

HOLDING AND CURATION

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Abstract: In this article, itself a continuation of a process of bringing and holding ideas together, I explore the way that what Metcalfe and Ferguson (2001) refer to as ‘holding structures’ within art can be said to resonate with curatorial processes. I focus, here, upon a practice as research project that I completed in 2014

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Anna Macdonald has received International recognition for her work including being selected for; Art Currents, New York, VideodanzBA, Argentina, Dascamdans, Belgium, Miden Festival, Greece and being nominated for the International Video Dance awards in Barcelona. Her work has been exhibited nationally in galleries such as Sidney Kent Gallery, Peter Scott Gallery and Bluecoat Arts Centre. Recent public art works include commissions from; Artsdepot, London, Wandsworth Arts Festival (the Shimmy commission), A Million Minutes curated by Central St Martins College, London, all of which received funding from Arts Council England. Her work has also recently been selected as a flagship project for AHRC funded research into socially engaged art, hosted by Creative Works London.

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called *Falling for everything* (Moving image, 2014: 5m 26). Here, the praxical knowledge that emerged through handling materials during this project is articulated in dialogue with a retrospective analysis of the work, which brings together the psychoanalytic theory of Winnicott (1965), Kristeva (1982), and Ettinger (1996) alongside the curatorial discourses of Bauman (1998), Doubtfire and Ranchetti (2015) and O’Neil (2010). *Falling for everything* (2014) forms part of a body of work exploring the relationship between holding and loss within the ontic boundaries of film, sitting within the field of socially engaged art whilst adding to a canon of work made by moving image artists engaging with representations of death.

Key Words: *Falling for everything*; holding structures; curatorial processes; moving image art.

1. Introduction

In a discussion regarding the rise of the contemporary role of ‘artist-as-curator’, Doubtfire and Ranchetti describe curation as an act of ‘temporal bringing together’ (Doubtfire and Ranchetti, 2015:1). I am an artist, rather than an artist-as-curator, but this description of the curatorial resonates particularly with my moving image practice in two main ways. Firstly, because like much contemporary art, my work brings together found materials in new temporal relationships rather than generating new material, and secondly because the praxis itself is concerned with physical and metaphorical acts of holding. So in this article, itself a continuation of this process of bringing and holding ideas together, I explore the way that



what Metcalfe and Ferguson refer to as ‘holding structures’, (Metcalfe and Ferguson, 2001:252) within art can be said to resonate with curatorial processes. I focus, here, upon a practice as research project that I completed in 2014 called *Falling for everything* (Moving image, 2014: 5m 26)². Here, the praxical knowledge that emerged ‘through handling materials’ (Bolt. 2007:30) during this project, is articulated in dialogue with a retrospective analysis of the work which brings together psychoanalytic theory (Winnicott, 1965, Kristeva, 1982, Ettinger, 1996) and curatorial discourse (Bauman 1998, Doubtfire and Ranchetti, 2015, O’Neil, 2010).

Falling for everything (2014) forms part of a body of work exploring the relationship between holding

and loss within the ontic boundaries of film, and draws on the psychoanalytically-underpinned work of writers such as Doane (2009), Mulvey (2006) and Phelan (1993). It was commissioned by a woman, who I will refer to here as X, who was dying and wanted to explore this experience with an artist³. Its basic form was that of meeting, talking and recording our conversations. The final work involves a single recording of one of these meetings where X talks about the new sense of temporality she has found through living with life threatening illness. Her words are heard alongside the relentless visual expansion, and then disappearance, of a National Institute of Medical Research diagram outlining medical research trial

The Clinical Trials Toolkit - Routemap

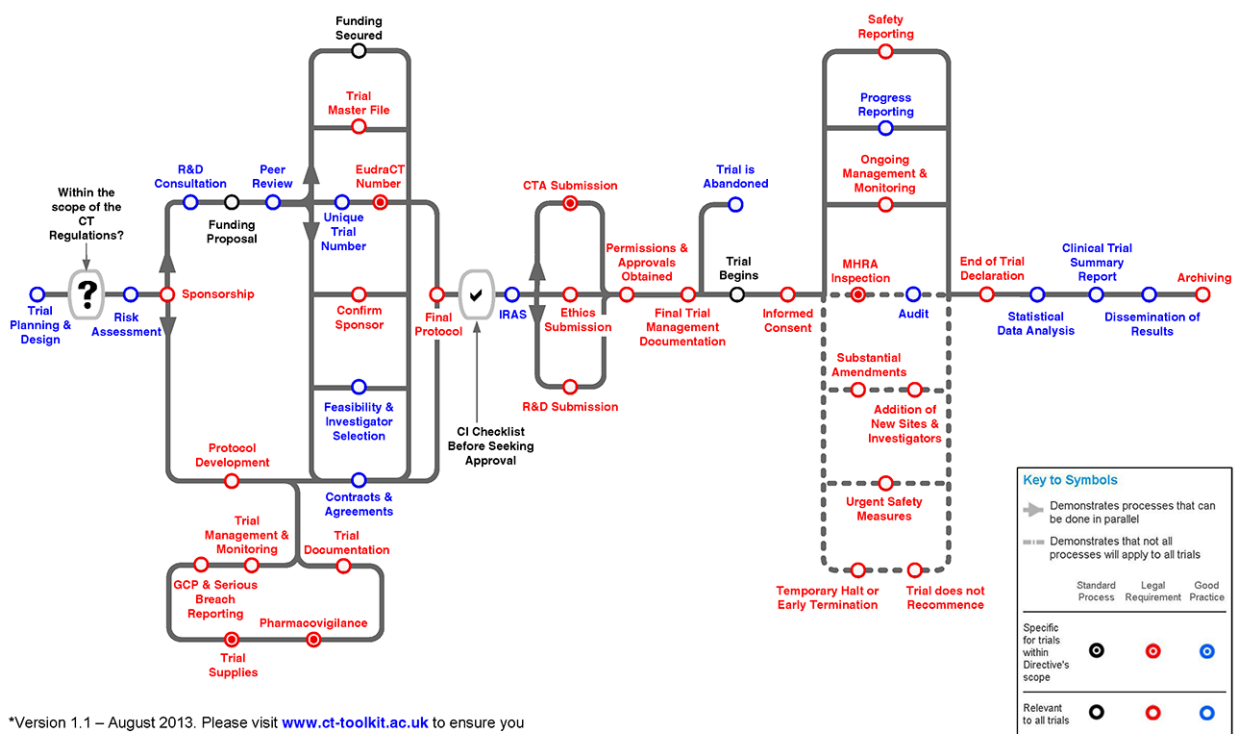


Figure 1: National Institute of Medical Research diagram

² At time of publishing *Falling for Everything* has been screened at Phoenix Arts Centre, Brighton, 2016, Maternal Creativities conference: Southbank University, London, 2015, Risk and regulation: Arts and Medical Humanities Conference at Dartington Hall, Falmouth, 2015, Pause Exhibition, House Gallery, London, 2015, LimeWharf Gallery, London (The London Science Festival). It can be accessed at <https://vimeo.com/109223428>

³ X said she was happy for me to use any bit of our recordings in our work, but when she died we had not talked about me publishing any writing about the work. I do not believe that this decision could be made by another person now, on her behalf so I have therefore taken the decision to not use her name here.



protocols – see Figure 1⁴.

During its making the woman was preparing to die and much of this preparation appeared to centre around her thinking through her eventual separation from her child. In response to this, I developed this praxical research, the outcomes of which I reflect on here in order to consider the act of curation. I will focus on the potential relationships between the psychoanalytic concept of maternal containment (Winnicott, 1965) and mortality both within the process of creating the work and its final form.

Falling for everything sits within the field of socially engaged art, whilst adding to a canon of work made by moving image artists engaging with representations of death such as Sophie Calle, Alina Marazzi and Becky Edmonds. These artworks take death as their subject and, although they may have a cathartic affect for participants and viewers, can be seen as being distinct from the practice of palliative art therapy. Much of this work is collated in Wilson's 2012 book *Love, Mortality and the Moving Image* where she includes a chapter on one of Calle's most famous pieces *The Impossibility of Capturing Death* (2007), which involves footage of the moment her mother died. Writing of this work, Wilson argues that 'the artist's assimilation of her mother's death [...] opens questions of what Calle's art can contain or cover' (Wilson, 2012:47). Here Wilson suggests that certain phenomenon, and here she is referring specifically to death and dying, are more difficult, or even 'impossible' as Calle might have it, to contain than others. Her use of the word 'cover' is also of interest here for it flags a tension, that she writes of later in the book, between containment in art as an act of care or as an act of consumption, which sees the artist covering the subject of the artwork with another set of concerns.

The ethical tensions between care and appropriation in work of this nature, as identified by Wilson, are central to my research into ways of bearing witness to, whilst still protecting the integrity

of, X's experience in *Falling for everything*. An example of the complexity of this aim presents itself now as I write, for each time I replace my collaborator's name with a generic X it feels like another act of erasure or negation of her presence, whereas typing her first name offers me only an uneasy sense of taking what isn't mine. This research is particularly relevant to current curatorial concerns, and has a resonance to debates surrounding the practices of recent large-scale artist-as-curator-led exhibitions such as *Documenta*. For these transnational events, as Paul O'Neil suggests, have been accused of using individual artist's work as 'raw material' brought together in such a way that they are 'subsumed by the identity of the whole curatorial endeavour' (O'Neil, 2010:24).

Drawing on the praxical knowledge that emerged from making *Falling for everything*, an image that proved illuminating as a way of conceptualising the tension between protection and appropriation within curation is that of the 'abject' maternal body taking care of and yet threatening to subsume the infant, as described by feminist psychoanalytic writer Julia Kristeva (Kristeva, 1982). What I propose here is that Kristeva's articulation of the notion of the unbounded, abject body conjuring a fear of undifferentiated space and the loss of identity, offers a useful framework for exploring the act of containment within the process of making art, and by extension curation. For it is an image, as I go on to explore, that resonates both with the potential consumption of the subject/artwork by the artist/curator and, the complexities of trying to hold an unruly, indeterminate and dying body, that 'might be here in a few years time or might not'⁵. So I begin by considering X here in light of the notion of the abject, or that which is without boundary, proposing that her contingent body can be seen as ontologically un-holdable or un-curatable. This allows me to go on to articulate how and why I tried to curate or 'hold' the 'impossible', which in turn has the potential to reveal something of the desire for, and affect of, curatorial acts.

⁴ The National Institute of Medical Research diagram is reproduced in the film with kind permission from the National Health Authority, UK.

⁵ Extract from audio recording in *Falling for everything* 2014.



2. The Object body and the Un-curated space

The NIMR diagram in the film details the formal processes that have to be gone through in order to initiate and conduct a new medical research trial. It consists of a series of horizontal lines in primary colours, like that of a London underground transport map, that offer oddly concrete pathways for what are essentially unknowable outcomes⁶. In this film the diagram is initially shown at such an increased scale that the original image is rendered unidentifiable. All that is seen is light and shade and pixels. Over the course of the film, which lasts just over five minutes, the diagram decreases in scale, moving past its original size, until it is no longer visible. The gradual change in scale makes more and more of the diagram visible, which generates the impression of lateral movement onscreen.

At the start of the film the lines are not distinguishable from the background and what is seen is an indistinct shadow that gradually becomes a dark column moving across the screen. Viewers have noted that they find this part of the work the most unsettling as they are unsure of what they are looking at, not only in a conceptual sense (although this is also true of this moment) but literally because the form of the image is unclear⁷. Art therapist Marion Milner observes the way images without clarity of outline, like these blurred lines at the start of the *Falling for everything*, can create ‘a fear of losing all sense of separating boundaries’ (Milner in Fuller, 1980:134) for the viewer. This fear is a primal one, for the relationship between life and containment operates on every level, from the geographical to the physiological to the psychological. If the borders of our homes, bodies or cells are not held then we become vulnerable, for life needs to be distinguished from not-life. I was drawn to this image though, this place of not knowing, for it is a place before closure, before diagnoses perhaps, a place of fear but also of

potentiality and hope. When the diagram begins to become clear it is as if this window closes, for a circle of red emerges as we hear X talk of the point where her diagnosis shifted from benign to malignant.

Acts of distinction are at the heart of both holding and curation for they both require that a space be created around an event, which separates it from other possible events. An un-curated or un-held space could therefore be said to be one that resists differentiation. It would be what film theorist Mary Anne Doane refers to as a contingent space where all events would be of equal significance, or insignificance, its un-bounded state raising ‘the spectre of pure loss’ (Doane, 2002:140). The ontological connection between that which is uncontained/un-curated and death is echoed in the psychoanalytic realm where, as Winnicott argues, the emerging or partially formed subject is ‘always near to anxiety about going to pieces, falling for ever, and having no relationship to the body’ (Winnicott in Parry, 2010:22) a state that resonates with the process of working with someone who is dying. For X was terminally ill when we started to work, her body was contingent and unpredictable and she did not know how long she would have left to live. It is this fear of becoming un-bound that is encapsulated in Kristeva’s articulation of the abject.

The notion of the abject feels significant here not because X was ill, for as Kristeva writes ‘[i]t is thus not lack of [...] health that causes abjection’ (Kristeva, 1982:4) but because she embodied that which ‘does not respect borders, positions, rules’ (ibid). For X’s illness overflowed normative trajectories; her cancer was so rare that there was not enough data available for predictions on its trajectory to be made. Even the fact that she developed it at all fell outside of what Mackay refers to as ‘rational metaphysics’ (Mackay, 2011:1), of rules or statistical probability, for, as she talks about in the film, she did not meet any of the medical indicators. In addition, the particular nature of her illness also had no need to breach nor recognize boundaries for it attacked from inside the body, therefore holding a particular imaginative and physical terror. X carried the cancer and both was and was not the cancer; she was inoperable and it

⁶ See - <http://content.tfl.gov.uk/standard-tube-map.pdf> (accessed 9/12/2016)

⁷ This feedback was received verbally from viewers of the work in both gallery and screen-based contexts.



was not possible to separate one from the other, for there was no boundary between them.

In psychoanalytic terms, a fear of the un-bounded and contingent nature of the abject body is echoed, according to Kristeva, in our fear of the undifferentiated space between mother and child before an 'I' is formed. This 'fear of losing all sense of separating boundaries' (Kristeva, 1982:3) between mother and infant was for me replicated between artist and subject in the making of this work, for the relationship between X and I was, and continues to be after her death, complex and merged. We worked for over a year with our professional and domestic spheres overlapping as we met for dinner, sometimes with her son sometimes alone, sometimes at the hospital or at her house. I also worked with this woman's husband and knew her to an extent in a social capacity. I was concerned about the potential for a collapsing of the distinctions between our roles within the process. This was partly perhaps a fear of seeming unprofessional, for larger cultural manifestations of the fear of the abject are potentially assuaged by notions of professionalism as defined as a singular focused activity. It was also perhaps, because being with X (encountering the abject) worked to remind me of what I needed to distinguish myself from or 'permanently thrust aside in order to live' (ibid).

Kristeva writes, the abject is both 'desirable and terrifying' (Kristeva, 1982:19) and it is true that although X's diagnosis created a sharp line between us, the desire to both cross and reinforce that line due to fear and fascination was strong. It was noticeable, when I accompanied X to a hospital visit, for example, that there was something of both awe and fear in the way that even consultants approached her, for she intensified the sense of time around her, occupying a special place of being in life and approaching death. In a way X was already not quite of this world and a sense of the abject as supernatural pervaded the way I thought of her. For as I sat opposite this woman, who was about my age, worked in the arts and had a child the same age as my oldest, I felt that our proximity protected me from death in some way because if she was dying then I wasn't. With slight shame I wonder if in writing this now I am attempting to conjure up some extended protection.

The abject is perhaps the antithesis of the distinct boundaries that O'Neil identifies within traditional curatorial models where the curator as carer arranges and protects autonomous artworks. However, Kristeva's abject maternal image of that which is merged, and unruly is useful in helping us to identify what might drive a desire to curate as an act of distinguishing, separating and protecting ourselves from what is curated. For example, if the abject is seen as the un-curated space where, in Kristeva's words 'meaning collapses.' (Kristeva, 1982:19) then, as Zygmunt Bauman writes, curation can be seen as an antidote to not knowing which finds 'the curator [...] on the front line of a big battle for meaning under conditions of uncertainty' (Bauman 1998: 31). It might also point, however, to the attraction of an un-curated space that offers some resistance to forms of closure.

3. Acts of holding: Not *Falling for everything*

In life we are held by the complex interweaving of different structures such as language, religion, work and culture. These phenomena appear to curate contingency, offering us specific ways of interacting with others and operating through time. Art, particularly art that operates relationally, as Nicolas Bourriaud famously writes, can work to intensify the affect of these bonds by working as 'a linking element [or] a principle of dynamic agglutination' in the generation of a temporary community (Bourriaud, 2002:21). These ways of being that bond us in art and in life are, as Laura Mulvey suggests, part of the way we order time in recognition of, and protection from, its 'intractable nature' (Mulvey, 2006: 31).

Holding structures such as this can potentially work to bring a sense of order that holds our anxieties concerning mortality at bay. In the making of *Falling for everything*, X was scattered and it was completely beyond me to make sense of her experience, but what I could do, and tried to do, was create moments and places of order where she could talk and I could hear her. The holding structures we used, that I now go on to explore, were drawn from the psychoanalytic notion of containment (Winnicott, 1965) and focused upon the interrelated processes of holding boundaries and witnessing.



i) Boundaries

When X and I worked together we always set clear times and dates for us to meet and the length of our meetings was decided upon in advance, as was whether we would be eating or not. These dynamic administration processes created boundaries that, arguably, worked to curate or contain that which was unpredictable, making the process of talking about mortality easier for us to do. A simple example of how this worked is the way that marking the beginning and ending of our meetings which, like the gradual disappearance of the diagram image in the film and perhaps all temporal acts in art or in life, offered X and I opportunities to rehearse the act of leaving. It is processes such as these that, as Wilson writes, offer ‘possibilities of assuagement in palliative art’ (Wilson, 2012:47).

These clearly defined ways of working also created a sense of futurity, a sense of ‘this is how this is going to work’ for us, bringing order, perhaps, to the contingent abject. Another example of this is found in the linear trajectory of the medical diagram in the film that details sequential processes that work to reassure us, just as guidelines are intended to do, by offering a conceptual pathway into the future. This reassurance is reinforced, perhaps, by the linear movement of the unbroken shot of the medical diagram, which works to accentuate familiar filmic patterns of narrative progression and causality. For here we can see that ‘this’ will lead to ‘that’. Aesthetically, the confident and bold diagram appears, perhaps, to hold the abject fragility of X’s voice. Certainly in life, X talked about the comfort that this medicalised form of holding offered; the series of appointments and the treatment stages creating a sense of something having been done before, of a pathway that was known. And even if this, like the process of working with an artist, was only a temporary sense of order, apparently it still helped.

These dynamic administration practices drew explicitly on the psychoanalytic idea that ‘the outer predictability of a setting, a set time and place can lead to an inner sense of being held in a safe place’ (Winnicott, 1971: 83). One of the ideas informing this being that, through resonating with early forms

of parental holding, containment devices can work to reduce the anxiety of contingency; the anxiety that the world may not exist to meet your needs. They are based upon Donald Winnicott’s notion of the boundary that is created by the ‘good enough’ mother (ibid) during early infant development patterns, that is strong enough to contain the un-integrated infant’s experience, allowing for the transformation of its rage and anxiety.

According to Winnicott, if this boundary is not maintained then the infant is at risk of being overwhelmed by fear, by ‘unprocessed’ sensation and the potential loss of their individuated ego. The fear of death, the fear of no longer being held, seemed to come to X in waves and appeared, at times, to overwhelm her. My fear of not being able to hold X’s fear was also all-consuming at times, which potentially fuelled my instinct to create clear boundaries between X and I, in the process of making *Falling for everything*, as a form of co-protection. So the work was clearly set up as an art project, with a financial component to our working arrangement and an artwork to be produced at the end, rather than an exercise in compassion. Holding demands that one remains separate from that which is held and these acts created a delineation between subject and artist. I saw them both as a way of creating a holding space around X and a way of preventing myself from being overwhelmed by her immanent death. In maintaining these boundaries I was assisted by the fact that I have two young children to look after alongside being an artist. Yes, I was impacted by X, deeply so, but I also had the extraordinary boundary of domestic necessity along with the emotional need to protect myself, and therefore my children, which prevented me from immersing myself in X’s situation.

Six months after completing the work, my oldest child turned the same age as X’s was when we entered into the process. I became aware of this when my daughter bought home the book *Pippi Longstocking* to read and I remembered that this was the book X talked about reading to her son in the film. When I read it with my daughter I realised that this book is all about a young girl who is living a vibrant and full life without having parents and I felt a deep sorrow that I had not



felt until this point. I was surprised that I had not made this connection earlier but this is perhaps indicative of the distancing effect of working in the bounded way I did here. As Calle writes about her work *Couldn't capture death*, 'It was only when it was installed and I went to look at it that I realized that this was my mother, and I started to cry' (Calle, in Wilson, 2012: 43).

Another example of a potential containment process can be found within the film itself in the moment where X talks of the way the pattern of reading to her son each night served to 'hold her', even whilst most other structures collapsed around her at the start of her diagnosis. Professor Bobbie Farsides (Professor of Ethics at Brighton and Sussex Medical School) was invited to respond to the work as part of a symposium looking at the relationships between Arts and Science in 2015. She suggested that the repetition of this act, the ritual of being held each night, will go on to function as a holding structure for X's son in the future. It acts, in a sense, as a preparation for her absence. This process is reminiscent of, what Winnicott refers to as, the early infant's internalised sense of being held by the mother that, if fully formed, is able to be sustained when the mother is not there allowing them, according to Winnicott, to bear their inevitable eventual physical separation. It is interesting to note that the character Pippi in Pippi Longstocking, the book X is reading to her son, does live on her own, as I mentioned earlier, but holds a clear belief that her father is present somewhere in her life. In fact Pippi has embodied this sense of holding to such an extent that when her father does come back she decides it will be ok to live without him.

ii) Witnessing as Holding

Falling for everything presents a record of X's physical voice and some of her thoughts on a particular day during 2014. It offers, as all film does, a form of holding that remains after death but is irrevocably bound to its time of production. At the start of our work together X sent me an email that said '*Documenting or creating? Sometimes I'd like to document every little detail. But what for?*' This profound question reveals the difficulty in reconciling the

desire to preserve with the recognition of the loss embodied in every act of documentation. I could not hold X. What I could do, however, was to try to hold, or take care, of each time that we were together, not as an attempt to capture everything to form a larger truth or narrative, but as an attempt to honour each event as entire in itself.

So with X's emailed question in mind, we started working together with the intention to make something but without a predetermined sense of what that might be. When we met, I often felt like I wasn't doing anything but equally couldn't think of what I might do apart from turn the camera on when we met and then off when I left. I did not point the camera at X but left it on the table between us, at her request, to collect our voices. It felt as if filming X speaking would be both asking and doing too much for she was dying and it was utterly beyond me to try to 'do' anything for her apart from register what was happening and allow her to hear herself back as a way of curating her experience. Looking back, it could be said that we worked with what Metcalfe and Ferguson call the 'purposeless love' (Metcalfe and Ferguson, 2001:251) of a mother, creating a holding space for X to talk and for me to listen.

Phillips writes that '[b]y literally gathering her baby in her arms [...] the mother allows him to feel something' (Phillips in Ferguson and Metcalfe, 2001: 251) suggesting a connection between holding and witnessing which is potentially useful when thinking about the act of curation. In this project, the connection between holding and observing is perhaps most evident in the process of 'playing back' X's voice in the composition of the final work, which uses an almost entire recording from just one of my meetings with X, rather than a composite assemblage created from all of this aural material. The inclusivity of this act resonates with X's distinction between documentation as an attempt to capture 'every little detail' or all of life, and 'creation' as an act of selection. For here there are no cuts to distinguish one part from another, evoking the filmic device of the unedited shot, which as Doane (2002) argues, appears to simply point to a world where nothing is more likely to happen than anything else. In this sense the single take can be said to invite the sense of contingency



that X embodies. Using a recording, framed/held only by its start and end, can also be seen as an attempt to resist the desire to make sense of X's experience whilst concomitantly curating it, witnessing it instead, as I would a found object, for her and others to see.

The aim, in both the process and final artwork, was to create a space between X and I, and here again I draw on Winnicott's model of the maternal holding environment, 'within which un-integration is safe' (Metcalf and Fergusson, 2001:251). According to Winnicott, the aim of the mother is to not be overwhelmed by her child's fears and try to solve or negate them, but to create a space within which they can remain un-integrated. In a therapeutic context, this idea is echoed in the need for the therapist to have what Freud called an 'evenly-suspended attention' (Freud in Gay 1989: 110) containing their own anxiety in order to contain the patient's. In an artistic or curatorial context it perhaps requires that the artist/curator aim to reveal the subject/artwork, through witnessing as a form of holding, as opposed to revealing what they desire from the subject/artwork. The origin of the idea of evenly suspended attention, or the act of playing back as a form of containment, lies in the moments where the mother looks at the baby, and that which the baby sees is himself reflected through the mother's expression. According to Winnicott, this process is effective only when the responses of the mother are contained, for if her expression is that of 'only her moods or defences then [the baby] can lose track of the continuity of his being' (Parry, 2010: 23).

But of course it is impossible for all desire to be held back from an artistic or curatorial process, whatever holding processes are employed, and selection is an inevitable part of the process of communication⁸. For example, one of my desires in this project was to understand and expose my understanding of something of X's experience

to others, another was to care for her. As Wilson notes, there is always a 'balance between testimony and protection in palliative art' (Wilson, 2010: 131) and one is not always reconcilable with the other. So when I stated earlier that I used 'almost' an entire shot in *Falling for everything*, what I was alluding to was the fact that I actually edited out one small section of the recording, even though X had given me permission to include it. This was a part where X made a reference to bleeding as the first symptom of her illness. In a sense by removing this reference to blood, I re-sealed the leaking abject body, using a sound engineer to recreate a seamless sounding whole. Here, perhaps, we see curation as an act of both selection and transformation, palliatively covering something that was difficult to hear. Perhaps this is a process I am replicating here in this article as I construct a form for these ideas that contains and conceals the unruliness of the process itself, sanitising a process that was hard and complex and flawed?

4. Holding/curating as a jointed connection

O'Neil describes the traditional role of curation as 'an administrative, caring, mediating activity' which he opposes with an apparently modern notion of contemporary curation 'as a creative activity more akin to a form of artistic practice' (O'Neil, 2010:21). Although I am not suggesting here that O'Neil is negating the worth of the traditional curatorial model, his description does suggest a certain passivity within the act of care whilst attributing more active qualities to the merged role of artist-as-curator. I would argue, however, that *Falling for everything*, and projects of this kind, point to the importance of recognising the creativity of artistic and curatorial acts that resist the merging of artist and subject or curator and artwork as a way of both protecting and bearing witness to the subject. For, just as the physical process of holding someone works to bring attention to the surfaces of both holder and held, the process of holding X, through witnessing or playing back, worked to allow us to see each other and ourselves. Ettinger describes this process as one of 'wit(h)nessing: witnessing while resonating with an-Other' (Ettinger, 1996:

⁸ As the editor Jane Linden pointed out in response to an earlier draft of this article, even Kristeva's notion of the abject is curated symbolically, as it precisely encompasses those difficult embodied experiences that are sidelined by culture and language.



220). Here she describes a reciprocal connected relationship that protects the integrity of both parties. A relationship that maintains distance in proximity and connects without fear of abjection or merging. This resonates for me with curation as a process of revealing my ‘understanding of the artifacts and their relationships’ (Doubtfire, Ranchetti, 2015: 1), rather than curation as an act of consumption. So although I have stolen X’s words, I also held and took care of them for her as she spoke them and hold them now for myself and others after her death, in a way that reveals my understanding of them. The boundaries we constructed in making *Falling for everything* acted as kind of curatorial protection against the potentially affectively immersive quality of this project, of dying, but they also created a line of connection between two people, one dying now and one dying later.

However, as my concealed curation of X’s words testifies, it is also important to recognise the potential within this bounded model for the artist ‘to disappear behind the process of mediation’ (Doubtfire and Ranchetti, 2015: 26) or perhaps to position the artwork as O’Neil writes, as a fixed or ‘autonomous object of study’ (O’Neil, 2010: 13). For the act of holding things in one place must also run the risk of fixing the constant movement of all materials and ideas. Looking back, perhaps out of fear, a need for meaning, or simply a need to appear professional, there was a certain immobility in the way I held the boundaries that X and I generated between us, as a way of managing the process of working with someone who was dying. One example of this occurred at a point very near to the end of X’s life when I chose to wait for funding from my institution to go and work with her, rather than funding this trip personally. At this point X was living in Austria. I received the funding too late and X died before I saw her again. I wonder now whether this lack of responsivity or flexibility was in part a response to a feeling that I couldn’t hold X and did not know how to respond, which I then retrospectively translated into not responding as a response. I also wonder whether I held X or let her go with this act?

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