made, and reels of film discarded, before I managed to run through the whole sequence and develop the final film. The film was then hand processed in buckets filled with chemicals (developer, bleach, fix) re-exposed using a light bulb and then developed again to create a positive image. The process lasted around 40 minutes with the continual dunking and scrunching of the tangled ball of celluloid, scratching and marking the resulting images.

The final piece shows a series of glowing white objects on a deep and solid black background – an effect created by the high contrast film stock I was using, one which could be cheaply purchased and reverse processed. Each shot documented a small performance with an object – moving it, turning it, stroking it, presenting it. Over the image a constant dance of bright white scratches and marks produced by the development process seemed to give the images a faux-historical character; aged and degraded, but not entirely convincing.

Pieces of Wood (2016) marked another important stage in the development of the research. It represents the honing of a specific research path which explored the possibilities of the Phantom slow-motion camera; an impressively hi-tech, but equally clunky and unreliable, piece of kit. Unlike newer versions of this brand of super high framerate cameras, this ex-industry model was a large metal box onto which you could attach a range of old 35mm SLR camera lenses. It had to remain fixed on a tripod and required so much light that it could only be used with its aperture wide open, giving the operator a tiny depth of field in

which a clear image could be produced. After a series of experiments with Pound Shop objects and other materials, I began to bring different sculptures in to the studio. There seemed little point in filming static objects beyond a conceptual gesture; movement was what the camera desired and what it reproduced most effectively. With this in mind, I made a series of small wooden constructions which could be tossed in the air in front of the camera, appearing to float in space. A series of shots were then edited together to create a choreography of sorts with the objects passing through the frame in different trajectories. The use of music (whilst adding a sonic dimension to the visual and making the images more lively) was found on reflection to be problematic, as it generated a profusion of questions around the nature, meaning and purpose of cinematic sound, which fell beyond the scope of the practical enquiry. As mentioned above this film was most informative to the research in the dissatisfaction I felt towards the process; that the objects 'performed' in the desired way and that little was *discovered* through the process of filming that was not confidently anticipated.

The third film *Some of my sculptures move from left to right* (2016) was shot on Kingston School of Art's Canon C3000 studio camera, mounted on a mechanical slider. Choice of objects and lighting became key for this film as the camera was able to reproduce surface detail and texture in an incredibly vivid way. A series of plaster sculptures was made and others taken from the large collection of small pieces I had been making. Most had chiselled surfaces and angular features which could be intensified by lighting them from a severe angle. The resulting images show the objects with their highly defined features gliding effortlessly by; a vision of digital perfection, enabled by the hand-crafted.

The Research Practice

The research has been phrased as a series of open-ended experiments in which different sculptures are put in front of different cameras to see what happens. It has been important that the practice be driven by an approach that is not overly systematic, and that the possibilities for the sculpture and camera be explored in an open-ended and not overly-determined manner; thus leaving space for entropy, chance and intuitive exploration. The aim has not been to

provide an exhaustive or systematic overview, nor to seek a definitive knowledge of all types of camera/sculpture relations. This might too easily lead to a situation in which new possibilities are concealed in favour of making definitive claims or establishing models of 'best' practice, which might dictate and limit future ways of working.

To this end the testing has not followed standard laboratory rules: there have been no controlled tests, experiments have not been conducted in a formulaic of systematised way, nor have they been employed in order to prove or disprove particular suppositions. They embody instead the spirit of testing, aiming to uncover something previously unknown by bringing together elements, for example, a specific sculpture in front of a certain type of camera. The aim is a form of feedback or multiple testing process, allowing the elements themselves to dictate the progress of the experimentation and to be ready or poised to acknowledge and develop the things that take place.

The process can be broken into four broad stages: initial construction of a physical object, bringing it to be filmed, reviewing and editing (in the case of 16 mm processing), and presentation to an audience. In practice however, these tend not to happen in an entirely straightforward manner. Sculptures are often brought in front of the camera at the early stages of construction and then reworked before being filmed again. Reviewing and editing may prompt new types of formal construction. A single sculpture may be filmed by several different cameras over an extended period, placed alongside others and explored in different contexts. Likewise, presenting the work to an audience may prompt new ways of looking, options for editing and sequencing, and ideas for new or reformulated sculptures and types of filming. Films have been shown

alone, or on split-screen, in exhibition contexts and in presentations and workshops. The aim has not been to find the best way for them to be presented, but rather to use the encounter with the viewer or workshop participant as a means to extend and uncover possibilities within the research material, and to present the work as always mutable, partial, complex and as an invitation to further engagement and questioning.

Nicholas Addison, in his essay 'Developing Creative potential: Learning Through Embodied Practices' (2010), describes a heuristic approach to art teaching which is remarkably close to that which I have articulated in relation to my own practical research. 'The idea of a heuristic activity suggests a process of discovery, of not knowing the outcomes of an activity even though participants may have clear aims and goals; in other words, heurism is a process of finding out and coming to know, not being told.'(Addison 2010, p. 44) Something similar might be seen in Rebecca Fortnum's understanding of the artist's studio, 'as a device, a technology if you will, that allows artists to dwell in their process and that this dwelling [is] important because it is only over time that an artist comes to understand why and how they do what they do as well as what it is they have done [...] a sense of not knowing quite what is being done urges the artist on.' (Fortnum 2009) In this sense, uncertainty within defined parameters is the driver of creative exploration, the studio allowing space and time in which the artist can dwell amongst, and come to know, what it is they are making.

Citing Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, Addison describes learning as 'a social process through which people make meaning from experience'. (Addison 2010 p. 48) In contrast to an understanding of learning based on knowledge transfer, Addison describes how, 'the learner is recognised as the maker of meaning and

the teacher as the person who constructs learning situations to make this process possible.' (ibid) Learning environments are therefore created that both, 'provide opportunity and encourage students to think and behave differently to the ways they have done before. (ibid, p. 49)

This description of the learning environment maps usefully onto the research which happens in the film studio or filming situation, where the encounter with the camera is constructed as a means of investigating, analysing and thinking differently with the sculptures placed in front of them. It is the artist as researcher who facilitates situations (for themselves) in which learning can take place and knowledge can be created. Knowledge which is not discrete or abstracted, but contextualised and embodied within a process that is not directed, for example, towards puzzling out a particular aspect of the object but rather one which enters into a dialogue with the sculptures made to be filmed and has the potential to impact upon and reconfigure our constructions, preconceptions and understandings of the world more generally.

This understanding of my own solitary studio practice became clearer in relation to two workshops led by artist Lucy Cran, which I supported at Kingston School of Art and the University of Brighton in 2017.[1] In each case a group of students were asked to make sculptures which might perform or that they could perform with. They spent the morning designing and constructing objects, and in the afternoon brought them to the film studio in order to perform with them. What was striking about this afternoon session was the way in which the students interacted with the things they had made. Rather than 'finished'

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[1] Documentation from these workshops is available at https://performingsculpture.wordpress.com/ (Accessed: 5 September 2019)

pieces being brought in front of the camera in order to show-case the students' expectations, there was a sense in which they were learning the possibilities and significance of the objects they had made through physical exploration, and that this was as much a part of the making process as the earlier construction of the sculptures. This process was happening collaboratively and within a social context. To a certain extent, it was structured or enabled by the presence of the camera, which had produced an altered energy in the room. The students knew they were being recorded and this made their play more focused. When we were younger, Lucy Cran and I worked together in an experimental theatre company, and the students' playful exploration reminded us of the methods we had used then to create performances: closing the doors, setting the camera rolling and improvising. Then too, it was the camera that gave the activity a sense of purpose: that it could be watched again later, but also that the camera acted as an outside eye, an audience which heightened our awareness of what we were doing. Improvisations can often be frustrating experiences punctuated with moments of excitement and flurries of creative energy. For the students in the workshop, it felt that they had a wealth of things to play with and explore, and whilst there was initial caution, once involved in the activity of playing with their sculptures together in front of the camera there was an ease and fluidity to their interactions and imaginative responses.

Perhaps we could see this activity in much the way Vygotsky (2004) discusses Newton's great insight when seeing an apple fall from a tree. His argument is that were it not for Newton's many years of work and research, the amassing of a body of experience, he would not have been placed to recognise what he saw and conceptualise it as gravity. Whilst on a smaller scale (hours rather than years) we could see that the work done by the students in advance of the

improvisation, had primed them with ideas and experiences which allowed a free flow of imaginative possibilities to be explored. We could perhaps see this as an ideal scenario within the context of this research and the work that has happened predominately alone within the studio; a scenario which is aimed and prepared for, but which can never be guaranteed. Equally, the sculptures of this research share an unfinished or open quality, as with those made by the students. Like Franz West's *Passstücke* (1979) they are intended to invite interaction, whether this be physically with the human body or through the lens of the camera, and this expectation creates different criteria when physically constructing the objects. Different materials, forms and attributes are included, developed or tried out, less for the way they look, or for internal compositional or spatial relationships, but rather for what these characteristics might afford or prompt within the highly particularised filmed encounter.

The focus of the research is therefore not on what cameras do to objects per se, although this is an important aspect of the enquiry. It is more a question of how the filming situation can augment the creative process and be used to create new understandings of sculpture: what kinds of sculptures are created when in anticipation of being filmed and how can they be activated by human intervention, enabled, inflected and recorded by the camera?

This might appear to diminish the importance of the images created, focusing attention instead upon the process itself, but this is not entirely the case. The films and moving images created are fundamental to the artist's understanding of the activity in front of the camera. The films document these explorations, except that there is no sense in which these are activities that would happen without the presence of the camera. Film becomes the vehicle through which

creative activity is undertaken and revealed both to an audience and to the artist, as it is often only after the fact, on reviewing the footage, that the artist discovers exactly what has been created.

Equally the sculptures made to be filmed are objects which only exist because of the camera. The two are inseparable. Consideration of one is consideration of the other. This is why the sculptures and films can be shown side by side within the gallery without any sense in which the presence of the 'real' objects makes the films redundant. The viewer's grasping and consideration of these sculpture-objects is in relation to their film-ability. Seeing the objects in 'real life', albeit always alongside the films or with the invitation to make films, only serves to strengthen this relationship.

An important question then may be how these moments of discovery, of alchemy even, are recognised, when what one is engaged in aims, in the moment, for a non-analytic, intuitive state of mind in which physical exploration moves in a moment to moment responsive way.

Whilst certain trends can be identified in the research, among them the sculptures' modernist aesthetic, a preference for images which remove the objects from any particular context, and the physical handling of, or interaction with sculptures in front of a locked-off camera. Rather than articulating and establishing these implicit rules as a fixed series or set which govern the work, it will be of more use to discuss the type of decision making at work, foregrounding artistic processes which are 'used' or set into play in order to generate creative work through intuitive and explorative conditions.

It may be useful at this point to consider Gregory Bateson's description of a young child playing with building blocks. Unlike in a game where there are clear and pre-determined rules this play appears unstructured and exploratory. The rules, if they are to be considered as such, have something to do with the way in which blocks can be stacked, with gravity and balance.

'[…] The blocks themselves make a sort of rules. They will balance in certain positions and they will not balance in other positions. And it would be a sort of cheating if the child used glue to make the blocks stand up in a position from which they would otherwise fall.' (Bateson, 1987, p.28)

The play, which characterises the exploration of objects with the camera, operates under similar types of physical and natural conditions. The equipment poses certain restrictions and possibilities which are negotiated through the act of filming. Likewise, the objects being filmed have specific qualities, react in certain ways to lighting and camera angle, contrast and colour recognition. They offer ways of being handled, arranged and moved depending on their shape and size, weight and feel, their formal and aesthetic aspects.

Working through the myriad of tiny and often intuited decisions is beyond the scope of this piece of writing and of significantly less interest than understanding the ways in which this type of activity is undertaken. The child's play with blocks is engaged and intuitive, rather than critical and rationalised. Bateson describes it as having something to do with gravity. His repeated use of the phrase 'sort of' hints at the dangers of specifying exactly what is happening, as if it were a definite and repeatable phenomenon. The play of the child is far more delicate and nuanced than that. It is a type of unspoken negotiation with

objects and contexts, with physical and material conditions, that is of importance to both the artist and the child. Knowing the moment at which something sits 'just right' within the frame, or responding to a knobbly bit on the side of an object by gently running one's fingers over it, slamming something down on a surface, or gently rotating it in one's hands, these are decisions made without purpose beyond the immediate ebb and flow of careful physical engagement, negotiation and play. Decisions are therefore made within this spirit of intuitive engagement which is fostered throughout the making and presentation process. Editing and selecting footage is often done on the basis of surprise or based on the recollection of moments in which new or unexpected possibilities seemed to arise. What is hoped for is a sense of finding something out which could not have been predetermined. When the work has been exhibited, it is always with the invitation to continue thinking and manipulating the objects, or to see the films and sculptures side by side in order to experience them in different ways. The aim of this process, and to a certain extent of this research, is one of continuing dialogue and the maximising of possibilities.

It is also important to acknowledge the silent criteria by which practical art making moves forward, and the background from which the process itself arises. As in Vygotsky's example of Newton, the background to discovery, in my case, would include my own experiences of the research thus far and more generally those of being an artist; my unconscious leaning toward certain aesthetics or ways of working and the social and cultural context - the types of sculpture and images which provide the larger context to the enquiry. A huge mass of factors are in play at any moment. Perhaps this could be a reason why some artists are drawn to intuitive forms of working. Physical and intuitive

engagement and immersion in an activity can open onto, and allow for, an incredible complexity of physical, intellectual and emotional response, which could not be rationally arrived at. Attempts to marshal and account for all this contextual knowledge and experience could be overwhelming and lead either to undesired simplification or confusion.

It may also be worth mentioning at this point the importance of the 'hand' within the research, as an expression of the manual and human-centred focus of the research methodology. As becomes clear in references to the Pre-Socratic philosopher Anaxagoras, and Matthew Crawford's discussions of the physical and experiential nature of knowledge (2010), within the 'Aphorisms' text included in this submission, and in comments made by participants at a showing of work at Peer Session recorded below, the 'hand' is a consistent presence within much of the practical research, whether hovering at the edges of the frame or evidenced in the handmade qualities and textures of the objects themselves. The 'hand' is an actualisation and a metaphor for the type of embodied, heuristic and holistic art practice being put forward here as research; one which sees thinking and physical exploration as bound together, centred within a particular place and in a particular body.

Collaborative Films

Two films are included at this point in the submission.

Semi Circles (2016)
https://vimeo.com/288338713

Because We Have Hands (2016)
https://vimeo.com/195546428

These films were both made with artist and friend Claire Undy. They are very particular and a product of our working together. Whilst I physically made the objects, they were created in dialogue, both through discussion and through the relationship we built over the time we spent playing around together in front of the camera. These films represent snapshots of days spent together exploring the potential of these objects in the film studio. The first film *Semi Circles* is a single take, one of several where we silently performed together, watching intensely, responding to one another's movements and gestures, feeling for moments of humour. The second film *Because We Have Hands* was filmed in three sessions of this type and edited jointly by sending the Adobe Premier file back and forth between us. For this film it was decided to create a series of thin objects painted black and white, shooting them on a black background, playing with the viewer's perception of two and three dimensions and giving the impression that the objects moved autonomously. They represent an important moment of development within the research, one in which performance, improvisation and responsiveness come clearly into focus.

Because We Have Hands was shown at the FSP performance and film event in the Brunel Tunnel Shaft, London 2016 and as part of the exhibition *and lines present scores to be performed by bodies* at Wimbledon Space 2017. *Semi Circles* was shown as a part of Uniqlo Tate Lates at Tate Modern 2018.

Improvisation

Improvisation has become a key concept for the work that is done in front of the camera. This came into focus when working with collaborator Claire Undy on the video *Because We Have Hands* (2017), which was intended to extend my work in the film studio by inviting another person into the filming process. What emerged was a highly focused period of physical exploration during which neither of us spoke. This had not been planned, neither was it strictly necessary – we were not intending to use the sound recorded by the camera. We watched one another intently, exploring different ways in which the objects I had made could be played with. One of us would do something then stand back to allow the other to respond. There was a heightened awareness of one another's actions, body language and eye contact. Exploring the possibilities of the sculptures became a means of communication.

This prompted a number of collaborative experiments in the studio, as well as the developing of experimental workshops run at Kingston School of Art and Tate Modern. The developing importance of improvisation was supported by readings of Gary Peters whose *Philosophy of Improvisation* (2009) describes the constant looping of the jazz improvisation in which phrases are picked up and developed within a continuous stream of musical dialogue. Improvisation in this context is something that happens between people in an intensified atmosphere.

Repetition as a process within creative practice was explored in the essay *Repeat, Repeat and Repeat Again: Repetition as a Strategy for Fine Art Research* (Leslie 2018). In this I outlined the creative potential for repetition within research as a means of developing deep and highly contextualised

understandings of a subject matter. It also explored repetition more generally in terms of child development, creativity and psychoanalysis.[2]

Peters refers to improvisors such as Derick Bailey as having great memories. Improvising for him is not about continual innovation but rather a constant looping back to moments from earlier in the dialogue, or past experiences, reworking elements from the repertoire in ever new and shifting iterations. Referring to Keith Johnston, himself a pioneer of theatrical improvisation, Peters cites a passage in which Johnston outlines the *Yes Game* in which participants in an improvisation verbalise a contract of sorts.

'When I arrived at class, I asked the students to say "Yes!" to any suggestion, explaining that the suggestion should come from everyone – that there were to be no leaders: "If you can't respond with genuine enthusiasm, please leave the group and sit quietly at the side. We'll time how long the group can sustain itself, so don't fake it! Is that agreed?"

"Yess!"
"You promise not to say 'Yes' to any suggestion unless you really mean it?"
"Yess!"
"You accept these conditions?"
"Yess!"
"You want to begin?
- *Yess!*
If you want to accelerate the stories for entertainment purposes switch to *Yes! And…*
- Let's explore the forest!
- *Yes! And…*

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[2] This essay is included as an appendix to the submission.

- Let's go into the deepest part of the forest!
- *Yes! And…*
_Let's discover an old castle surrounded by thorn bushes!
- *Yes! And…*
- Let's make our way through the thorns!
- *Yes! And…*
- Let's find a sleeping princess!
- *Yes! And…'*

(Peters 2009, p. 39)

This constant reaffirmation is designed to maintain a continual movement. The focus of the participants is therefore shifted away from outcome based and strategic thinking in favour of a moment by moment reworking, in which the ideas and spontaneous interventions of others (the developing dialogue) are intended to overcome any sense of individual ego or competitiveness. By shifting focus away from the final outcome, what emerges might be seen as a type of play through which unexpected discoveries can be made.

In the context of this research, improvisation in the film studio is closely allied to the articulation of the concepts of *intuition* and *whim* within the Aphorisms text that accompanies this submission.

Intuition and whim

What is intuition? It's an idea I come up against and use frequently but it has both positive and negative associations. I have heard it used as a way of closing down discussion, albeit unintentionally. When asked, for example, what was the rationale for such and such decision? It can be all too easy to cite intuition. It seems often to be used as shorthand for a type of thinking or making that is responsive, immediate and not pre-meditated. There are many merits to using this type of approach and I would think in many cases it is a practical necessity, but it should not

preclude other types of practice, making or thinking. It's important to be honest about the role of uncertainty, chance and personal preference in making art. When asked early on at my first PhD presentation why I had made objects that looked the way they did, I could only answer 'whim?!'. This was true to an extent, though it did not articulate what, at the time, would have been a complex series of decision making (conscious or not) around the particular form and material of the objects; the influence of whatever I had been looking at or thinking about at the time, and the history of my own making which must have been present in the background when conceiving and working on the objects. This could perhaps be a working definition of intuition, the complex network of small decisions, the background of culture, personal experience, preference, engagement and enjoyment as well as current influences, ideas, readings, artworks or exhibitions. Whim works in a similar way, but is more fanciful, braver perhaps, describing that moment where you unburden yourself of the reasonable course and do something unexpected. My online dictionary describes whim as 'an odd or capricious notion or desire, a sudden of freakish fancy'. Compare that to the definition of intuition as a 'direct perception of truth, fact, etc., independent of any reasoning process.' Intuition would certainly seem to have a more positive connotation, but, at least by this account a more problematic one. The current use of intuition has lost the religious association but retained a certain seriousness. What is notable in this definition is the passivity of the one who intuits. Whim on the other hand is an active form of decision making, if at times a foolhardy one. It might lead to the rejoinder, 'you've only yourself to blame'. In this way the current meaning of intuition when used in relation to making art has qualities of both whim and intuition. It is an attitude which is open to chance and fancy, but which also allows small decisions to be made without overbearing rationalisation or contemplation. It tends to be linked with practical dealings and the type of embodied thinking that is dictated by one's sensibility in the moment. It is a state of mind which I think most artists will recognise, where the broader questions and problems of the work are put aside in order to focus on the making of something in particular and in which ideas come

to mind semi-automatically. What is important, it seems to me is that both the intuition and the whim provide the impetus for action which is so necessary for the development of practice. They are tools to be wielded.[3]

Similarly, these concepts delineate practices which eschew strategic and rationalised thinking in favour of decision making, which is tactical, physically engaged, and responsive to the forms and materials with which the artist is engaged.

To this extent, Steven Connor's *A Philosophy of Fidgets* (2010) has been useful for the way in which he describes activities which may at first glance seem unfocused and inefficient, but which reveal new possibilities. Doodling, for example, is described as a process of local inclinations rather than global strategies in which there are rules but no ground plan, 'add a line here to close off this box, add a diagonal there to nudge the whole just a little away from equilibrium again,' (Connor 2010) a continual process designed not to reach a particular destination but to occupy space, 'optimising chances and amplifying responsiveness'. (ibid) A research visit to the studio of artist Adam Gillam in 2016 provided the grounds for consideration of these ideas within the field of contemporary art, sculpture and the studio. His practice appears to be one of occupying space. Sculptures cover the walls and floors, and he works on them as a whole, adding some things here, others there, in a series of potentially endless small practical decisions.

Using remarkably similar language to Peters, Connor writes: 'The aim of the loopy [...] is precisely not to reduce possibilities, but to maximise them. Loops

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[3] This passage is taken in its entirety from the Aphorisms text which accompanies this thesis.

are in fact optimal itineraries when what counts is occupying a territory –
leaving as little space as possible left over – rather than optimising a trajectory.'
(ibid)

My own adoption of the concept of whim as an active, provocative and
generative moment within practical making, is closely aligned with these
practices. Conceived of as a moment in which a decision is made without
concern for where it will lead, but in the knowledge that it has the potential to
propel the work forward in an unexpected direction, whim is both a tactic which
can be employed, and an acknowledgement of the uncertainty inherent in the
creative endeavour.

For artist and teacher Jo Addison, uncertainty is a central factor in the artistic
process. In her teaching, she encourages students to be open to uncertainty,
and to be comfortable with not knowing what their work will be and where it
may lead. '[A]s a tutor, I am always looking to recognise the uncertainty of the
student as a function of their learning. As well as learning about the historical
and contemporary context in which they make work, they are learning their
own work. And we don't know what that's going to be. So, it seems important
sometimes, to debunk or broaden inherited models of what it is to be an artist.
Or to point to enough examples to encourage an uncertain and negotiable
testing ground.' (Addison and Walton 2016, p.12)

This can be understood as both a psychological and critical approach, one
aligned with our earlier discussion of learning environments, in which students
are encouraged to reconsider their pre-existing knowledge and understanding
through practical engagement. Here, by being asked to embrace uncertainty

per se, students are being encouraged to go beyond their immediate possibilities and ability, to imagine and to get involved in the complex and messy business of finding out what their art is, by making it. A sort of deliberate forgetfulness which might lead to the expanding of the individual's possibilities, and later to the extension of artistic possibilities more generally.

In her own sculpture making, Jo Addison attempts to allow the materials with which she works to show her the way, learning the objects she makes by making them. Speaking of a sculpture which she painted and repainted many times, unable to get the colour just *right,* she describes the process as one in which she 'learned that object, like learning an instrument ... but I didn't know what instrument it was!' (ibid, p.8) Using language which bestows a certain amount of agency upon her materials, and a painful amount of uncertainty in the process, she plays with materials until forms emerge. Exactly what it is that finally brings the process to an end, is negotiated intuitively and physically with the materials and forms as they come to be. This strategy deliberately resists what might be seen as institutional requirements (within the academy and the art world) to account for, and rationalise, the artistic and creative process. It positions the intuitive negotiation with materials and forms – flawed, difficult and emotionally/intellectually complex – at the centre of the making process.

Figure 5: Theorem Exhibition, Ruskin Gallery Cambridge University 2017

Sequences and Split Screens

A split-screen film is included at this point in the submission.

https://vimeo.com/362515741

Included in the submission at this point is a split screen film montage, one iteration of a number a montage films made for presentations during the research. Unlike the films included previously, this should not be considered a finished work, but rather an example of the way in which video and film material has been sequenced and arranged in order to generate new and different experiences. This is not to say that this work is of less quality than previous work, rather it was felt important to hold the material in mutable relationships. This decision was prompted by the developing enquiry, gaining

understanding of the significance of the 'work' produced as an invitation, created for viewers, to rethink continually what it is they are seeing, and to open up thoughtful, associative and imaginative possibilities.

It is around the half way point in this four-year research project, and a huge amount of film material has now been produced (and continues to be over the entire course of the research). A series of exhibition and screening opportunities allows the material to be sequenced, initially as three-screen montages, combining images shot on 16mm (colour and black and white, negative, positive, hand-coloured, professionally developed and processed by hand), slow motion, Hi-definition (using the C3000 studio camera and my own 'entry level' Canon 550D DSLR), VHS, and MiniDV. Despite the differences in frame ratio and image quality, the clips begin to speak to one another, creating an ever-expanding sequence of images, most between three and thirty seconds in length, some recurring, others appearing only once. The split screen allows for images to appear in different combinations. Originally shown on three separate projectors, the varying refresh rates of the media players meant that, as the three films repeated over the course of the evening, different combinations occurred, different connections could be made.

The first split screen iteration was shown at a silent group critique run by Peer Sessions, the London-based 'nomadic crit group for artists'[4] run by Charlotte Warne-Thomas and Kate Pickering in 2016. Many enlightening comments were made during the group discussion.[5] Subsequent iterations were shown at the Theorem exhibition at the Ruskin Gallery, Anglia Ruskin University in 2017 and a Kingston School of Art PhD seminar at the ICA Theatre in 2017. What follows is a short account of the discussion held at the Peer Session presentation.

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[4] This description is taken from the Peer Session website (Warne-Thomas and Pickering 2017)
[5] A full transcript of my notes taken during this discussion are included as an appendix.

After having watched the repeating films for some time, a group discussion began to which I could only listen. They talked about the nature or appearance of the objects and their 'tactile, haptic quality' as well as the perceived presence of the hand throughout – both evidenced in the roughly made objects, and the sense that hands hovered at the edges of the screen, orchestrating events. They spoke of the sculptures as props and described the 'presence of a person in all these things', as well as a Modernist sense of truth to materials. It was noted that the camera never moved, focusing attention instead on the ways in which the objects themselves behaved and performed, as opposed to using the camera as a way of seeing all around; as if the objects were saying 'I do this!' There was discussion concerning the nature of the objects: were they sculptures or props or playthings, somehow reliant upon the presence of the

'player'? Despite noting a number of different sculptural styles and characteristics, the group seemed to have no trouble considering the objects as a whole.

It was at this point in the research that the question, of whether it was useful to think of these objects as sculpture, was posed. They clearly relate to sculpture, but the films are not straightforward documents of sculptural objects which pre-exist the process. Whilst they referred to the objects pictured as sculpture, the Peer Session group seemed naturally to consider them as having been made for the camera (which of course they were). What had begun as a necessity – that of having to create sculptures in order to test what happened to them when filmed - had become its own practice; one of creating objects to be filmed, which looked a lot like sculpture, but which challenged many assumptions about what discrete sculptural objects might be.

At this point it became clear too that these objects were interesting in their own right, not simply in how they might be considered to embody certain sculptural characteristics. They had taken on something of a life of their own. Equally the footage seemed to form a loose collection of material, which could be sequenced in different combinations, allowing subtle shifts in nuance.

The Camera, Film and by Extension Perception

Within this research, the camera enables a certain type of practice – that of creating images of sculpture – which itself comes with a weight of historical determination. Notably, this includes the practice of photographing/filming artworks for representation in catalogues and other publicity, art historical books and the like. Speaking of the photography of ancient statuary, but equally relevant to modern and contemporary art, Mary Bergstein writes, 'photographs have formed some of our most fundamental and abiding perceptions of art, and of sculpture in particular.'(Bergstein 1992, p.10) Bergstein outlines a history of art, deeply inflected by the photographic image, and the fact that sculpture, 'three-dimensional, static and inflected by light' (ibid) lends itself to being photographed by a media that aspires to neutrality and transparency, albeit one which is influenced by subjective decision-making, art historical agendas, context and social convention.

Images are required daily for the task of representing works of art, and there are, therefore, certain requirements for these images to depict their subject realistically in scale and proportion, colour and texture. One can imagine that 'photographing well' must come into the considerations of gallerists and curators and that there is considerable pressure on art photographers to capture their subjects adequately, which may at times be hard to consolidate in a single image. Artists such as Benedict Drew (2014) use video, alongside still images, to document their installations, allowing for a better representation of moving image elements – videos of videos. What this all has in common – and in direct contradistinction to the artists cited earlier – is that the photographic and film image is utilised for its relative ability to faithfully reproduce its subject, within a culture that demands and desires images.

In another twist, images take on a significant financial dimension when works of art become so valuable that they remain permanently in archival storage. We might see this taken to its zenith in Gregor Quack's discussion of the vast tax-free art storage facilities which have blossomed in recent years in free trade zones. Here the physical artefact recedes from human presence, inscribed into a system of capital, in which the image remains as the only touch point, '[…] such spaces are unlike museums [..]. Here, paintings and sculptures trucked in the night after Art Basel's preview day, do not expect visitors. While their jpeg representations are traded at often staggering profit margins, to remove the actual objects from their climate-controlled crates becomes little more than a conservation risk.' (Apter etal. 2016, p. 81) Here the photographic image is a fundamental component in a system which has replaced the need for art to be encountered with that of its preservation, not for posterity, but for purely financial investment.

It is the value of art, linked with its conservation, that produces our standard experience of the gallery and the ubiquitous 'Do Not Touch' signs, ropes and floor markings, which structure the average visit to the museum. For a public institution this poses a paradox, one which became clear in my own work with the Tate London Schools and Teachers programme, where I have run many workshops over the past few years. Tate were keen to promote the use of the gallery, not simply as a space of quiet contemplation, but where visitors could feel empowered to move around, explore and make noise, providing they didn't touch anything. The paradox for an institution like Tate is that they are at once charged with making their collection accessible to the widest possible public,

but they are also custodians of extremely valuable art works (symbolically and financially), which have been financed by public funds.

In less strikingly economic terms, but nevertheless linked with the need for art to be seen and disseminated, there are any number of ephemeral or short-lived artworks – performances, earthworks, installations – which rely on their documentation in order to maintain some kind of material existence, beyond the moment of their physical happening. Whilst these practices have often been deployed over the last fifty years as non-economic or anti-market strategies, images of the most notorious works have themselves ended up at auction and inscribed into the economics of the art market. Photographic documentation of performances by artists such as Vito Acconci and Marina Abramovic (Sothebys 2018) selling for many tens of thousands of pounds.

More than ever before, artists are involved with the production of images. Internet and social media bring fresh demands for us to document and disseminate our practice far and wide. University art courses run Professional Practice modules[6], expecting their students to produce online portfolios and websites and encouraging the use of social media. Whether this be used as a means of achieving prominence, (gallery) representation, or as a deliberate non-commercial means of sharing work, the production of images is a central concern for contemporary artistic practice.

Alongside this pragmatic day to day activity, there have always been artists and photographers who have used the camera, not for its dependable neutrality, but for its ability to offer alternative ways of seeing. As early as 1908 Edward

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[6] Kingston School of Art currently (2019) run a module of this type that requires students to produce initially artists' statements and digital portfolios, moving on to the design of professional websites.

Steichen used photography to bestow atmosphere and mood upon the statues of Rodin. In the 1930s, Brancusi used the camera to give to his studio, and the sculptures within it, a quiet yet imposing spirituality. Whilst Moholy-Nagy printed pictures of sculpture side by side with scientific imagery and X-ray photography, exploring the new types of imagery made possible by photographic technology.[7] In the 1950s, artist David Smith photographed his sculptures in ways that confused perspective and brought him at odds with his gallery. Equally art historians such as Aby Warburg and André Malraux explored the ways in which images of art works from diverse cultural and historical periods could be placed side by side in order to foster new interpretations.

It is against this background and the camera's amazing ability to reproduce the visual world, that this research proceeds. Whilst it is a commonplace to speak of the camera's ability to deceive, the history of photography and film in the main has been one that considers photographic representation as unproblematic. Film theory has argued for the privileged position of the chemically produced image through its indexical link with the moment of capture: the light from its subject matter literally hitting the negative and imprinting its mark. A discourse of contact stemming from theories of the photographic image, outlined by Rosalind Krauss in her essay Notes from the Index (1977), and based on C.S. Peirce's definition of iconic, symbolic and indexical signs. In this respect the photographic image is both icon and index, being both a visual representation of a signifier and one which is, like a footprint, a direct inscription. Whilst the supposed indexicality of chemical film has been challenged by the invention of digital cameras, the experience of pointing a camera at something, and that something being recorded, still holds sway. Cited by Krauss, Andre Basin writes,

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[7] See Marcoci, R. (2010) *The Original Copy: Photography of Sculpture, 1839 to Today,* for these examples and more.

'only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation'.(Krauss 1977, p75) ' Duchamp's Large Glass, memorably recorded in an image by Man Ray [8], becomes an illustration of the work of the photographic image as index – the falling of dust on its surface, fixed in place to form parts of the image, inscribing the passage of time.

As Laura Mulvey states, also referring to C.S. Peirce, 'the cinema (like photography) has a privileged relation to time, preserving the moment at which the image is registered, inscribing an unprecedented reality into its representation of the past'. (Mulvey 2006, p. 9) This understanding becomes clearer as photography ages, particularly when looking at films and photographs depicting times, people and places now gone. Speaking of the early photography of statuary in the 1850s, Mary Bergstein, citing Susan Sontag's description of photographs as getting better with age, describes the double lure of the aging image of ancient sculpture: as 'form and content comingle' (Bergstein 1992, p.10). The patina and staining of the glass slides, marked and sepia toned, mirror the ruined and degraded sculptures, intensifying the image's relation to the passage of time. This might be seen to lead to a form of object fetishism in which the image reifies the depicted object, imbuing it with historical, sentimental even spiritual significance. We might find a similar practice in operation in the photographic work of Brancusi, where the camera is deployed to elevate the work pictured, imbuing it with significance. Here the power of the photographic image as index could be seen to legitimise the authenticity of what might otherwise be seen as a transformative deception.

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[8] Man Ray, *Elevage de Poussiere* (Dust Breeding), 1920.

Carlo Ginzburg outlines the complex ontological character of representation thus: 'On the one hand the "representation" stands in for the reality that is represented, and so invokes absence; on the other hand, it makes that reality visible, and thus suggests presence.'(Ginzburg 2001, p. 63) The representation is then simultaneously present and absent, a vehicle for transmitting something from the invisible beyond into our perception, whilst always already caught in an inevitable failure to bring the reality of that beyond into full awareness. This critique of representation more generally maps onto that of the photographic image as a reproduction, a copy always at a remove from the original reality of its subject. It leads to a discourse of loss or lack, albeit one in which something is retained over time, that might otherwise have been lost, or in which the opportunities for dissemination may be vastly increased. This might be seen as especially strong in the context of sculpture and art works in general, where the originality and singularity of the work of art is integral to its market value. Benjamin, in his famous essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (2008), suggested that discourses of authenticity and originality which surrounded works of art in the early part of the twentieth century, might be displaced by the endless reproducibility of the image. In response to this we might see how the art market has found ways of countering the logic of the reproducible image and re-inscribing the aura of the artist: editioning prints, destroying negatives and restricting access to film and video, allowing it only to be shown in specific circumstances or in its original format. We can also see that, despite the radical increase in access to images of works of art through the internet and in print, the authenticity and uniqueness of the original works, perhaps by the very fact of their being reproduced, has only been bolstered. These images flowing around the world act as publicity, only increasing the aura and value of the original.

In his essay Meditations on a Hobby Horse, E. H. Gombrich (1985) uncovers another aspect of representation; that of a substitute. Gombrich critiques the understanding of representation as one in which the artist imitates or abstracts from nature, a discourse with a historical pedigree beginning in ancient Greece and from which we might see the commonplace understanding of the photographic image as a form of depiction to stem. Conversely, 'if the child calls a stick a horse […it] is neither a sign signifying the concept of horse nor is it a portrait of an individual horse. By its capacity to serve as a 'substitute', the stick becomes a horse in its own right.' (Gombrich 1985, p. 2) This form of representation is then far removed from that of reproduction. The hobby horse has no original, it stems neither from nature nor from a template. A brush or stick will work as adequately as a shop-bought toy. This is a representation which is linked with the imagination, with use and physical interaction. 'Surrounded as we are by posters and newspapers carrying illustrations of commodities or events, we find it difficult to rid ourselves of the prejudice that all images should be 'read' as referring to some imaginary or actual reality.'(ibid) Could it be possible for a film image to be read in this way, as constructive of a reality, rather than the depiction of something that happened elsewhere and at another time? Can the camera, artist and viewer enter into an imaginative and playful relationship in which the sculpture on film leaves behind what might be seen as its expected function and situation (those associated with galleries and first-hand encounters), and can be toyed with by the viewer, as a thing with its own possibilities right here on the screen? If we take Gombrich's statement and replace horse with sculpture, then the sculpture on film is neither a sign signifying the concept of sculpture, nor is it a portrait of an individual sculpture. By its capacity to serve as a 'substitute' the object on film

becomes a sculpture in its own right. In a similar way to the child who is able to use the hobby horse in order to ride, the viewer of the filmed sculpture (and the artist researcher) is able to use the pictured object in order to experience and think in new ways about the nature of sculpture and objects more generally. It will become clear in the section of this thesis which discusses the sculptures themselves, that it is they that most closely resemble the hobby horse: It is the sculptures made to be filmed which allow for a type of use in front of the camera which is forbidden of conventional gallery exhibits.

In her book *The Address of the Eye* (1992), Vivian Sobchack uses Maurice Merleau-Ponty's formulation in which perception and expression are reversible and inseparable aspects of human experience, outlining a phenomenology of film experience in which she ascribes to film a primary ability to signify. She attributes this to film's unique position as a situated and embodied form of visual, audio and proprioceptive perception and expression. For her, film has a pervasive ability to signify, based on a 'wild meaning' which prefigures any discrete communication and that we as humans are uniquely placed to perceive as analogous to that of our own embodied and enworlded experience. 'The moving picture makes itself sensuously and sensibly manifest as the expression of experience by experience. A film is an act of seeing that makes itself seen, an act of hearing that makes itself heard, an act of physical and reflexive movement that makes itself reflexively felt and understood.' (Sobchack 1992, p. 3)

Central to this is a notion of film's body as a situated being, which constitutes a world through its ability to perceive and communicate experience, not as discrete operations which need to be synthesised, but as a single reflexive

process. 'A film is experienced and understood not as some objective mechanism like a water heater. It is also not experienced and understood as an enabling and extensional prosthetic device like a telephone or microscope. Rather, the film is experienced and understood for what it is: a visible and centred visual activity coming into being in significant relation to the objects, the world, and the others it intentionally takes up and expresses in embodied vision.' (Sobchack 1992, p. 171)

We see something similar in Bazin's description of the photographic image. 'The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discoloured, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the representation: it *is* the model.' (cited in Krauss 1977, p75)

For Sobchack, film expresses itself to us in an embodied and direct language predicated upon our own bodily experience. Watching film is not a process of decoding abstract data – two-dimensional forms, colours, and patterns or pixels – in order to synthesise them into a picture, in the same way as our engagement with the world more generally is not one of assimilating abstract sense data into an internal picture. If we understand the film image as an expression of perception, and perception itself as being intimately entwined with the world and objects within it, as Merleau-Ponty did, then we might see objects themselves as caught in the reversible act of perception and expression. It is their expressibility through perception, which characterises their existence for us. When film (or photography) expresses objects, no matter how fuzzy or distorted, they appear to us *as objects*. There is no need for us to interpret, to

synthesise abstract data into a perception. The objects on screen are there for us to grasp as direct apprehensions.

This runs counter to empiricist philosophies in which our understanding of objects is 'built up' by the rational accumulation of qualities – this thing is red and green and round and juicy, it must be an apple! A model in which the brain syntheses abstract sense data in order to build up an internal picture of the world. This 'input-output' model, in which sense data is taken in by the sense organs and processed by the brain before sending out instructions for action is critiqued by Alva Noë, again influenced by Merleau-Ponty, in his book Action in Perception. (2004) For him 'vision' is far more complex than something we do with our eyes alone. Instead the entire body participates in a dynamic enworlded perception in which our understanding is built from a multi-facetted agglomeration of bodily senses, all working together to make perception possible.

Similarly, philosopher Graham Harman suggests that we experience objects in the world immediately and as a whole, before we pick out individual qualities: what Merleau-Ponty refers to as a perfect fullness. 'It is impossible completely to describe the colour of the carpet without saying that it is a carpet, made of wool, and without implying in this colour a certain tactile value. A certain weight and a certain resistance to sound. The thing is that manner of being for which the complete definition of one of its attributes demands that of the subject in its entirety; an entity, consequently, the significance of which is indistinguishable from its total appearance.' (Merleau-Ponty 2002, p. 376) Every aspect of the object is always already inscribed into the whole. Oliver Sacks' essay The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat (2011) is informative here. As

the man described in the essay becomes increasingly unable to recognise the faces of his students, Sacks realises, when asking him to name the people in a family photograph, that he is consciously processing abstract data – this person has blue eyes, blond hair, it must be my brother – contrary to what might be seen as typical perceptual functioning.

Sobchack writes that every film, no matter how abstract or Structural Materialist, referring to experimental films of the 1970s which foreground the material characteristics of analogue film, must necessarily be experienced first as representation before it can be secondarily coded as abstract. The experience of watching a film such as *Room Film* (1973) by Peter Gidal, a central figure in the UK's Structural Materialist movement, is a case in point. The constant flurry of grain and the repetitive disorientating movement of the camera offer little for the viewer to anchor what they are seeing. Due to Gidal's critical shifting between the materiality of the film and glimpses of depictional content, the viewer is left swimming within the film experience, constantly grappling for a visual hold on what is presented. Yet, in the moment where the outline of a bathroom tap momentarily looms into focus out of the mist, this object immediately coheres, before slipping back into the patina of the celluloid, and suddenly the meaning of the work's title is grasped as the whole room is momentarily perceived. The idea that a visual fragment such as this could give on to a perception of the tap, or the bathroom as a whole might seem counter-intuitive, but consider Merleau-Ponty's example of a house. For him the view from the front is already redolent of the other sides, we do not need to move around it to confirm its whole existence. This is not to say that the tap is perceived in its entirety from only a fragment. It is rather that the fragment is experienced as always already a part of a whole. It may transpire

that this fragment is just that, a piece of a tap broken off from the rest, but this would be a secondary realisation and the fragment would nevertheless be perceived as a tap part. The whole tap must exist for us, as must the perceptual world, in order for those aspects of it that we encounter to be graspable as such.

If we return to Bazin's description of the photographic image we see a similar conception. No matter how fuzzy or distorted the image may be the objects that it pictures appear to us as direct impressions, as the objects themselves. For us experientially competent adults, the things depicted by the film are there for us, we need not interpolate them.

When directed towards this research, in which the question of sculpture is posed through the medium of film, this has profound significance. It allows us to shift our understanding of the image of sculpture from that of flawed replica to one which offers direct access to an object, immediately grasped as a wholeness no matter how grainy, oblique or degraded the image. This is not to go along with the commonplace understanding of film as a transparent and unproblematic depiction, but to understand film's power to thrust objects and situations into our perceptual understanding. Our experience of objects, people and places through film, may be materially different to that of encountering things in real life, but structurally, our perception of objects in film operates in a similar way to that of everyday perception.

Perhaps it is this that makes film and video so engaging, beyond the initial amazement prompted by it as a scientific marvel. The fact that film is

structurally analogous to our perception, yet materially different to it, is what underpins its aesthetic, creative and imaginative possibilities.

Whilst Bazin effectively discounts the material particularities of the image, we may view them as fundamentally linked with our perception of film and the things it represents. This is clear in the case of Peter Gidal, whose films force the viewer to consider the material stuff of the celluloid at a time (the 1970s) in which the indexicality of the film image was a theoretical mainstay. As with many other structuralist or materially engaged filmmakers, he sought to present the film's body as an active and fundamental part of the cinematic experience.

Whilst the research has certainly concerned itself with different types of camera and film/video formats, it has not done so in order to investigate or champion the ontological particularities of any one media. Instead it has used footage from different types of camera, transferred and edited digitally, indiscriminately, in order to explore the possibilities they open up, when brought together with objects in the studio. It could be asked (derisively perhaps) whether the use of these different media is simply one of visual effect, but this would be to misunderstand the intention. The materiality of film and video is not only about the physical substrate on which the image is encoded, but resides equally in the affective qualities – the look - of the image, the ways in which it can be used, manipulated and treated, and the types of looking that the particularities of the media and its equipment inspire.

Aphorisms

Included within the submission is a text comprising a series of short insights and aphorisms intended to accompany the film work.

The writing of a series of short insights or aphorisms began at around eighteen months after the start of the research. Behind this activity was a desire to contextualise the research, in particular the art practice happening in the studio, connecting it with a range of experiences happening alongside it. This was intended not to describe or pin down the art work, but to expand and extend its possibilities. It includes theoretical writing, anecdote, key experiences or moments of realisation relating to the research practice, discussions with

friends and colleagues and the rethinking of past experiences through the lens of the present. As an accompaniment to the various practical outputs of the research, it is not a conventional academic piece of writing, and as such, the decision was made not to include referencing (although specific authors are mentioned from time to time), as this would distract from the flow and continuity of the writing and which would give the texts an unwanted sense of authority. Instead a bibliography has been included on the back cover.

Walter Benjamin's One Way Street (1997) and The Storyteller (1997) became important points of reference as they seemed to offer a mode of writing which was both analytical and experiential. Through Benjamin's discussion of the storyteller, it was possible to conceive of the writing as a communication of experience, rather than the explication of readily verifiable information, or as a series of events with a singular narrative construction. The aim was to create writing which would not attempt to justify or explain the artwork, but which could be read around or alongside the film material, orbiting elliptically and offering the viewer a series of openings for further thought and consideration, evidencing the rich and complex process through which the work was developing.

An initial selection of these pieces of writing was read aloud at a screening of film material at the ICA cinema in 2017. The reader (me) sitting in the audience in an attempt not to present the texts as an authoritative 'voice from the front'. Subsequently in 2018/19 they were printed, each on a single sheet, and arranged on a long table alongside films on small screens and a selection of sculptures. Viewers could sift through the sheets and read as they wished.

The text has developed throughout the following years; passages added and others developed. They form a distinct part of the practical output of the research, as opposed to a commentary upon it. They are included within the submission as a series of individual pages which can be read through in any order. In the digital version they exist in series, but readers are encouraged to approach the reading of this text as they feel is appropriate to their own engagement with the material as a whole. Needless to say, it is not really intended to be read start to finish in one sitting.

Figure 8: Stills from videos made by participants at 'Please Do Not Touch' workshop Tate Britain, 2016

Filming 'Real' Sculpture

Cameras have also been used in workshops to enable different ways of looking and of acting towards sculptures. One such workshop at Tate Britain entitled 'Please do not touch'[9] was particularly revealing. Participants were given cameras and asked to film sculptures in the collection on full zoom, trying to find ways in which the camera could offer different perspectives and ways of interacting with their physical, spatial and tactile qualities. This was predicated on two main ideas, firstly the propensity for people in galleries to step back when taking pictures, in order to get the whole thing in. A mode of viewing which emphasises pictorial composition. Secondly was the Tate's priority for diverse groups to be able to use the galleries as they saw fit, working against traditional expectations of quiet contemplation. We were particularly interested in how young people with learning difficulties could access the collection. The

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[9] I was invited to run this workshop as part of the Tate London Schools and Teachers programme in May 2016. Referred to as a SEND Study Day, the workshop was for teachers and other arts professionals and asked them to consider ways in which young people with SEND might best use and inhabit the gallery and access the collection, through a series of practical activities.

irony was that touching the work was forbidden, yet to my mind, this would in many cases have been the most worthwhile and meaningful way for many of the young people I work with to access the work. Sculpture is after all tactile, spatial and massive (possessing of mass rather than being huge), and I felt should be physically experienced.

The idea to film sculptures using cameras on full zoom came initially from a reading of Alva Noë's concept of human perception as an interconnected system of sensory experience (Noë 2004) – as opposed to what might be seen as the traditional privileging of sight as the dominant sense. Citing experiments where blind participants are able to respond to visual data received through tactile sensation, Noë shows that visual perception does not reach us purely through our eyes. In one such experiment fMRI brain imaging is used to show that tactile data is being processed within parts of the brain normally accosted with visual perception. Using technology that translates visual data from a camera into tactile sensations reproduced on the tongue, the subject (in this case one who is blind) is able to interpret visual sensations and, remarkably, recoil when a ball is thrown at the camera.

When looking closely at something, it is common to run one's fingers over its surface in order to better make out fine detail through tactile exploration. What Finnish designer and master craftsman Tapio Wirkkala described as '"eyes at the fingertips", referring to the subtlety and precision of the tactile sense of the hand.' (cited in Pallasmaa 2009, p.54) This, I suggested to the participants, was something that might also be achieved through magnification. The question was, if we use zoom to focus in on fine surface detail, will this offer us

impressions, ordinarily accessed through touch, which are forbidden in the context of the gallery?

Here, in something of a reversal of much of the studio work I had undertaken, in which the camera had encouraged the touching and handling of objects, participants created videos which attempted to gain this up-close sense of tactility through extreme close-up.

Before we began we had watched several short videos on the Tate Britain website in which works of art in the collection are discussed and filmed in a detached, measured and reflective way.[10] The films made by the participants by contrast were frantic and full of movement as they used the camera to roam over the surfaces of sculptures, moving in and around, viewing them from angles which would be impossible or unlikely to be experienced by the standard gallery viewer. Unlike the videos on the Tate website, where sculptures were pictured as a whole, before certain elements were picked out and focused in on, (a structure of long view followed by close up which is typical of the way art objects are pictured in television documentaries[11]), the videos created in the workshop had few if any wide shots. This meant that the impressions of texture and formal detail were not integrated clearly into the whole work as compositional elements, but were experienced as running into one another, giving these aspects an altered significance, one based in embodied experience rather than intellectual contemplation. Merleau-Ponty describes a similar sensation when gazing at the Lascaux cave paintings which follow the lines and contours of the rocky surface of the cave. 'I would be hard pressed to say *where*

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the painting is that I am looking at. For I do not look at it as one looks at a thing, fixing it in its place. My gaze wanders within it […] Rather than seeing it, I see according to it and with it. (Merleau-Ponty 1993, p.126)

Here we return to the concerns laid out in the opening gambit of this thesis; that what is desired is to use cameras to unlock or explore new and different ways of looking at, and being with, sculpture. The official Tate video is the type of film which takes the medium's transparency as a given, using its ability to reproduce the visible as a means by which to illustrate a conceptual and historical argument. The films made by the participants were an expression of a certain type of bodily experience, of tackling the spatial and physical qualities of the work at close hand. One thing that was particularly noticeable was the way in which participants often held the cameras at arms-length, unconcerned with the image on the camera screen. This was a type of filming connected as much with the hand and arm as with the eye.

Whilst this approach has not been one I have pursued in the studio practice, it opens up an important aspect of the research linked with the body, and in particular the hands. Throughout my filming I have, in various ways handled, caressed, shoved, tipped and moved the sculptures I have made in front of the camera. This is partly to do with scale. The sculptures in the Tate - of which there were a number by Henry Moore - were large, allowing the camera to be moved around, under and through them. The sculptures I have made by contrast tend to be far smaller, almost camera-sized, fitted to the hand which moves them around on the screen. Equally the camera has largely remained fixed within the studio. This is partly a practicality. When working alone and needing both to operate the camera and handle objects in front of it, it has

been necessary for the camera to remain fixed. This has allowed a shift in the undertaking, where it might be seen that it is the objects which perform, becoming an active element within the situation. Unable to look through the viewfinder or see the display screen prompts a more physical mode of working, thinking less in terms of composition and image, and addressing instead, the sculptures' objecthood and physical form.

There are also several reasons why filming pre-existing sculptures has not been the focus of the research. Firstly, there are the practicalities of filming this type of sculpture, made by other artists and owned by collectors or galleries who have vested interests in the control of the works' reproduction. It would have been nearly impossible to have loaned sculptures, and even reproducing images of them would have been fraught with copywrite issues. It was also important for my own artistic practice that the sculptures pictured in my films would be things I had made, rather than those of other people, as this would have prompted too many questions relating to authorship, which would have distracted from the focus of the research. Finally, a freedom is allowed by my making the objects myself. I need not be overly precious or deferential. As the objects are intended for filming and not for conventional gallery display, I have been able to be more physically adventurous, even at the risk of damaging objects in the process of filming.

As with those made on full zoom, many of my films including *9 Objects* (2016) and *Some of my sculptures move from right to left* (2016)*,* could be seen to offer the viewer tactile experiences. By displaying the sculptures tactility through physical handling or intensifying surface texture with stark lighting, these films explore the physicality of the objects at the same time as rendering

them practically untouchable: unlike in the gallery where there is usually the opportunity to touch even when it is forbidden. Something similar is at work in the hand coloured 16mm footage which appears in many iterations of the research's film material including split screen presentations and gifs[12]. This footage was created as part of the practical research that led to the film *9 Objects* (2016) and, as described in detail in the *Aphorisms* text, was used as part of a workshop at Tate Modern, where I projected the negative film and then unrolled the whole one hundred foot reel of celluloid across the room inviting participants to hand colour the image in any way they chose[13]. Here the materiality and tactility of the film itself becomes a part of the viewer/participants experience of the image and of the filmed sculptures, as they are able to interact with the thousands of tiny images that make up the film. When re-projected the materiality of both film and objects are entwined within the viewer's experience.

Most importantly this process of making sculpture in order to film has created a rich and dynamic relationship between the processes of construction and filming, which could never have been the case had I directed the camera solely towards pre-existing works. Had this been the case the pitch of the research would have been subtly but fundamentally changed, as the process of filming would have become the main force of my active engagement with sculpture. Instead what has emerged is a far more complex relationship between the various parts of the making process. It has also put consideration of these

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[12] This 16mm footage shows me handling objects, or sliding them back and forth in front of the camera coverd with the constant flurry of coloured marks and lines. It should be easy to identify.

[13] Documentation from this workshop can be viewed at http://b-leslie.blogspot.com/2016/08/drawing-on-film-workshop-at-tate-summer.html

specific objects firmly in the spotlight and prompted in-depth analysis, both practical and theoretical, into what exactly it is that they are.

Figure 9: Impromptu gif exhibition at the opening of the Brighton Photo Fringe, 2018

Gifs

Included within the submission are two sets of animated gifs and eleven short films made during a workshop with undergraduates at Kingston School of Art. These can be accesses via the links below or found in folders on the memory stick accompanying the paper submission. In order to give a sense of how these images appear as grids online, screen recordings have been included, but equally readers can access these online via the links below.

I would strongly advise that, if possible, you view these gifs on a smart phone or tablet by navigating to the first link below, as they have a very particular feel and existence when they fill the screen and you are able to hold them in your hand; something almost akin to objecthood. Writing this, I have brought up a gif

of a revolving yellow object on my phone and have placed it on a shelf above my desk. It is silently turning in the periphery of my vision as I write. The dexterity of these little image/objects once on a phone is a part of the pleasure of exploration. I am immediately drawn to do things with it; find odd places to tuck it away, different surfaces to frame it, things for it to peek out from behind. This mode of viewing becomes an opportunity for further play and experimentation.

Skelf Art Feast Animated Gifs
http://b-leslie.blogspot.com/2018/03/animated-gifs-made-for-skelf-art-feast.html

Animated Gifs created for Kingston School of Art workshop
http://b-leslie.blogspot.com/2018/10/blog-post.html

Films made by students at Kingston School of art #refilminggifsworkshop
https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/refilminggifsworkshop/?hl=en

Images from Brighton Photo Fringe Opening
https://www.instagram.com/p/BoU_lR0B_eX/?utm_source=ig_web_options_share_sheet

I was given the opportunity to create a series of animated gifs for the virtual project space www.skelf.org.uk in 2017 as part of the Art Licks Weekend, London, during which gif artworks could be downloaded and kept by the public. I set about transforming a number of existing pieces of footage into short looped artworks. Much of the footage I had made lent itself to this treatment and a large collection of gifs was created, nine being selected for exhibition.

Two sets of animated gifs are included as part of this submission: the initial selections made for Skelf which were all created from existing pieces of footage; and a second selection which was used in a number of public encounters including at Brighton Photo Fringe in 2018, where members of the public were asked to download gifs from the internet onto their phones and come together for an impromptu exhibition. These were also included at the exhibition Making Representations at Phoenix Art Space Brighton on tablet and phone screens installed in the space, and as part of a table-top presentation at the ICA in 2019 where I asked the audience to download the images to their phones and to add them to the arrangement on the table. This second selection includes a number of gifs created in photoshop using a newly made set of sculptures which seemed to lend themselves to digital manipulation. This initially produced fairly clumsy animations using photoshop to superimpose objects on video backgrounds found online, or using the paint tool to make the objects spew forth from what turned out to be mouths and ears. This was inspired by an Interest in memes, described in the Aphorisms text. The moving images which were taken forward developed from this process and were mainly produced using motion effects in Adobe Premier.[14] Whilst the initial animations did not make the cut, they are a good example of the form of the sculptures dictating or leading the experimentation in ways that had not been intended.

During a workshop I ran with undergraduate art students at Kingston School of Art in 2018, I asked students to download and work in groups to refilm these animated images, uploading the results to Instagram. In a relatively short time (twenty minutes) a series of new films was created, the students responding to the images and refilming them in a number of ways, including holding the

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[14] These early experiments can be seen online at http://b-leslie.blogspot.com/2018/03/meme-compilation.html

images up in front of their faces, positioning them in places around campus, using mirrors to create doubling effects and placing them on different coloured backgrounds matching those of the on-screen sculptures.
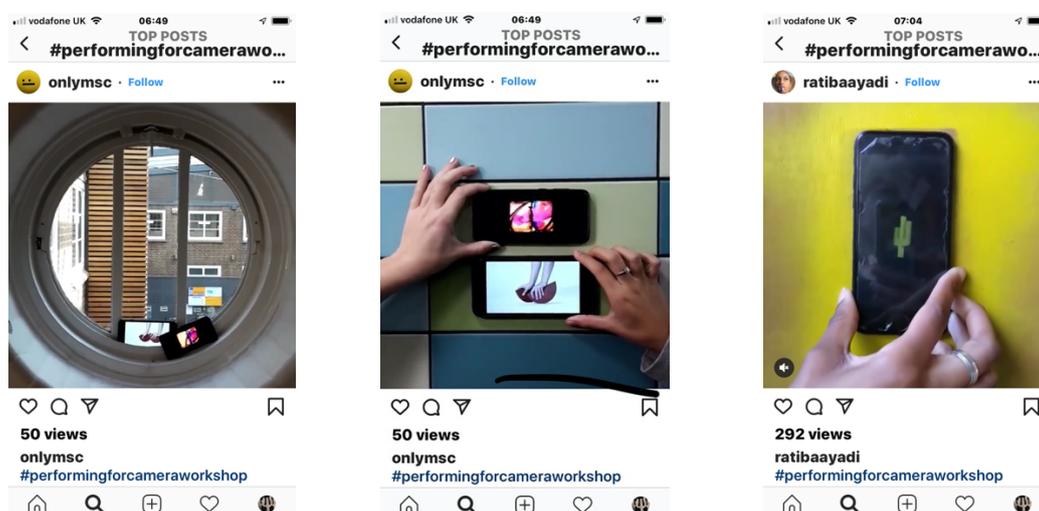

Figure 10: Instagram posts from the refilming gifs workshop Kingston School of Art, 2018

As with the workshop at Tate Modern described earlier, where participants were invited to hand-colour one of my films, these experiments revealed the importance of workshops and participation to the research, and their facility to offer ways in which the form of presentation might enable different types of engagement with the research material. Rather than the assumption being that these films, as art works, were the result of the artist's creative process as an end point, the reception of the work could be inscribed into the making process. Invited to experience film works in different combinations or on different devices; alongside elliptical texts; or to take part practically in the making or presentation process, the viewer becomes actively involved in the research process.

This challenges conventional modes of making, viewing and understanding sculptural and film practice as characterised by a separation of process and product. Importantly, research is taking place at every stage, as each new

context allows for fresh discoveries to be made. In this respect the researcher is not working towards an 'output', in the sense of a final artwork (for example), rather, the research is constituted in its openness to diverse possibilities, and in finding ways of bringing others into the process, not to display findings abstracted from the art making process, but involving them in the process of questioning, exploration and individual discovery.

The Sculptures and Objects More Generally

For three years this enquiry proceeded under the question 'what happens to sculpture when it is filmed and photographed?' While this question, in the end, became inadequate to describe the specific trajectory the research took, it was incredibly generative. It enabled me to convey easily a sense of my enquiry to others and, by continually coming back to it again and again, it structured a collection of activities which have ultimately outstripped it and its usefulness, but to which it will always be indebted. The main problem as it turned out was not the question's breadth (this was always understood), but in its use of the word 'sculpture', which in the end seemed to signal something which did not exist. There was no sculpture to begin with that things happened to, no original to which all images could be compared. The sculptures of this research, – and as we shall see this is no simple definition – the things I have made, were not 'sculpture' before they were filmed. Conceived of and constructed for the process of filming they are sculpture made to be filmed but also objects made to be sculpture. They are the instigators or loci of a series of practices aimed at generating questions about the nature and possibilities of these objects within an artistic practice structured around the camera. 'Filming sculpture' becomes the situation/set-up which organises the production of objects-as-sculpture in ways that throw light on, or open questions around, both sculpture (as a particular category of object) and objects more generally.

We therefore turn our attention toward the 'sculptures' of this research and to the question of what they are, how they should be considered, and what exactly is the function of their relationship to the camera.

It seems important that these objects have been physically constructed or formed. They are not consumable objects plucked from the world in the sense of the 'readymade', bestowed with sculpture-hood by the art context. Nor are they everyday objects explored for their physical and imaginative possibilities such as in the film *Plasma Vista* (2016) by Cockings and Fleuriot, or the films of my own collaborator Claire Undy. Neither are they assemblages of objects presented *as* sculpture, like the photographic series *Equilibre* (1984-7) by Fischli/Weiss, where the camera is used to bestow a permanence on momentary or short-lived constructions. Similarly they are not objects from other disciplines such as design or architecture, which are of particular formal or aesthetic significance that the camera can draw attention to, like Simon Martin's *Carlton* (2006), in which a piece of post-modern furniture is beheld enigmatically and beautifully on film, or transformed by the use of lighting like Hollis Frampton's film *Lemon* (1969), in which a giant fruit is slowly revealed as if it were a moonrise. They are not interventions into everyday life recorded by the camera, such as *Cats and Watermelons* (1992) by Gabriel Orozco, or the films of Francis Alys, or performance acts which have been documented, like those of Bruce Nauman and Claes Oldenburg.

Despite not being exactly like any of these practices, the current research benefits from engagement with them all. It borrows strategies and processes and applies them to its specific concern: how the physical forming of a sculpture can be placed in a reciprocal dynamic with the act of filming. The question is not whether the camera legitimises these things *as* sculpture, but rather in what ways can the dynamic of sculpture and camera be employed in order to explore their combined possibilities.

The objects of this research have been made – constructed, modelled, carved, cut – by the artist in order to be filmed and this gives them a very particular quality and status. Although they are not intended for presentation within a gallery space, they do *look very much like sculpture.* They are things which have mass and weight and particular aesthetic qualities of a sculptural kind.

A series of questions then proliferate: Does this sculptureishness pre-exist the filming of the objects or is it conferred on the objects by the process itself? Are aspects of both objects and process conspiring to produce sculpture effects? Are they significantly different things than they would be if they were intended for a more traditional mode of display?

This ontological questioning owes much to readings in contemporary metaphysics and phenomenology. This is not questioning that demands definitive answering, but has been used to tease out the particularities of the research process, and of the objects and practices which comprise it. We will return to the particular properties which might be seen to characterise these objects as 'sculpture', and turn now to their relationship to the process of filming, and questions about the nature of objects in general. When we talk of these sculptures what exactly is it we refer to, the physical object which is placed in front of the camera, or the thing which reaches the viewer on or through film? Are these to be considered different objects, or instances of the same? Do they persist as relatively stable entities through the process of filming or are they transformed into something substantially different to that which they originally were?

THE REAL AND THE SENSUAL

Object Oriented Ontology and the related areas of Speculative Realism, Thing Theory and Vibrant Materialism, have all come to prominence in recent years, and have been widely embraced by the art world. What unites these philosophies is their consideration of a world of objects existing beyond human access, in which objects have hidden depths and vitality, or exist alongside humans in networks where agency is dispersed.

A number of strong criticisms have been made of these philosophies, including that they have been all too easily co-opted by the art market and 'stripped for buzzwords' (Apter etal. 2016, p.8) in order to reaffirm the commodity value of art works, and that by focusing on objects, these philosophies ignore the still very real and ongoing political inequalities that exist for people, which post-structuralist inspired theories did so much to challenge.

The use of vivid and poetic language employed by many of these writers can also be problematic as it can be seen to lead to a kind of object fetishism, which marvels at the glories of matter and material in a mysterious and anthropomorphic, even quasi-religious, manner. What D. Graham Burnett describes as, 'barely secularised forms of spiritual striving.'(ibid, p. 20) The refreshed attention given by artists and curators to the potency and depth of art objects in the wake of these philosophies, would seem to support this idea and can easily be seen as a form of reification, if not a directly monetary one. This aside, by shifting our focus away from the ways in which sculptures are made and intended by human agency, and instead considering the latent qualities and dynamics between sculpture and camera, and the ways in which they impact upon the various encounters that make up the full scope of the art

work – from conception, construction, filming and editing to its meeting with a viewer - these philosophies offer us the opportunity to form a deep and complex understanding of this process and the objects that constitute it. As Armen Avanessian writes, '[t]he thing about the toy truck, for the magnet, is the iron. The thing about it for the girl (just now) is the sound the wheels make when they spin really fast. The thing about it, for her mother, is the fact that her own father once played with it, found it, repaired and repainted it (yellow). The thing about it, for the cat, is that at any moment it may dash like a rodent. Some latent thing about the object must be catalyzed by an encounter, and yet: that very thing catalyzes the encounter. (ibid p. 8)

This duality, or paradox is at the heart of Graham Harman's Object Oriented Ontology, which sees objects as both embedded within a field of relationality and coherent as things in themselves. In order to articulate this joint existence, he posits two types of object, the 'real' and the 'sensual'. The real object is that which forever withdraws, exceeding any relation. The sensual object is that which is created within the relational encounter. These two facets of the same thing allow objects to appear differently, dependant on situation and circumstance, without the coherence of the object itself being threatened. Here the tree is the same tree in summer and in winter, with or without foliage, from close up and at a distance. This is because the tree has a reality which exists beyond any single perspective or perception. Objects therefore, have two types of quality. Those which are susceptible to change and which the object can withstand, such as variations in light or the loss of leaves, and those which are essential to it. Here we might imagine that a tree reduced to firewood or to ash, is no longer a tree. Harman writes that accidental qualities 'can be shifted nearly at will without affecting the character of the object. Yet the same is

obviously not true of its essential features, which the object desperately needs in order to be what it is.' (Harman 2011, p. 27)

In the context of this research, a model is offered with which to consider the sculpture on film. We could describe the sculpture made to be filmed as the 'real' object, which when filmed is given a number of accidental features which inflect our perceptions of them, but which the object can survive – we might think of the mottled texture of 16mm film, the use of harsh lighting, or different camera angles. The object is changed but not unrecognisable. The film could be seen to offer the viewer a series of sensual profiles in a similar way to that which we would find were we to encounter the object in physical reality. What is interesting is that Harman sees these sensual profiles as infinite possibilities. Each and every perception (and this goes for interactions between inanimate objects as well) unlocks only certain features of the object. This allows us to think of the process of filming, not as one of loss – the compacting of three dimensions into two, the fixing of a particular spatial and temporal view - but of unlocking features of the object which may otherwise have not come into view, for example the intense sense of texture that can be produced by harsh lighting and extreme close-up, or the seductive quality of a white, angular object against a stark black background.

For Harman, objects are only ever encountered as sensuous profiles and as such our perception of objects is inevitably partial and our expressions of them – their descriptions or representations in art, philosophy or science - can produce only caricatures, partial renderings masquerading as fully present. The use of the term caricature is, however, somewhat misleading as it suggests that sensual objects as they are perceived are in some way superficial, trivial and

simplistic. In fact, the sensual encounter can be multi-layered, deep and complex, a swirl of accidental and essential features, but there are always further possibilities which will be revealed in other encounters. The object is never exhausted.

The universe is thus full of objects which continually withdraw, as there are always aspects of the object which do not present themselves in any single encounter. By this reckoning there could be an infinite number of films made of an object, each unlocking new and different aspects of the thing, never exhausting its possibilities. Harman has more recently replaced his use of the word 'withdraw' with that of 'withhold', but both have the same mysterious connotation which is appealing in relation to the current research. Art objects are often thought of as compelling because of their depth and inscrutability. The project of art history is in a sense the quest to delve into these myriad possibilities. In this sense however, it is the art historian who is actively probing the work, which may otherwise be considered stable, fixed and complete. In Harman's hands, it is the object that is the one doing at least some of the work of withholding and revealing, the process is a dynamic one, characterised by negotiation and collaboration.

The complex physical interrelation between camera and object may be further developed in relation to Merleau-Ponty's evocative description in Eye and Mind (1993) of seeing the tiles at the bottom of a swimming pool: 'When through the water's thickness I see the tiling at the bottom of the pool, I do not see it *despite* the water and the reflections there; I see it through them and because of them.' (Merleau-Ponty 1993, p. 182) Rather than obscuring the full reality of the object it is the stuff which surrounds it which enables the encounter.

Consider light rather than water. The particular colour frequency may affect the way in which an object is seen, without it there would be no sight. Here the object is inseparable from the watery medium which is at once transparent and viscose. We might see a similar conception in Husserl's notion that we do not see black, we see the black of ink, or the black of tar, except here the focus is reversed. In both cases objects and qualities are intertwined and inseparable and always embedded within a wider perceptual reality or world, which includes the body, prior experience and socio-historical, cultural and technological conditions. These things are inseparable in our perception.

A similar operation is at work in Harman's critique of scientific rationalism, which he describes as undermining the object by searching for a more basic reality beneath its surface, and philosophies of relation, for overmining the object, reducing it to its position within a contextual network. Instead he sees the object as caught in a dynamic relation between its inherent reality and the specifics of the situation in which it is found.

An argument could be made here from a Marxist perspective that Harman's ontology ignores history, or at least subsumes it within the generalising framework of objects and relations on the one hand and objects and qualities on the other. If we consider the reality of objects (and sculptures more particularly) within the frame of art history or culture more generally, then existing in a highly developed consumer society, as we do in the West, is yet another pool through which we see and into which all objects are immersed. This includes multiple discourses from the financial, economic, personal and ecological. The endangered tree has a different patina to it than the common one: its material presence is altered by countless contextual relations.

More surprisingly in Harman's reckoning, every relation no matter how trivial creates a new object, as within each sensual encounter there are aspects which do not come to light and must, in Harman's reckoning, constitute a new real object. This makes for a complex situation when filming sculpture. It would appear that in each encounter between sculpture and camera both new sensual and real objects are produced. There are two real objects to begin with: the camera and that which is placed in front of it. The sensual object is what is recorded: an image of the object placed in front of the camera. A new real object is produced: the film which then goes on to produce sensual profiles when encountered by different viewers under different circumstances (more sensual objects).

But there is also *the sculpture pictured within the film,* which is where the real discoveries of this research may lie. Is this merely another sensual object, one of many potential caricatures of the 'real' thing that exists as a physical reality somewhere beyond the film's reproduction? Or has something new been created, something with its own distinct reality?

If we think of the process of filming as a transformative act, one which not only changes the appearance of the sculpture but potentially transforms the sculpture-like object, the thing made to be filmed but not exhibited, into something that is recognised *as sculpture,* then something more profound is taking place. The film both reveals new aspects of the sculpture/object and creates a new object: the object *as* sculpture.

Harman's litmus test for a real object is whether it has qualities which exceed the sensual encounter. The question is whether the pictured object is all used up when it meets the viewer – does the camera lock down a particular and partial view which is grasped in the same way no matter how, where and in what way it reaches the viewer - or can different qualities be perceived in different circumstances or modes of viewing? For example, if it is projected on a large screen, or on a hand-held device, shown physically side by side with other works or sequenced as part of a larger film.

To further complicate matters, I would suggest that this is not a temporal transformation. The object is not simply an object which is then transformed, butterfly-like, by the process of filming. By being a sculpture made to be filmed, the object owes its sculpturehood to the camera from the very outset, with its own highly-particularised reality. We can then see that we have only one object: the sculpture made to be filmed which can be encountered sensuously by the camera, the artist, the viewer and the workshop participant, in actuality, or on film, each iteration revealing different aspects inherent to the infinitely withdrawn, or withheld 'real' object.

Whether we think of the sculpture made to be filmed as a singular real object with a multitude of potential actualisations, or as the process of filming *creating* a new object, these lines of thought allow us to imagine the confluence of object and camera as a constitutive act, in which something is produced which exceeds conventional understandings of both camera, as that which sees and reproduces, and sculpture, as that which has a singular physical reality outside of the film process.

It may also be that the camera alone does not have the power to confer sculpturehood upon these objects. It is part of a contextual framework which designates certain objects as sculpture, combined with certain sculptural qualities of the object itself. This includes among others, the figure of the artist, the recognition of film and video as an artistic medium, the context in which the work is encountered, and the institutional framing. Rather than trying to make a claim as to whether the pictured sculpture is a sensual or real object, this line of enquiry helps us to form an understanding of the complexity of the relationship between the many factors which condition the work with the moment of filming at the centre.

Rather than seeing the camera and sculpture standing in fixed relations, augmented by human agency, the camera perhaps being seen for its utility in the act of creating images, conceived of and realised by the camera operator and equally the sculpture as a piece of, or combination of, physical materials, forged by or subjected to human will, we can focus our attention on the qualities that each bring to the situation. The ways in which they condition or inflect our approach and understanding of them as entities with a certain degree of agency. Both in their physical, sensual reality and in the ways in which they embody certain aspects of culture more generally. This can lead us both to consider Michel Serres' concept of the quasi-object and Willem Flusser's description of the camera as an apparatus encoded with a pre-given set of cultural instructions which the photographer must negotiate.

Flusser writes that, before the industrial revolution, tools were used by humans as extensions of the body. In industrialised capitalist society, however, the human became a function of the machine. The camera operator is thus a

functionary who plays with the machine in order to discover its possibilities, which are already pre-determined by the concepts by which the machine was constructed. The photographer (and we may extend this to film-er/video-er and artist) 'plays' with the apparatus, which by inference involves playing with the symbols which are programmed into it by 'meta-programs' of ever increasing scale – from the science of optics to economics. Sounding remarkably like Harman, Flusser writes, 'The possibilities within it [the camera] have to transcend the ability of the functionary to exhaust them […] no photographer, not even the totality of photographers, can entirely get to the bottom of what the […] camera is up to. It is a black box.' (Flusser 1984, p. 27)

This Marxist view has similarities with Michel Serres' description of the quasi-object. Like Flusser's apparatus, the quasi-object structures a game conferring subjecthood upon the players. Speaking of a game in which people must pass around a button or slipper without being caught, Serres writes, '[t]his quasi-object, when being passed, makes the collective, if it stops, it makes the individual.'(Serres 1982, p. 225) The subject (or subjects) and the object are here mutually constitutive although, as he says of the football, it is the players that follow the ball not the ball that follows the players. 'Playing is nothing else but making oneself the attribute of the ball as a substance.' (ibid, p. 226) As with Harman's objects, Serres is concerned both with the quasi-object as an entity in itself and as a relation: 'Being or relating, that is the whole question' (ibid, p. 224)

OBJECTS AS AGENTS

Something similar to Serres' quasi-object can be found in the concept of indexical agency in Alfred Gell's Art and Agency: an anthropological theory (1998). Concerned not with philosophical classification, nor sociological concern with institutions and systems, but rather with causal relations happening in real time, Gell shows that objects can be seen as embodying a dispersed social agency. In the first instance this can be seen as a question of identity: for Gell the soldier cannot be a soldier without rifle and land mine, objects which enable him/her to express their causal agency and retain a connection to them beyond their direct presence. Thus the landmine explodes despite the soldier's absence, but they are nevertheless the agent of this destruction and the harm it may cause. The landmine functions as an index because this causal agency is seen as directly imprinted upon or expressed through the object. It is also the case that 'agents' and 'patients', as he calls the affective and affected parties in any social relation, continually interact though physical substrates (the body, tools, the material environment) without which no action could be set in motion. Actors in social relations (which include objects) continually slip back and forth between agent and patient status. Importantly for us, Gell talks not in philosophical but biographical terms. For him it is of no consequence that his car does not possess agency in the philosophical sense, what is important is that in day to day life the car is treated by him and his family as if it had partial agency. It is what they rely on to get around: if it were to break down he would consider this an affront; he may even blame the car or kick it; it is even referred to affectionally by a nickname. If we think back to artist Jo Addison's description of learning her sculptures by making them, we may find something similar in operation. For her, in practice, the objects she makes are attributed a kind of

agency, they direct her material investigations, they 'tell her' how to progress. More prosaically we might say that the material properties of the objects she creates impact upon her handling and forming of them. They push back. They will hold certain forms and not others. The process of making thus becomes a back and forth of agency, as the agent-patient relationship flips back and forth between artist and object.

Gell also notes that most art works are made with their reception in mind and that the works reception itself may be activated as a type of agency, which is recognised within the object as an index. We might see something of this kind played out in Eva Rothschilds' film *Boys and Sculpture* (2012). One by one, then in small groups, a dozen or so boys between the ages of ten and twelve are allowed into a gallery full of imposing angular Modernist-influenced sculptures. They begin walking slowly around, looking at the sculptures from what might be thought a respectful distance - no doubt one learned from social convention, but also inferred from the size and imposing aesthetic of the sculptures themselves. Only as more boys enter the room do they begin to circle around particular works until, after what might be ten minutes, someone touches the tall piece at the back of the room and rather than resist imperviously, it yields to the touch, swaying delightfully like a tree in the wind. At this moment, what might be interpreted as the invitation of the work completely changes. What at first seemed solid, imposing objects, bend to the touch, and are inevitably pushed some more until the whole sculpture collapses, and its spherical pieces become balls to be kicked. After this the entire exhibition is dismantled, knocked over, used as swords and reassembled into new objects. There were no instructions given before the boys entered the room, and it is therefore hard to view these sculptures as completely passive objects whose meaning is given

to them solely by their beholder. They, or at least the artist, anticipated certain types of interaction and built these into the fabric, the physical materiality of the sculptures themselves. Graham Harman, Bill Brown or Jane Bennett might see this as evidencing the power of objects themselves. For Gell they might evidence a dispersed agency within a social milieu, conditioned and enabled both by the presence of humans and of meaningful and causal social objects: an indexical agency possessed by the sculptures which lives on beyond the artist's direct presence. This points to the ways in which objects and people, together, create interactions, practices and meanings within particular social contexts.

We can make a connection here between Gell's indexical agency and Flusser's understanding of the way in which the camera embodies a program itself inscribed within a larger social, cultural and economic context, to which the operator is subject. Whilst Gell is interested in day to day human interactions, Flusser's concept focuses on the ways in which the everyday dealings of the camera operator are determined, to a certain extent, by the possibilities inherent in the object itself. Possibilities which are culturally and institutionally determined. Each author's conception offers something slightly different. With Flusser the object's power appears to come from within the 'black box', whereas for Gell, its power is external and has to do with the way it interacts and connects with a pre-existing social context.

In both cases, the object has a power, which might be seen both to play an essential role in, or even structure, certain social practices and, as made clear in both Michel Serres' theory of the quasi-object and Gell's idea of dispersed agency, has some role in the construction of subjectivity. The artist is not an artist in principle, but only in as much as the things they make, engage with, or

have some kind of impact within the social context of 'art'. Equally the viewer of art is only a viewer in as much as they can view and engage with art works and practices.

This may be extended by considering Robert Morris's infamous exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1971, for which he created a collection of large objects designed to prompt physical interaction from the viewer. As Morris wrote to the exhibition organiser 'the show is more environmental than object-like, offers more the possibility – or even necessity – of physically moving over, in, around, rather than detached viewing. Personally, I'd rather break my arm falling off a platform than spend an hour in detached contemplation of a Matisse.' (cited in Floe 2014) This wish was soon fulfilled when, during the opening and subsequent days, before the exhibition was prematurely closed, audiences clambered, leapt and variously interacted with such force and exuberance that many sustained minor injuries and the work became damaged. Despite Morris' quip, he actually intended the work to be interacted with in a far more considered and reverent way, one of, as Hilary Floe puts it, 'quiet phenomenological self-discovery'(ibid), evidenced in the film *Neo Classic* (1971) that Morris made shortly before the opening in which three dancers interacted with the slopes, balls and cylinders in a measured, almost spiritual, manner. It seems Morris had misjudged both the expectations of the audience and the invitation of the objects. For example, two heavy balls attached by rope, intended to be dragged meditatively along the floor, were reportedly held aloft and swung around one 'viewer's' head. This begs the question as to the indexical relationship of author and art work. Does the work here possess a borrowed-agency or rather its own unanticipated one, forged not in the dynamic of creator and creation, but by sculpture and viewer? Could this

perhaps be described as an unintended indexicality? Gell acknowledges this unanticipated agency. For him intention is of less concern than causation and, as such, it was Morris who 'caused' the events, even if they confounded his expectations. This is to simplify however, because as we have seen, Gell understands multiple agencies and indexes to be at play at any moment, which here might include that of the artist, the gallery, the building itself, the sculptures and the audience, all continually swapping between agent and patient, actor and acted upon. What we have is not a one-way street of agency and causation, but a continual flow and negotiation, between humans and objects of their concern, within wider social contexts and extra-material qualities of institutions, practices and behaviours, which make what takes place take place.

Within the context of research which considers the relation of sculpture and camera we are now in a complex situation. How do these objects interact? If the sculpture is the quasi-object then it structures a situation, the camera looks at it, as does the artist, but equally the camera brings with it its own coded identity in which the artist – now seen as an operator or functionary – must 'play' within the system that the camera embodies. Having created the sculpture in the first place the artist has sent it forth as an index of their agency, but then they approach the sculpture anew, attempting as far as possible to put aside pre-determined ideas of how the object will interact with the camera, the camera with the object. There is a sense of unlocking. Of facilitating the encounter by these two objects both imbued with agency, socially, culturally and economically encoded, structuring a game which the artist, having initiated in the first place, must now be at least in part subjected.

This might be seen as a feedback loop in which the unconscious social context produces sculptures which themselves prompt or produce certain ways of being towards them. It might also be that previously undetermined and unexpected qualities of the sculptures are catalysed within the encounter, by one who is primed to recognise and respond to particular qualities and affordances, due to the social milieu in which the whole activity is situated.

In the practical research setting, these theories, philosophies, and the vocabulary they employ, can be useful for the imaginative possibilities they open up. By thinking of the object and camera as agents in the creation of something beyond the artist's direct control, where each may demand things of the other, or in which it is asked what does this object afford, what does it offer, what does it want?, new ways of acting towards, experiencing or exploring both sculpture and camera can be discovered. This is not, in any way to diminish the privileged position of the human in these practices, but to acknowledge the role that objects play in the construction of our experience and our lived possibilities.

In the process of making art and particularly art research, in which new knowledge is sought, it is a reminder not to dominate the things with which we work with pre-conceived ideas or expectations, but to be open to their potential whether material, physical, kinetic, associative, anthropomorphic, historically or culturally significant. It enables us to think of sculpture – or at least the sculptures made to be filmed – not only as a kind of specialised object made for contemplation or other higher aesthetic purposes, but as objects with a certain degree of agency within certain social settings – the film studio, the gallery, the workshop, - which can be used by the artist researcher (as well as other diverse

audiences) to prompt physical, material and imaginative exploration, which allow us to think about the nature of sculptures, camera objects and social interactions more generally.

REPRESENTATIONS

We have so far addressed the question of what these objects, presented to and by the camera are, in terms of their objecthood and their power or agency within certain social situations. We will now return to the particular objects of this research and ask again, are they *sculpture*?

Let us take two specific instances to try and figure this out. Firstly, if we return to Eva Rothschild's sculptures, which 'appear' to be solid, imposing and impervious objects, but turn out to be made of pliable and dissemble-able materials, we might think of these not as 'sculptures' as we might Rothschild's other sculptural output, which are indeed solid, and intended for traditional gallery 'viewing', but as representations, both of angular, modernist constructions and also of her own work. These are objects designed to be physically touched and taken apart. They 'look' like Eva Rothschild sculptures, but their materials and their purpose differ from that of more traditional solid sculptural exhibits. As with the objects that populate my own films, we might ask, are these really sculptures? Are they more like props or prompts or objects of play – quasi-objects which construct a subject: that of a young boy left unattended in a gallery who goes on to cause havoc. Should these 'sculptures' be considered art works in themselves? The art work Rothschild chose to present to the public at large is the film, the record of the boys' interactions made without their knowing. This sets them apart from Robert Morris' Tate Gallery installation in which the objects were presented *as sculpture,* albeit

sculpture that invited a different mode of interaction from that of convention. Morris' sculptures were encountered by the public within the gallery, whereas Rothschild's only appear within the film. Exactly what constitutes these things as 'sculpture' may be a matter of both the artists' framing of the work and the way in which they meet the public.

Like the sculptures in Eva Rothschild's film, those I have made through the course of this research might themselves be seen as representations. Although they could be considered props, this does not seem to sit correctly. They are not stage properties intended to aid a theatrical or cinematic narrative. They are the subjects of the films, the central focus. Whilst the framing of the objects by the film, and its presentation in an art context, does some of the work of telling us that this is sculpture, the objects themselves are also working to point us to this recognition. They *look* like sculpture. They have sculpture-qualities. They seem to reference some Modernist tropes and styles; angular abstraction, organic forms and kinetics, among others, but they are not clearly identifiable as copies of particular works.

Now perhaps we come to the nub of it. Because the films do not tell us that these are sculptures in the way an exhibition in a gallery does. The fact that these films are art is affirmed by my identity as an artist, by that of the institution which funds and supports this research and the galleries in which the work will be exhibited, but this is not the point. By reaching the viewer through film, something subtly different is being done. By being there on film, rather than there in person (so to speak), the question immediately arises, why? The films, and the objects they present, are telling us two things at once; that these

are sculptures and that they are not quite sculptures. Or at least not quite in the usual way sculpture is constituted.

To further complicate matters, I have, in the latter part of the PhD, begun to show the films I have made on small screens, alongside the objects. These have been presented on table tops inviting viewers to handle and rearrange both objects and screens as they see fit. Prior to this, the films had generally been shown as projections, or on large monitors, which create a certain amount of physical distance to the viewer and emphasise the images as windows onto the objects within them. By showing films on small screens – tablets and smart phones – which already have handling built into their proscribed use, the films take on a certain objecthood in their own right: things in people's hands, which can be picked up and arranged in much the same way as the objects. At the same time by making the objects available to the viewer to handle a significant sign-post of 'art' in the traditional sense - that works of art are not to be touched – is being contravened.

In these encounters another aspect of the objects is revealed to the viewer, which might otherwise be kept secret; that they are only as good as they need to be for the purpose of filming. They are often surprisingly flimsy and lightweight. Sometimes they are not entirety 'finished'. If the intention was to film them only from one point of view for example, they may not have been painted on both sides, they may not be entirely stable as they only need stand up for a short time in front of the camera (not for the prolonged time frame of an exhibition), they may be marked or chipped attesting to the time they have already spent being filmed and moved around. They have a certain openness to contingency, which again throws into question whether or not these things can

be considered 'sculpture'. Their physical form is, to a certain extent, dependent on their being made to be filmed. Displaying the objects themselves reveals the extent to which they depend on the camera.

In this sense, the closure or coherence of the traditional gallery exhibit as a physical unity, is further undermined as these 'sculptures' are again folded back into the larger context of the art making process, of which the encounter between sculpture and camera forms only a part. If we see this process, from initial construction (or conception) of an object, through multiple re-workings and encounters with the camera, reshoots, edits and presentation to viewers, often in multiple and differing ways, then the moment in which the object is recorded by the camera forms a structural pivot, with all activities being undertaken with this moment in mind. So, there is the *before* filming and the *after* filming and even the *inter* filming; there is no part of the process which isn't in some way inflected by the fact of this encounter. At once we might say that the sculptures are made for the film, and on the other hand, the films are made for the sculptures. They exist in a feedback loop, or mobius strip in which there is a continual back and forth between the sculpture and the film. Neither is the means of the other's end.

We might return here to Gombrich's insistence (Gombrich 1985) that representation as substitution predated that of imitation. The objects of this research could be seen to imitate sculpture, but this is undermined by their no-sculpture-in-particular quality. Perhaps we could see them as substitutes. Like the hobby horse they need to be seen not as copies or imitations, but instead to fulfil a practical requirement: in this case that they are fit or suitable to be placed in front of a camera.

If we look again at out reformulation of Gombrich's statement replacing horse with sculpture, then these sculptures are neither signs signifying the concept of sculpture nor portraits of individual sculptures. By their capacity to serve as a 'substitute', the objects on film become sculptures in their own right. This may shed some light on another trend in the research. That the 'sculptures' are of a reassuringly familiar size. Small by Modernist standards, they have taken on a camera scale, which is also one related to the hand which operates the equipment and handles the objects, often in close connection if not simultaneously.[15] My 'sculptures' are therefore toys, brought into the game of filming. They are enough like sculpture to function for the camera and to instigate a certain type of playful activity in front of it. In the end it does not really matter whether we call them sculptures or not, but rather that these diverse lines of questioning uncover the importance of these 'sculptures' as objects of use, not of detached contemplation.

We have now considered these objects through the lens of philosophy, phenomenology and anthropology. What has emerged is a complex picture: a range of possible understandings and practices with the pictured object at its centre. The question of whether or not these objects are 'sculptures' becomes less important than the question of what, as objects, they allow for or instigate. They are the locus of a series of encounters - between objects and cameras, objects and viewers - which have constituted this research, offering ways to

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[15] In this respect Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's *Torpedo Fish (Toy)* (1914) is an early and important point of reference. Intended as a 'pocket sculpture' for the philosopher T.E Hulme it was made with the hand in mind, whether to be used as something to fiddle with whilst writing or more aggressively as a knuckle duster (as suggested by the Kettles Yard website (2014), this is a form of sculpture brought to the proportions of the hand. Similarly at the Chicago Bauhaus in the 1930s Lazlo Moholy-Nagy and his students created 'hand sculptures' made not to explore visually but through the sense of touch; an integral part of the artists 'sensory training'. (Botar 2014, p.27)

think through the complex issues of representation, recognition, art viewing and encounter, practical exploration, play and learning.

ARE THESE TRANSITIONAL OBJECTS?

The strange, neither-one-thing-nor-the-other quality of these objects has led to consideration of Donald Winnicott's theory of transitional objects, in which he theorises the way in which the infant becomes aware of the external world. Initially the world and objects within it are presented to the infant by the good enough mother (which we must understand to extend to the family and the outside world more generally) in a way that appears to them as self-created; they desire milk, the breast appears. It is essential to our psychic development that these seemingly internal objects, as they are known in Psychoanalysis, become separated from the psyche, in order that the infant can come to understand the world of objects as external phenomena. For Winnicott this is predicated on a paradoxical impulse in which the psychically healthy infant must destroy the object, which subsequently survives. This survival allows the object to gain external existence, the subject placing it, 'outside the area of [their] omnipotent control, that is, the subject's perception of the object as an external phenomenon, not as a projective entity'. (Winnicott 1969, p. 713) This is often referred to as the infant's ability to distinguish between 'me and not me'. It is with this formulation that objects become unfixed from their specific identity within the psyche and become solid things in the world, which can be manipulated and changed by the will of the infant, as well as by environmental factors.

Winnicott's transitional objects accompany a specific stage in psychic development and are therefore those close to the infant – the breast, the

thumb, a cuddly toy. The concept of the transitional object then does not refer to a specific class of objects, but to a particular use of an object for developmental purposes. It is therefore our ability to separate things from the psyche that underpins our relationship to objects and the external world more generally. It is what enables us to use and manipulate things, and to hold multiple meanings or possibilities for objects within our understanding, without the coherence of those objects being threatened.

We might see this manifest in our relationship to convention and habit within adult life. We are inclined toward generally fixed or glib understandings of, and relationships to, things. This we might see as a type of security which allows us to concentrate our attention on the things that concern us, in the confidence that the world as a whole will remain reasonably stable. However, by the same token we are always able, in principle, to throw open and shift our understanding and use of objects. At times this may be straightforward, at others very difficult, depending on the importance they hold within the structure of our psyche.

For Winnicott, the shift from 'object relating' to 'object use' underpins our capacity to play. We might see this clearly in the play of children from as young as eighteen months, but it is also in evidence from as early as six weeks. The toy car is used as a phone, the box as a cup, the peas as balls. This ability is predicated on the transition from 'object relating' to 'object use', which happens through the object's destruction and survival, and is the basis for our imaginative and creative relationship with the world of things. Critical for the current research is Winnicott's insistence that analysts take into account the external world of objects, not as projections but as things in themselves. The

objects of our concern are therefore not simply empty signifiers given meaning by the psyche, but real objects in the world, which are vitally important for our development and understanding. It is they that structure the infant's development into psychic awareness and adulthood. Objects enable us to be human.

How can we make sense of this in relation to the objects I make to film? When being filmed, they are literally in transition, from three-dimensional real-world objects to two-dimensional pictured ones, from inanimate to animated, inactive to activated. Equally transitions can happen within the films, where an object appears differently through the course of its time on screen. Whilst they cannot be transitional objects in the precise sense in which Winnicott uses the term, we might draw some useful parallels.

If we were to think of them as transitional, then these objects must have a certain degree of significance. Certainly, they have significance within the context of this research. As I have already said, they are not stage properties, they are the central focus and subject matter. They also have a distinct importance to me. They are the objects of my work, they are precious and have a direct bearing on my sense of self. Yet they are not fixed in this respect. They are important because of the activity they inspire and, as has already been noted, they are somewhat indeterminate. They could easily be a little different and still function as well within the framework of my artistic practice. They are objects which invite play and physical manipulation. They are things to which I have a sensual as much as an intellectual relationship, many of which seem to have prompted forms of touch and physical handling. As part of the dynamic process of filming and performing in front of the camera, they are also

immersed in a context which prompts change, manipulation and difference, and which does not have a clearly articulated end-point. It would always be possible to make another film. They are objects which seem to be in constant or frequent transition, or which are at least transitional in principle.

For my own part this places me in a different relationship to the objects of my work from, for example, an artist working towards clearly defined pieces, which are seen to be completed and from which the artist must move on. The things I have made linger, hang around in my studio; it is always possible for them to be reused and reactivated. They do not have meaning as object or sculptures in themselves, outside their particular history of use; the shoots I have taken them on, the things that happened to and with them, and the images which were created.

The question then arises, how does this importance function for other people? Is something of this altered relationship retained in the film footage? Is it necessary for people to come face to face with the actual objects, to take part in the process of manipulation? If they do join me in playing with and filming the objects, do they have, in any way. the same type of relationship to them as I do?

Throughout the research there have been many opportunities to present the films and objects in different ways – as single and split-screen film montages, alongside text, on tables, as gifs. The aim has never been to present a clear definition, as if these objects were complete independent things, but to offer the viewer opportunities in which to understand these as objects, which are in some way mutable, changeable or in transition. It aims for the mode of

presentation (as with that of the making process) to be one which poses questions in a playful manner, drawing the viewer into a conversation about exactly what it is they are looking at.

Perhaps this goes some way to explain the importance of film and video over that of photography within the research. Moving image is a place where things can happen, where an object can be presented and then nudged or moved or in other ways re-articulated through physical interaction, shifts in lighting or viewpoint. As opposed to a photograph which fixes an object in a particular aspect, in moving image, things are able to change, and the process by which the objects are presented, becomes a part of the viewer's perception and understanding. Film's temporal aspects allow for these objects to retain their mutable and propositional character.

By referring to these objects as 'good enough sculptures' the intention is to highlight these aspects. It is hard to imagine a sculpture in a gallery being described as 'good enough for a plinth'. This would immediately undermine any sense in which the object was worthy of artistic consideration in a system which reifies 'works of art' as cultural artefacts of significant value in and of themselves. We might see the imposing bronze on a plinth as an object to which we can relate, but not use. It's meaning and our relation to it has been fixed by social prescription and convention. We may judge its merits and form an opinion of them, but we cannot easily use them to play.

As has been said earlier, the object of this research is not intended to be fixed and finished sculptures, or objects for detached contemplation. As objects of use they are poised to be taken up and manipulated, explored and reframed

within the artistic endeavour, whether this be as artist, spectator or participant. As Psychoanalyst and Winnicott scholar Jan Abram notes in the closing gambit of her paper Interpreting and Creating the Object, '[b]oth the *'artistic endeavour'* and *'the act of psychoanalytic endeavour'* offer infinite possibilities to evolve and continually become the Self we are always in the process of becoming… up until, and hopefully at the moment, we die.' (Abram 2017, p. 9)

As objects made to prompt thought and exploration, these sculptures made to be filmed are in a continual process of becoming, with no definitive end other than that of the film ending, the camera turning off, time running out. Whilst these specific sculptures may live on beyond the current research, it is the spirit they embodied that is of importance: the continual turning over of ideas and materials and the ethics of never reaching a fixed conclusion. They embody an invitation to explore and transform, to engage in physical, material and imaginative processes of investigation, in the confidence that new forms of art and knowledge will be created, new relationships made, new identities formed.

This brings us back to our earlier discussion of heurism and to Addison's teacher as a facilitator of environments, in which students can find out and come to know by challenging their preconceptions. Similarly, as Abram (2007) notes, Winnicott appeals to the analyst to refrain from interpretation, to allow the analysand to reach understanding through the process of analysis. A view of psychoanalysis in which the 'analyst's task is to facilitate a space within which the child or the patient is able to discover something for [themselves].' (Abram 2007, p. 257) For Winnicott analysis is a 'highly specialised form of playing' (ibid, p. 256) predicated on the idea that it is through play 'that children […] make external the world'. (p. 252) The job of the analyst, as with that of the mother

(or care giver) is to provide a good enough environment, populated with good enough objects, in which the infant feels safe and confident to take risks and explore. What is significant is not the analyst's (or the artist's) clever interpretation, but 'The significant moment is that at which *the child surprises himself or hersel*f.' (ibid, p. 256)

As with the presentations, workshops and exhibitions I have organised through the course of this research, to read this, I hope, is to enter into the dialogue in which I have been engaged, and through which my knowledge and understanding has grown; knowledge and understanding born of experience, characterised by a process of continual evolution with objects as my playthings, and conspirators. In this sense the research facilitates opportunities for people to explore their own conceptions and hopefully provides contexts in which fresh discovery is possible.

Conversation with Franz West, April 2019

BL – Hi Franz, thanks for talking with me, given the circumstances.

FW – No problem Bill. I'm always pleased to talk with other artists. What did you want to ask me?

BL – I just went to see your posthumous exhibition at Tate Modern (*Franz West*, 2019) and I realised how important your work has been to me for such a long time. I suddenly see your influence in all of it.

FW – Well, that's very good to hear, I think. That it's been useful?

BL – It's the reference that is so close I've not been able to see it. There was a big exhibition of yours at the Whitechapel Gallery maybe fifteen years ago[16] that I saw. It was a better exhibition than the one at Tate I think, although that may just be that it was the first time I'd seen your work in the flesh, so to speak.

FW – I remember this show well.

BL – I was making performance then and had come from a theatre background, and still felt very much like an outsider at contemporary art galleries, but your *Passstuecke* were really relevant and exciting, and that made me look more at your later work and, although I didn't know what to do with it in terms of what I had been making, I loved it. I think I started making sculptures because of them. The work made it feel as if making was possible.

FW – So you copied them?

BL – Yes, I think so. Your work and some other peoples'.

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[16] *Franzwestite: Franz West – works 1973-2003* (2003) exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery, London.

FW – With good results?

BL – No, dreadful! Although your sculptures seemed so accessible, when I started to make things, I realised how incredibly sophisticated your sculpture-making was. Seeing all that work again made me remember both the feeling that things were possible, and that difficulty. Then there were films I hadn't seen before. I was sitting watching this one where you seem to be making a sculpture on a boat, and at the end (which was the first bit I saw), you put the sculpture on a table and filmed it, so that it almost looks like one of the cliffs that rise out of the ocean. It's not the most original gesture I guess. Henry Moore did stuff like that with photography, but to see it on film, or video rather, seemed like a different thing. Irreverent somehow, like a lot of your work.

FW -Yes being a bit stupid has always been important, although I don't think I really try to be like that, it's just what happens. I am very serious about the work and I like working with film. That one in fact was made by Bernhard Riff.

BL – Yes, I saw that. There's another one too that he made of you working on plaster sculptures in your studio. I couldn't read the subtitles, but it was nice to see how roughly you handled the materials – using electric saws to lop pieces off and sticking different bits together.

FW – That is what I find the most useful about these techniques and materials. Everything can always be changed. But you also must work with the materials. I think it was Adorno who wrote about the logic of materials. I remember reading this in the late 80s before I began making outdoor sculptures, but it was true for the work I had already made. The idea that a different aesthetic comes out of different materials, this is very interesting to me.

BL - A kind of humility in the face of the materials? Looking for what they offer not trying to dominate them?

FW – Perhaps.

BL – There's something playful about all of it. Do people say that a lot? But I also feel a little conflicted, especially with the later work, because it is made from a position of privilege. So, I wonder how much the playfulness and irreverence are a product of being an outsider, and how much it is something enabled by a position of privilege.

FW – I'm not sure I can really answer that. Of course, I have always come from a relatively privileged position and then perhaps later, in the art world, a very privileged one. But I have tried I suppose to stay true to those early works, which were in many ways a reaction to the seriousness of much of the work that was happening in Vienna at the time. I felt that I had to make work that was less serious, and that meant I was not successful for a long time. I have tried to keep that same feeling always.

BL – And has film and video always been important?

FW – Yes, for sure. It was necessary to document the early works. They were not the same if they were seen merely as objects. I wanted them to be activated by the people who picked them up and did things with them, and I had nowhere to keep them. I took lots of photographs too.

BL – Yes, and they all have people in them, don't they?

FW – Of course! What would be the point of photographing them alone, other than to give them some sort of importance as sculptures that they do not have? They are important because of what they make people do, how they make them act. This individual piece of plaster and metal isn't important. I have had to remake them, like for the Whitechapel exhibition.

BL – So, could other people remake them now you're dead, and use them to make photographs and films? Would that still be your work?

FW – No! It would be there's. But you are right, the forms are important but not the individual objects. And again, they can be a little different and no matter.

BL – But it is important that it is you who has made them?

FW – Yes, I think so. Otherwise it would not be my work.

BL – Could you have designed them and had someone fabricate them?

FW – No, I do not think so. How would I sense how an object might affect someone if I were designing them only on paper, and waiting until they arrived, in order to understand whether and how they functioned? It was necessary to make them by hand, with my body so to speak.

BL – And the later sculptures, they are singular material things, aren't they? Viewers can't touch them. People can own them. You couldn't just make another.

FW – This is true. They must be what they are. Although they often have parts of other older works in them, like the collages in the little rooms I make.

BL – There's a sense with them all I guess, because of the type of construction and the textures and application of paint, that they could easily have been different. They have emerged through the making of them.

FW – Yes, you cannot really plan and design work like this, and often you find you must take things apart and remake them before you find a satisfactory form.

BL – So, is the video a way of keeping that conversation with the materials open?

FW – Perhaps. It is also a way of showing that the process cannot be entirely planned, because it is a dialogue with the materials.

BL – There's something self-mythologising about that too isn't there? Setting yourself as the creative genius in the studio, forming things intuitively out of bare materials?

FW – Perhaps yes, but I always want it to be more messy than that; as if I don't exactly know what I am doing. You are right though. When you become successful, it is hard for any gesture to be… what's the word? - to be 'provocative'.

BL – So that video, the one of you in the studio, both uncovers a kind of messy, not too serious approach, but also creates an aura simply because of your position.

FW – Yes, I mean in the context of the Tate it must be read like this. If it were being shown in some little gallery somewhere, people might write it off as undermining the work. I don't know.

BL – The video kind of pushes in two directions at once.

FW – Maybe, but this is another reason for the outdoor sculptures. At the time, the only public sculpture allowed was so serious. It was a Richard Serra. And I was in the position, to change this, to do something provocative; make forms which were unexpected; which people could climb or sit on; which did not impose themselves so much but were a little silly. It was a new context I could approach as an outsider.

BL - There were two early films in the Tate show too, that I hadn't seen before; both of people performing with the *Passtuecke*. I think one was just of the *First Passstuecke*.

FW - Yes, I think this first *Passstuecke* is important. It was a response to these Cy Twonbly paintings of big circles, do you know them?

BL – Yes, I think so. Big canvases with red circles a bit like spirals.

FW – Yes exactly. I saw these in the 70s and did not know what I could to do with them. And then I was also reading Kant. You know Kant's *Uninteressiertes Wohlgefallen* … how would you say this in English… disinterested engagement?

BL – That's in the Critique of Judgment?

FW – Exactly. So, it has to do with use without end. And at the same time, I had read Wittgenstein and probably misunderstood, but anyway, he wrote that words can be like tools. So, I thought the *Passstuecke* could be like this. Tools without ends for people to do things with. They make people self-conscious; the interactions are awkward because there is no obvious reason for them.

BL – They are open for people to explore them however they want?

FW – Yes, but of course this is constrained by the social context and the psychological one. It is more that the focus is on this interaction and not on the reason for it.

BL – And the *First Passstuecke* was based on those Cy Twombly paintings?

FW – Yes. I also read in Wittgenstein that drawing is a symbol for the senseless, and this then seemed to fit with the idea that these *Passstuecke* would have no defined use. They were based on senseless drawings. Not that drawing is entirely senseless, but it is not a symbol for sense in the way language is.

BL – Are the films just a means of documenting the *Passstuecke* and people's interactions, or do they do something in themselves? They are very particular. In the *First Passstuecke* film that was shown at Tate for example, the sculpture is in the middle and people walk in and pick it up, do a little action, then put the sculpture down and go off. The framing is awkward too, a little close maybe. It doesn't feel like a document, it feels like a performance made for the camera.

FW – Yes, I think this is right. The camera changes the way you behave just like the *Passstueke,* but it is also an end. We were not making those interactions in a disinterested way, we were thinking about the film, so perhaps this is a problem.

BL – Your photographs also tend to be quite theatrical; people pose with the sculptures; they do not feel like they are documents of something happening anyhow. Do you know this little sculpture by Gaudier-Brzeska, which he made for a friend who was a writer? For him to fiddle with while he was writing? This seems similar in some ways. An object without a particular end, but in this case a solitary and private one, unlike your sculptures which seem very public, very caught up in display.

FW – Yes, display is important. For the exhibition you mentioned at the Whitechapel Gallery, we made an area where people could interact with the *Passstuecke* in front of large mirrors.

BL – Yes, I remember that, but at Tate there were these strange little curtained off areas, almost like a hospital ward, for people to take the objects inside. There were some of the original sculptures in glass cases. It didn't feel right to me. And at the Whitechapel, the mirrored spaces were separated off too, like changing rooms.

FW – Yes, perhaps this was to allow people to feel free to do as they wished without feeling that they are being watched. Perhaps there should also have been a stage, so that these rooms were for practising, and if people felt like it, they could then display what they had done to others. I am thinking in two ways here. Yes, the *Passstuecke* have to do with display and with performing, but they are also about a personal and individual engagement. A fiddling of sorts, which might well be better done in private, or partly in private. I'm not sure if it is important to decide one way or another.

BL – No. I totally agree. It needn't be one thing or the other, but this discussion uncovers the complexity of that engagement. It can certainly be both; it should be.

FW – I feel this is the same with my understanding of philosophy. It is not important that it makes you understand things, but that it helps you to have ideas. It makes you ask questions. Sometimes a misunderstanding can be as productive as an understanding. More so!

BL – Yes, I agree with that too. Philosophy must inspire action, it must cause problems for your thinking so that you question things. It definitely shouldn't wrap things up. That would be terrible, especially for art works. Then there would be no point in making things. At least not from my point of view.

FW – Yes, I think the way I make sculptures, if this doesn't sound a bit grand, is a kind of philosophical thinking, because I am not certain where it will lead, and things are discovered through the process. Even if they are ever so small.

BL – Yes, I think that's exactly how I feel about my work. Thanks Franz, this has been really useful. It's funny, although I don't think anyone would look at the sculptures I've made, if they are sculptures, and say that they look like yours, I think there is a deep similarity in approach. More than ever, I want the making to be free of too much pre-conception, so that it can feel lively and have a sense of discovery to it. I think this is also why I am drawn to making films and to your *Passstuecke,* because the making carries on through the interaction and the play and the performance with the objects, which is of a particular character, because it is directed towards the camera. It is both personal and public, awkward and enabling.

FW – Precisely. Is that not what much art is about? The personal and the public? When you make things you often do this alone and yet you imagine someone else looking or interacting with it?

BL – Yes that's true. But in my case, I am also imagining how I will interact with the things I make.

FW – Of course, me also. How else can you imagine except through your own experience? Did you play with the *Passstuecke* at the Tate?

BL – No, I felt too self-conscious.

FW – Why not behind the curtain?

BL – That would have been worse.

FW – You're sure you are in the right line of work?

BL – (Laughs) Thanks Franz

FW – No problem Bill.[17]

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[17] As well as my own experiences, this text used three online sources as reference. An video interview between Franz West and Hans Ulrich Obrist (2013), a You Tube video, *Franz West* (no date) posted by Parkett Art and an interview with Tom Eccles in ArtReview (2012).

Figure 11: Table top installation at Making Representations exhibition Phoenix Brighton, 2019

Table Tops – a Conclusion of Sorts. Nothing is Finished

Let's begin with the table; a surface onto which things can be placed. There have been tables used throughout this research. From the first modelling and cutting to the final presentation, tables have been used to place objects upon, sometimes with rolls of paper or black sheets pulled down over them, in order to film objects on clean backgrounds. The table is a work surface. It is not a plinth or a shelf. It elevates things to a working height, one which naturally enables us to stretch out our hands towards the objects that populate its surface, and do things.

Two sets of images are included in the submission which both document instances in which the sculptures and films have been exhibited side by side.

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The first at a PhD presentation in the ICA theatre in 2018, the second as part of the exhibition and symposium *Making Representations* at Phoenix Brighton in 2019.

ICA presentation
https://www.instagram.com/p/Bqw0qezlH47/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Making Representations at Phoenix Brighton
https://www.instagram.com/p/B2wTaJkFv4S/?utm_source=ig_web_options_share_sheet
https://www.instagram.com/p/B2wUYbUFJA9/?utm_source=ig_web_options_share_sheet

Making Representations Symposium (practical workshop)
https://www.instagram.com/p/B2wSH3dlphF/?utm_source=ig_web_options_share_sheet

Figure 12: Table top installation at the ICA Theatre, 2018

The table top has been a break-through. Towards the end of a process in which it was held that the objects were of little or no importance in themselves, but that only their images would reach the audience, I brought as many as I could carry to the ICA and arranged them on a table around and amongst the films

which were presented on small screens. For the first time people could encounter and interact with the objects themselves, alongside the films.

At a presentation I gave at an early stage in the research, someone asked me whether the objects were simply an excuse to make films, things that were necessary in order to explore the technical possibilities of the camera, but of no real importance in themselves. This could have been the route that my understanding of the research took, focusing on the different cameras I used as the active element in the research.

As the research developed however, the objects themselves have become more and more of a puzzle; far more interesting, in fact than the technicalities of camera formats and equipment. As we have seen, the contrary nature of these sculptures made to be filmed has become a significant area of analysis and exploration, prompted by the route of the practical art making, which increasingly favoured the handling and physical interaction with objects in front of a fixed camera, as well as multiple forms of dissemination, including screenings, talks, exhibitions and participatory workshops.

Links with art educational practice, particularly through work with Tate Learning and the BA in Fine Art at Kingston School of Art and engagement with thinkers such as Nicholas Addison, gave the research a context and purpose beyond the creation of discrete artworks for the gallery, and allowed the art making process to be thought of as a process of experimental and experiential learning. Further, by understanding workshops to be both a context for undertaking research, as well as a valid means of engaging audiences in the work's reception, the various outputs of the research, including screenings, talks, exhibitions and writing,

could be viewed as ways of actively engaging the viewer, and augmenting their encounters with the research and its objects (the sculptures and films).

Cameras become a new way of exploring these particular objects, of forging new relationships with them. The camera acted as a means through which to play with the objects: the artist and viewer responding to the situation; the camera enabling an altered mode of attention. The objects then act as invitations and prompts for inquisitive action within a specific context, that of the invitation to film. I have written above that the objects did not need to be exactly the way they are. They could easily have been a little different and still functioned as well within the context of the research. Equally the films and gifs, which have resulted from my encounters with objects, are not the final, finished authored work. They are the result of the play invited by the objects and by the various filming situations generated. They may themselves be invitations, possible realisations of a process with endless permutations.

Like Harman's objects and relations, these sculptures made to be filmed are never used up, there are always possibilities which remain to be activated. As with the work of Eva Rothschild, Robert Morris, Lazlo Moholy-Nagy and Laure Prouvost, they embody potential, awaiting multiple physical and imaginative realisations. Like that of like that of Adam Gillam they could be seen as open-ended gestures turned toward the future. They are an agglomeration of elements, the locus of a series of practices, performances and explorations, always with the camera in mind.

Above all perhaps sculptures made to be filmed are productive, as is their relationship with the camera; both enable engagement, exploration and

discovery. They produce not only moving images, but physical, thoughtful and imaginative interactions, which inspire thought and discussion. The aim of this conclusion is not to define exactly what these objects are, nor to put to a close this line of research, but to act as an opening up of possibilities, ways of acting and thinking towards and about sculpture, within an expanded and experimental artistic research practice. All the elements that make up this PhD submission, whether insights taken from experience, theoretical concepts, analytical writing, films, gifs, collaborative films, performances, exhibitions, symposia, experimental workshops or the sculptures themselves, are generative. They are tools with which to prompt thoughtful and imaginative physical and material engagement.

They also represent an expanded form of art research, informed by and informative to, art teaching, and an understanding of the embodied, emotional and socially engaged nature of art practice research, within the context of the academy. In this respect a significant aspect of the research's contribution to knowledge is that it serves as a model for a type of embodied, intuitive engagement with its processes and subject matter, which is academically and artistically significant. It is critically engaged precisely because it embraces the personal, social, collaborative and uncertain character, seen as inherent in the many forms of artistic engagement that have been undertaken. It is also significant in the way it involves other people within the research practice as active agents and learners. As has been stated above, the research has not been undertaken in order to present discrete and abstracted findings which can be presented (to a disinterested audience), rather it has sought to bring its audiences (whether in academic, artistic or educational contexts) into the research process, allowing or inviting them, in various ways, to involve

themselves in the forms of thought, questioning and practical activity that it embodies.

It is with some sadness that I submit this document; not only because the past four years have been personally incredibly exciting and fruitful, but because a document like this seems to produce a closure which has never been desired. Finally, the research has settled into this form. It is not the only way things could have settled; it isn't perfect. It necessarily produces a caricature, a partial rendering, setting down some avenues of thought and leaving out others.

The hope is that this research will inspire further thought and artistic practice and that the sculptures, if that is what they are, may still exist for other people or my future self to continue making and exploring. The research has not exhausted the possibilities of the pictured sculpture, nor even of these objects made to be filmed. Rather it has uncovered a territory or area of investigation, with innumerable undiscovered corners.

The submission ends with a series of images documenting all of the sculptures which have been used within the research, or at least all of those that have survived to this point. A nod to Paul McCarthy who, in the early 1990s individually photographed the props from his early performance works in a documentary style, creating a series of images called *PROPO* (1993). These photographs pay new attention to the objects, marked and scarred by their past ordeals, making them the focus of the viewer's consideration.

Earlier in the research this would have been considered a counter-productive gesture. After all, doesn't the research set itself against this type of supposedly

transparent reproduction? What these images allow, however, is for every object to be included. In an ideal world, perhaps reading this would magic the objects themselves into the reader's presence, in order that they could handle them, and possibly try to enact or extend some of the practice documented. Failing this, it is hoped they will give the reader a sense of the objects as things with pasts and futures: a certain self-sufficient reality of their own, at the same time as being invitations for action and exploration. It is these objects, the sculptures made to be filmed, which are submitted as the core of the research. As its locus, they embody the research's findings.

Unlike McCarthy's performance props, locked away in chests, these objects are still available for use. They are not curiosities or artefacts of past events – although, like McCarthy's objects many of them bear the traces of things which have happened. They remain objects tuned towards potential futures, new interactions, new modes of filming and of physical, material and imaginative exploration. Even if they never again leave the boxes in which they are stored, the invitation is there, at least in principle.

Figure 13: Bill Leslie, Good Enough Sculptures Poster, 2019

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