Social art as material and process: Towards a new method and ethos for social art.

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Social art as material and process: Towards a new method and ethos for social art.

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Abstract

This thesis presents an argument for the existence of unidentified materials utilised by social artists, including chance and often serendipitous encounters with people, environment, and place, which play a critical role in social art. I emphasise the need for a new ethical-social aesthetic model founded on a more comprehensive understanding of the materiality that comprises social art. My contribution to the field reveals the potential of such materiality in the three new artworks and developing a model of creative participatory approaches to art-making. By recognising this potential of seemingly insignificant things and ephemera, I explore a new model of aesthetics within my social art practice that influences the direction of the creative process and, ultimately, the form of the artworks. Through a closer examination of the nuances of social art practice, this thesis presents a fresh perspective on the potential of social art materials.

This thesis investigates a new aesthetic in social art practice rooted in a more productive relationship between hylomorphic and morphogenetic qualities (as discussed by Tim Ingold, 2013). To accomplish this, I draw upon Grant Kester's dialogical aesthetics (2004), Tim Ingold's binary approaches to making (2013), Erin Manning's potential of minor gestures (2016), and Yuriko Saito's familiar aesthetics (2017). To undertake this exploration, I reflect on and analyse field notes and personal diary entries from my involvement in creating three new social artworks (two interactive sculptures and a film) *'The Gentlemen's Wardrobe'* (2016), *'Time Machine'* (2017) and *'[birdsong]'* (film, 2019). Additionally, I conduct participatory observation in two internationally recognised social art projects: Rick Lowe's *Project Row Houses*, Texas (1995 - ongoing) and Suzanne Lacy's '*Shapes of Water - Sounds of Hope'* (2016 - 17) in my local neighbourhood of Pendle, Lancashire.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Fig. 44 Interviews in a grid format, film still ([birdsong], 2019: 16:11).

Fig. 45 Ascending Pendle Hill, film still ([birdsong], 2019: 11:42).

Fig. 46 Lorette and Frankie, the cat (20:14), Les bursting into song (17:54), Max's epiphany (13:54), film stills (*[birdsong]*, 2019).

Fig. 47 Group walking (41:56), an individual walking (10:45), family in the shed (1:01:36), film stills (*[birdsong]*, 2019).

Fig. 48 Diane in the shed, film still ([birdsong], 2019: 1:06:17).

Fig. 49 The schedule board at *The Little Savoy* (Titley 2019).

Fig. 50 The Little Savoy, Colne (Titley 2019).

Fig. 51 Digitally enhanced root drawing of the *[birdsong]* project (Titley 2022).

Fig. 52 Volunteers dressed for the occasion at The Little Savoy pose for a photo with actress Diane Poole. left to right: Darren Ward, Diane Poole, Paula Reed, Andy Reed (Titley 2019).

Fig. 53 *Across and in-Between*: Lacy 2018 (Frieling et al., 2019 p39)

Fig. 54 Claire's shed: serendipitous materialities. (Titley 2018)

Chapter One: Introducing a contextual and conceptual framework

This chapter introduces an overview of the thesis, the context of my art practice and my conceptual framework. It begins with some brief biographical details, which have influenced my thinking towards PhD research.

In contrast to much of the critical writing on social art practice, particularly that of Claire Bishop (2012) and Grant Kester (2004) (discussed later in this chapter), I began this research in 2015 from the perspective of an artist-participant who makes art with their community, in the place where they have lived all their life since 1966 (see Chapter Two, Part Two, *Remembering Place*) and where I began my professional artistic career in the 1990s. Some of my projects were commissions by the local government connected to regeneration schemes. Still, most were self-funded projects that relied on local support from my community, many of whom I had known for decades. Before beginning the doctoral research, I went from one project to another with no time to reflect on the process, without any critical analysis of my practice, which I now understand had evolved into a practice sustained by the support of others here in this place (East Lancashire). One day, a curator introduced me to another curator by explaining that they were '*working with William Titley, and he will be doing… err, William will be doing what William does'*. I remember being flattered by getting the commission despite them not knowing how to describe my practice, but simultaneously I began to question my approach. How and why did I make work?

A year or so later, in 2012, I co-founded In-Situ, an arts organisation in my community. Regular interaction with other visiting artists to In-Situ made me question more consciously than before what social art might be or could be. Those conversations with other artists about the issues facing social art practitioners centred mainly around ethical working practices, particularly when working with communities and the environment, which raised questions for me about my approaches to making work with friends and family in the place where I have lived all my life. Besides questioning the ethics of the

broader field of social art practice, I was curious to understand the mechanics of my practice. What did my creative thinking and decision-making look like, and how did I use materials? What exactly had I been doing in that place, with my community, and what *were* my materials? People were involved – but in what way were my interactions with them and with our environment the materials I was working with as an artist? Consequently, this internal and increasingly professional questioning of social art through thinking about my art practice led me to doctoral research and an inquiry into what might constitute the material of social art practice.

To help understand how and why these questions informed my PhD and how they grew out of my practice, it's essential to know how it evolved and what has shaped it over my lifetime. Thus, Chapter Two maps the development of my social art practice, from an early experience of making art (circa 1977) to more recent artworks, which were created as part of the research (*Gentlemen's Wardrobe* 2017 and *Time Machine* 2017). In Chapter Three, I present an examination of my experiences of participating in two social art projects by internationally recognised artists Rick Lowe and Suzanne Lacy and reveal two different approaches to making described by Tim Ingold (2013) as the hylomorphic (visionary use of materials) and the morphogenetic (relational use of materials). Chapter Four is in two parts; the first presents journal notes to illustrate two types of aesthetic (formal and social) which I identified as operating at the Venice Biennale (2017), and the second part presents field notes from my process of making a new moving-image work, which explores a combined approach of the hylomorphic and the morphogenetic and contributes new knowledge and understanding regarding the potential of a unique ethical-social aesthetic (*[birdsong]* (2019).

As such, this research has a substantial practical element comprising of the three new artworks submitted as part of the thesis, *The Gentlemen's Wardrobe* 2016 (Chapter Two, p74), *Time Machine* 2017 (Chapter Two, p87), and *[birdsong]* 2019 (Chapter Four, p138), through which it aims to radically rethink the relationship between material and social art practice. In what follows, I will introduce the initial questions, methodology, aims and objectives, and social art's critical theories and practices, which have helped refine and deepen my

inquiry. In doing this, I present a closer inspection of the nuances of social art practice, and I introduce my interest in exploring the potential of a new model of aesthetics capable of recognising the potential of many seemingly insignificant things and ephemera within social art that influence the direction of a creative process and ultimately the form of an artwork.

A social art context

The following section is a contextual overview of the field of social art practice and my position within it.

Current practitioners of social art include artists such as Ai Weiwei, Tania Bruguera, Theaster Gates, and the two case study artists examined in Chapter Three, Rick Lowe (p102) and Suzanne Lacy (p109). These artists work in various mediums and contexts, from public installations and performances to community-based projects and interventions. Through their work, they seek to engage with and transform the social and political issues of our time. They are instrumental in driving social change, utilising community gatherings to facilitate discussion, learning, and performances to highlight social issues and installations that encourage community involvement. Some practitioners organise workshops or events to promote collaboration and dialogue, while others work with marginalised groups to create public art that reflects their experiences and challenges social norms. Regardless of the approach, social art practice is a powerful tool to foster meaningful connections and initiate positive change in communities. In Chapter Three, I present two case studies (Project Row Houses by Rick Lowe and Shapes of Water-Sounds of Hope by Suzanne Lacy) as a way to investigate specific examples from artists working in the larger field of social art. Rather than giving an overall picture of static binaries, however, these were chosen both due to the serendipity through which I became aware of them – which, as I describe below, is an important aspect of my methodology – and due to the way the contrasting elements they manifest proved to be especially informative for this research.[1] Much of the

[1] These binaries (hylomorphic and/or morphogenetic) are by no means a representation of the artists' general practice.

larger field within which they themselves sit is investigated in *Mapping the Landscape of Socially Engaged Art Practice* (Frasz and Sidford, 2017).

In Frasz and Sidforth's survey, while it was agreed that socially engaged art could not be easily categorised, the authors offered some core principles that unite various practices under this umbrella. They posited that artists and curators believe in the power of art to effect positive change rather than relying on an artwork's aesthetics for an audience located only within the art world. They suggested that social artists need different modes of production to studio-based ones, including '*dialogue, community organising, placemaking, facilitation, public awareness campaigns or policy development, as well as theatre games, art installations, music, participatory media-making, spoken word and other media*' (Frasz and Sidford, 2017, p11). These projects often require collaboration with people from diverse backgrounds: members of a particular community, other artists, and professionals such as youth workers, architects, engineers, or scientists. With the focus being on social effects rather than aesthetic production, a successful piece may bring together disparate individuals in search of political justice.

In addition to identifying varying work styles and professional factors, the researchers noted similarities amongst social art practices that led to defining three common types: community-based, self-organised, and activist arts. Based on interviews and feedback from several artists, the survey identifies '*nine variations in practice'* which help to map the fundamentals of current social art practice:

1. Aesthetics: either social or fine art.
2. Role/Function of the artist: facilitator or creative agent.
3. Origin of the artist: rooted or dropped into the community.
4. Definition of the work: either by social process or an art product.
5. The direction of influences: inward (community) or outward (art world) looking.

6. Origination of the work: from the community or from outside.

7. Place: place specific or not.

8. Issue: either single or multiple issues.

9. Duration: short or long term.

The authors argue that all nine variations hold equal value within social art practice, and what follows are some examples of current practitioners, (that relate in particular ways to my practice) to help expand on the nine variations.

Jeanne van Heeswijk's (Liverpool Biennial 2012) approach to empowering communities through collaboration and dialogue inspired individuals to take ownership of their neighbourhood, creating a sense of pride and unity that permeated the area. In Liverpool, this collaborative effort led to the formation of a proactive community group called Homebaked. Their headquarters was a local baker's shop designated for demolition. The mantra '*regenerating our high street brick by brick and loaf by loaf*' became synonymous with their cause as they brought new life to the area (Homebaked Website, 2023).

This grassroots project (Homebaked) shared similarities with the two case studies explored in this thesis: Project Row Houses in Texas (Chapter Three, p102) and Shapes of Water-Sounds of Hope (Chapter Three, p109). Though each had a different dynamic, both directly engaged with people and focused on social change rather than a fine art aesthetic.

The unifying mantra of Homebaked brings life and energy to the project, highlighting the empowering nature of community-driven initiatives. Similarly, the projects by community-based organisations like Art Gene (Barrow-in-Furness) and Heart of Glass (St Helens) have a focus on collaborative processes for the sole benefit of the community/participants and often appear to be purely social projects such as creating a public allotment or organising a community dinner. Their underlying aims are social transformation through place-based projects emphasising the social process over aesthetic objects. The aesthetic versus the social is discussed further in Chapter Four (the work of David Medalla Fig. 39 and Yee Sookyung Fig. 40).

The individual social artist can sometimes be found making work with their community, like UK artist Anna Francis. Her project called '*100-year Plan for our Community'* borrows methods from landscape architecture and art and design principles to empower communities in the place where they live. As an artist, Francis is not a tourist to the site; she is a native by her choice of dwelling and practice. Like Francis, Katerina Seda often works in collaboration with her community in the Czech Republic. She creates a sense of place through her photography and frequently collaborates with family members, drawing on relationships built throughout life to inform these projects. Like me, Seda often works with family and friends, drawing from shared histories to inform her projects.

Returning to the nine variations, we can view social art practice as a movement through different ways of working rather than a type that can be mapped onto a straight-line spectrum. While these headings (of the nine variations) are helpful, they're not fixed divisions, as the following drawing demonstrates (see Fig. 1); it is the binary poles of each variation that I'm moving across and between during a project. The drawing helps to visualise the shape of an imaginary social art project based on my movement through the range of nine variations. Fig 1 is presented here to help show how the shape of the work might morph at different stages of a project, things moving from one side to the other as the project evolves. For example, projects might be closer to the social during the collaborative process and move towards a fine art aesthetic as the project nears completion, as the artist focuses on the form of artwork for display purposes at certain stages of the process (as highlighted in the case study of Suzanne Lacy in Chapter Three: SOWSOH, p109).

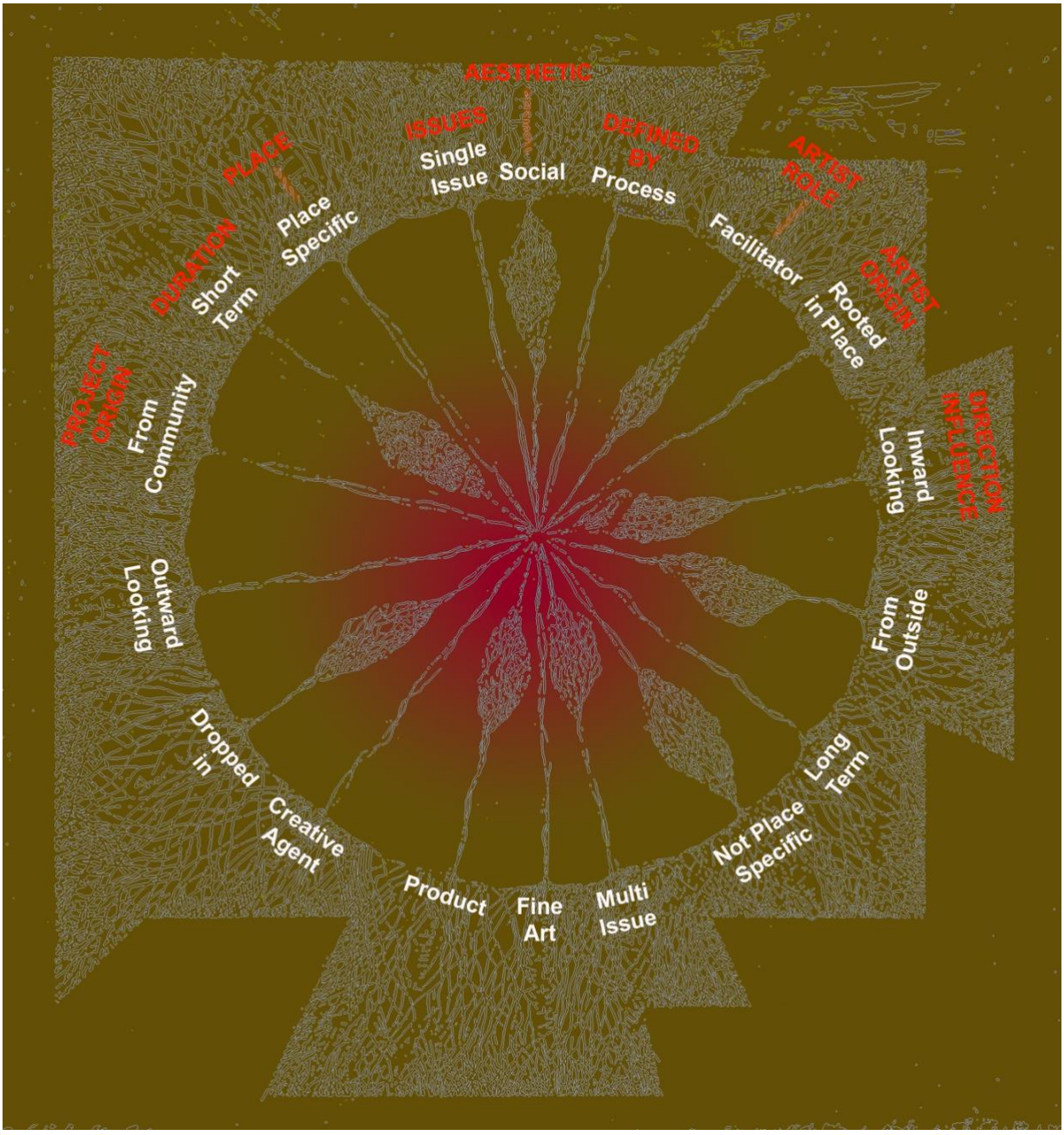

Fig. 1 Root diagram showing the potential shape of a given project (Titley 2023)

The diagram depicts a moment in the imaginary project timeline that is constantly changing as it is altered to accommodate new ideas and tasks. Instead of using a spectrum format, which implies static states, the sketch suggests an animated analogy that more accurately suits the liveness of social art processes based on processes and changes over time. Developing the diagram further, the following image presents three stills from an animated version (Fig 2).

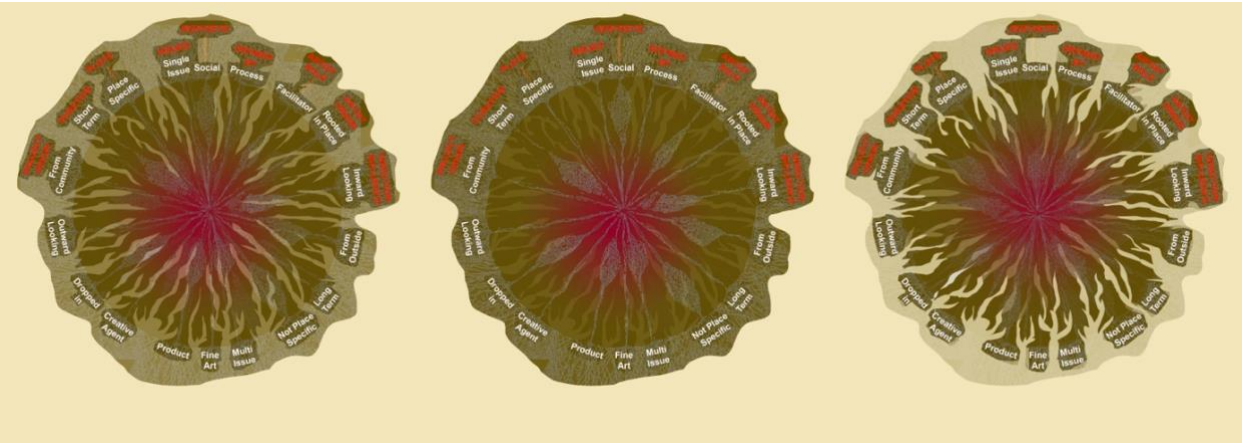

Fig. 2 Example of changing shape of a project (Animation stills. Titley (2023)

This moving representation incorporates audio from the *[birdsong]* project (p138) and animates the ever-changing shape of a social art project as it moves through time, from one moment to the next. To view the animation via YouTube, go to https://youtu.be/nDelLfHa8lQ

To contextualise my practice in this wider field of social art, it aligns with the fundamental principles that unite various practices under the banner of socially engaged art, including the belief in art's capacity to bring about positive change and the necessity for diverse modes of production to replace studio-based ones, such as dialogue, community organising, placemaking, facilitation, public awareness campaigns, or policy development. While my work is part of this wider field, my alignment with the different parts and aspects fluctuates across the temporality of a given project; sometimes my practice is akin to multi-issue work and at other times is inward looking.

A conceptual framework

Grant Kester, in conversations with artist Suzanne Lacy regarding her performative social art projects, once pointed out that *'The tip of the iceberg is the day of the performance, and then there is this huge mass of extremely complex human relational interaction that goes on leading up to that'* (Lacy and Kester, 2008).[2] Kester refers to the tip of the iceberg as the thing most

[2] *Working in Public*, 4 Lectures. Organised by On the Edge Research; Gray's School of Art, The Robert Gordon University; and The Scottish Arts Council. Working in Public drew together artists, theorists, curators and arts administrators whose work engages with issues relevant to social and cultural life, including policy. 2008 https://ontheedgeresearch.org/working-in-public/

visible (the artwork) and the considerable mass of relations as invisible; in this thesis I propose it is this often submerged and durational process, which consists of the material of my social art.

Kester is an art historian and a founder of FIELD, a leading journal of socially engaged art criticism. He has a long-term interest in the challenges of validating, critiquing and evaluating social art practice. He has developed a model responding to the lack of a critical framework for analysing such work within contemporary art aesthetics. Informed by Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism (date of Bakhtin's writing on this and add to references), where meaning evolves relative to external influences, Kester's aesthetic model aims to register all forms of communication and was developed in response to what he identified as a significant lack of a critical framework for considering and evaluating such work within contemporary art aesthetics.

In Chapter Three of his book *Conversation Pieces* (2004)*,* Kester challenges dominant contemporary art aesthetics at that time, claiming that it is still underpinned by a portrayal of the artist as the sole creative genius who produces objects to be observed by audiences, often in the controlled space of a gallery, and suggests that new aesthetic models are needed if we are to understand the value of art practices that do not necessarily rely solely on the production of an object for gallery contemplation. In challenging the image of the artist working on their own, Kester's model instead portrays the artist as one amongst many, complete with their flaws and vulnerabilities. Kester's model also provides a framework for evaluating the work of social artists by recognising the currency, in such work, of time, ethics, listening, exchange, openness, context, empathy, collectivity and legacy, and acknowledges the artists themselves as both participants and authors. These elements support much of the thinking underpinning my practice and are consequently examined across the thesis, particularly in Chapter Four. *[birdsong]* (p138).

Kester's thinking locates the artist amongst shared experiences, reliant on time for social projects to evolve through a '…*process of collectively generated and cumulatively experienced transformation passing through phases of coherence, vulnerability, dissolution, and recoherence' (2004: 123).* He

suggests that a social and environmental context can be imbued with acts of listening, not only as part of the social exchange but as that first step towards initiating a project, arguing that social artists listen to the context of a place and its people, which allows *'for a discursive exchange that can acknowledge, rather than exile, the nonverbal'* (2004: 115). This position of the artist being connected with the community in their place and sharing time relies heavily on the artist being able to relinquish any preconceived vision or self-interest when contemplating an artwork, suggesting more of a collaborative relationship dependent on durational and sincere encounters with people, place and environment, which in turn underpins an ethical practice of empathetic listening and social exchange. These elements of social artmaking, to which Kester gives renewed attention and value, are what, in this thesis, I propose to consider as material.

Considering the components of Kester's aesthetic model as material is the first step in identifying the effect of this material on social art practice. When considering Kester's critical writing at the outset of the PhD, I came to think that to imagine an aesthetic model capable of registering durational social relations; we must also include material effects unspecified by Kester and hitherto unnoticed and unidentified in my practice; for example, this could include chance events and serendipitous meetings, small talk, and inclement weather. This shift in considering the social processes and environmental effects as a material is vital to my contribution to knowledge into current discourses on social art. Marshal McLuhan reminds us that people are not actors against static backdrops but that our environments are '*active processes which are invisible'*, and he points out that the natural and public realm has the power to affect the narrative through its topography, weather, light, texture and so on (McLuhan 1967: 68). Within the environment, there are natural phenomena and chance effects, which I will argue are some of the materials available to and used by social artists, with the potential to influence the social art process. For example, the temperature, the quality of light, serendipitous encounters with other people, conversation, the presence of participants, inclement weather, gales or a gentle breeze, humidity, and so on can all shift/impact an unfolding project in new and unforeseen ways. Supporting this

notion of active material, Jane Bennett's (2010) philosophical project, *Vibrant Matter,* explores the agency of material around and within humans. This concept directly connects the human to the non-human, with the capacity to affect one another. Also, Bennett's use of Deleuze and Guattari's term '*assemblage'* helps imagine the collection of the social art material and its relations as *'… ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant material of all sorts';* they are *'living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within'* (2010: 23). There is a sense of life occurring as an assemblage driven by the energies of its vibrant matter (see Chapter Two, Part Two: *Demolition Street, p63*). Identifying this possibility then posed a further question: if this is the very same material vitality that is often overlooked in social art practice, and given its confounding nature, how might we recognise, record and utilise this potentially significant material in social art practice?

In another sense, these overlooked energies might be found in what Yuriko Saito describes as '*everyday aesthetics'*. Saito's theory of familiar aesthetics emphasises the agency of the everyday, which she argues *'determines the quality of society',* and she goes on to say that being mindful of everyday aesthetics is to be aware of the interconnectedness of all life, and consequently *'the state of the world':* making it essential to develop an ethical awareness of one's actions, and their impact upon other things (Saito 2017: 4). Saito's notion of a moral agency found in the everyday acknowledges an abundance of potentially active material, which has the power to transform society through the most familiar of acts: our choice of clothing, the plants in our garden, the food on our plate, the places we frequent and so on. And, when coupled with Kester's model (2004), Saito's (2017) components, encompassing the familiar, the routine, and the ordinary, create a more inclusive aesthetic model than that critiqued by Kester of the artist acting on their own, with the potential to register the often-unnoticed material of social art while situating the artist on an even footing with the people that they encounter in social art projects. An aesthetic model that took this into account would, by extension, enable the diverse materiality of social art to be recognised on its own terms as opposed to evaluating it through the concept of what Saito refers to as '*twentieth-century*

Anglo-American aesthetics,' by which she means contemporary art aesthetics underpinned by the experience of observing an object in a gallery (2017: 10).

These things that might otherwise be regarded as everyday life and that might change the creative direction of a project, connect in significant ways to what Erin Manning (2016) refers to as minor gestures. Manning argues that it is much easier to recognise a change in the significant event or the spectacle, *'not because that is where the transformative power lies, but because it is easier to identify major shifts than to catalogue the nuanced rhythms of the minor'* (Manning 2016: 1). The minor gestures, suggests Manning, get lost in the process of becoming the major event.

Returning to Kester's conversation with Suzanne Lacy and his use of the iceberg image, we might translate the major as being the final form of the artwork (the iceberg's tip) and the minor gestures to be things preceding the completion of the artwork. When we think of an artwork being created through the interaction between the artist and the materials, understood as social, environmental and vibrant matter, then these things, these minor gestures, can be considered the material with the potential to form the artwork.

Questioning the idea of the artist and participant working together in non-hierarchical ways, Clare Bishop argues that artists need to produce some *thing* – an object, a film or spectacle – if they are to communicate successfully with participants and audiences: thus, enabling the *'experience to have a purchase on the public imaginary'* (2012: 284). She argues that for the successful process of communication to occur (between the artwork and audience), art needs to be some distance from its audience, it needs to be separate from them as an object or spectacle, and it is this object, which prevents the artist and spectator from ever being equal, keeping art and the social in a state of tension: a *necessary* tension, which prevents any reconciliation between the two realms[3] (2012: 278). Bishop also contests Kester's argument for more ethical practice, arguing that putting ethical considerations before creative

[3] Here Bishop is linking the thinking of Jacques Ranciere and Felix Guattari regarding the need for something tangible if audiences are to connect with a work, some thing that '*stands between the idea of the artist and the feeling and interpretation of the spectator. This spectacle is a third term, to which the other two can refer, but which prevent any kind of "equal" or "undistorted" transmission'* (Bishop, 2012: 278).

invention stifles creativity by preventing artists from expressing themselves freely, through fear of causing offence or behaving unethically (towards people or the environment). Social practice – particularly collaborative methods – sets out to challenge the notion of creativity as an act of individuality and, consequently, authorship: an approach which transforms the passive audience into an active one. For Bishop, however, this focus has a reductive impact on the artwork's aesthetic, as it shifts the critique of art into the social realm, coming into direct contact with the ethical, which imposes negatively upon the artist's creative flow. So, while Kester (2004) calls for a new model of aesthetics to include more of the social aspects of social art, Bishop (2012) argues the undesirability of such a proposal due to its restrictions on creative freedom.

Bishop's argument locates social art outside the walls of contemporary art aesthetics due to its proximity to the social realm. Kester's proposal can be seen as an attempt to breach those walls to relocate social art practice soundly within the aesthetic realm. And, while I still hold onto Bishop's idea of a final artwork in my art practice, like Kester, I am interested in an aesthetic in which proximity, not distance, is the operating factor.

To get another perspective on contemporary art aesthetics, we may return to the position of Saito, whose research promotes a classificatory[4] aesthetic *'rather than the usual honourific'* and argues that restricting aesthetics to art is a relatively recent phenomenon (2017: 3). Saito's theories allowed me to reveal the element of proximity and the concept of a dialogical aesthetic that was embedded within my practice, unrecognised at that point by me. They showed me that Kester also talks about everyday aesthetics, although he does not use this phrase. Saito reminds us that earlier concepts of aesthetics[5] did not exclude the dimensions of life from aesthetic discourse. Instead, they set out to explore and understand the nature of sensory experience in all its scenarios. Saito argues that the domination of theoretical aesthetics '… *conceals the considerable power everyday aesthetics wields on humanity's ongoing project*

[4] A system of categorising experience without valuing one above another.
[5] As enshrined in the etymology of the term aesthesis, Saito refers to earlier concepts of aesthetics via the cultural traditions of the Inuit and the Navajo communities, whose daily activities such as making tools are aesthetically considered and integrated into everyday life, rather than an aesthetic reserved for the appraisal of fine art.

of world-making' (2017: 4), implying, as I have come to understand it, that everyday life contains a material inherent with an agency (with potential). In this thesis, it is in proximity to the diversity of material that I propose to locate the seemingly insignificant things (chance encounters, affects, interactions, the material conditions), which occur as part of the social art process, and which have the potential to influence the direction of creative activity, and thus the final artwork. This influential materiality of social art raises a new question concerning the status of such artwork and how it can be critically evaluated when produced in, with and through the social.

Hylomorphic and morphogenetic and the position of the artist

To return to Kester's metaphor, what might we find if we raised the iceberg out of the water to reveal its previously unseen mass? What was hidden, and how does revealing it change our perception of the questions raised so far – i.e., how we might recognise, record and utilise this potentially significant material in social art practice and the status and critical evaluation of the artwork)? To explore these questions and why they matter to social art practice, we might first consider two ways of understanding creativity, as described by anthropologist Tim Ingold, through creating things and using the maker's materials. Ingold defines two stances or approaches to making, the morphogenetic**,** which places '*the maker from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials*', and one of hylomorphism, when a practitioner imposes '*forms internal to the mind upon a material world …'* (Ingold 2013: 21) . I propose in this thesis that his detailed descriptions of the engagement with materials, and the creative processes involved, may also hold when applied to working with people and place, in a social art context. On the one hand, the approach Ingold calls the morphogenetic, positions the artist among potential materials at the beginning of the creative process, providing fertile ground for the emergence of an artwork informed by interactions with an ongoing understanding of the materials. On the other hand, the hylomorphic approach begins with an idea (or artist's vision) and consequent attempts to source the materials to create the artist's vision. Whilst Ingold opposes these approaches in an either/or way, with a definite preference for the morphogenetic, a question that became important in this research was whether

both might exist together, with one becoming dominant at different stages in the making process.

According to Ingold, the artist dedicated to the morphogenetic operates at the moment - in life as it occurs - and with material whose value emerges in the moment (through a learning process), *'… form is ever emergent rather than given in advance'* (2013: 25), whereas the hylomorphic artist applies value to the material beforehand (they seek out a resource to produce the vision) *'… where the maker already has a design for the material' (*2013: 21). In this scenario, the artist may have access to materials such as clay, ink, brushes, paper, and they would proceed to explore what can be made through their interactions with the material: can they bend this type of paper, how will it react to ink, to clay etc. This method of material inquiry involves an exchange between the maker and the materials and requires a questioning of the capability of the maker and the materials. Through this exchange process, form emerges, influenced by what the material can do. It relies heavily on the maker relinquishing sole control to the potential of the form (or final artwork).

For example, suppose the morphogenetic maker had a ball of clay. In that case, they might roll, squeeze, stretch, and press it into a new shape developed by each preceding interaction (not forgetting environmental forces also at play: temperature, humidity, light, sounds etc). In the hylomorphic scenario, the maker will have a preconceived idea or vision of what they want to make and then set out to find suitable material to best make that vision. There is little scope (if any) for the materials to influence the outcome of the creative process. This hylomorphic approach utilises material and works towards a preconceived vision through resourcing and construction. The morphogenetic method works with material to explore its potential through speculative pragmatic questioning of what/how else/can we be/make. While Ingold's clear distinctions between the hylomorphic and the morphogenetic are useful in setting up clear distinctions and characteristics of each 'type', I contend that an artist is likely to employ both approaches in their practice to varying degrees, as I shall demonstrate in later chapters through discussions of my artwork.

Indwelling

Returning to Kester's (2004) model for a dialogical aesthetic, putting the maker amongst the materials of everyday life, particularly the importance of listening and valuing the actions of others in their local context, brings us to ideas of indwelling, through resonance with Michael Polanyi's theory on tacit understanding *'… it is not by looking at things but by dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning'* (Polanyi 2009: 18). Ingold also identifies with this deep level of engagement with material as *'the artisan couples his own movements and gestures – indeed his very life – with the becoming of his materials, joining with and following the forces and flows that bring his work to fruition'* (2013: 31). Ingold is referring to the plasticity of materials such as clay or wood, but the idea of indwelling, and the synchronising of the artist's life with that of the materials (materials which I propose include people, place and/or environment) can also be applied to my own durational social art projects and to the very particular way of working I wish to champion in this thesis and in practice. In effect, when envisioned following Ingold's model, the social artist is tied with the context in the unfolding of life, attentive to minor gestures and everyday aesthetics through a temporal process of indwelling, effectively blurring the boundary between art and life.

The classic tension seen in Bishop v Kester, for example, between the two realms (of art and the social) suggests that the social artist, as a kind of skilful trickster, might operate in and somewhere in-between these two poles: flitting between art world conventions and everyday life, with an ability not only to mediate *'between and among spheres'* (Hyde 1998: 43), but also to disturb the boundaries between them.[6] This perpetual positioning and repositioning rests on relinquishing complete control over materials and instead demands of the artist *'an intelligence of contingency or the wit to work with happenstance'*.

[6] In his book *'Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth and Art'*, Hyde portrays a collection of mischief makers through the lives of historical and mythological characters, mostly whom, one way or another, have been able to transcend different worlds. Unsurprisingly, artists feature among these figures who dwell on the edges and demonstrate an urge to move back and forth, borrowing material from other worlds. However, and perhaps surprisingly it is the abolitionist Frederick Douglas, who for me resonates with social art practice, who as a slave chose not to indulge in weekend drinking (time allocated by the plantation owners), instead borrowing this time to educate himself, which eventually helped him to escape one world and ultimately change both, through the abolition of slavery.

Responding to unexpected situations on the fly, the artist is in a position of flux within an unravelling situation governed by active/vibrant material (Hyde 1998: 96).

Kester's tip-of-the-iceberg catchphrase is limited in delving into the materials of social art, despite helping as far as pointing out that there is much more to social art projects than their artefacts. A more suitable metaphor for registering the material of social art might relate the projects to the people, place and environment. The following sketch (Fig. 3), despite its simplicity, illustrates an artwork's potential relations with participants and place and offers scope to map the fleeting material of social art practice. Instead of the image of an iceberg, which suggests invisible, frozen and compacted matter, looking at social art as a system of roots connecting (literally) to the participants, environment and place portrays the art as alive, with the potential for further growth.

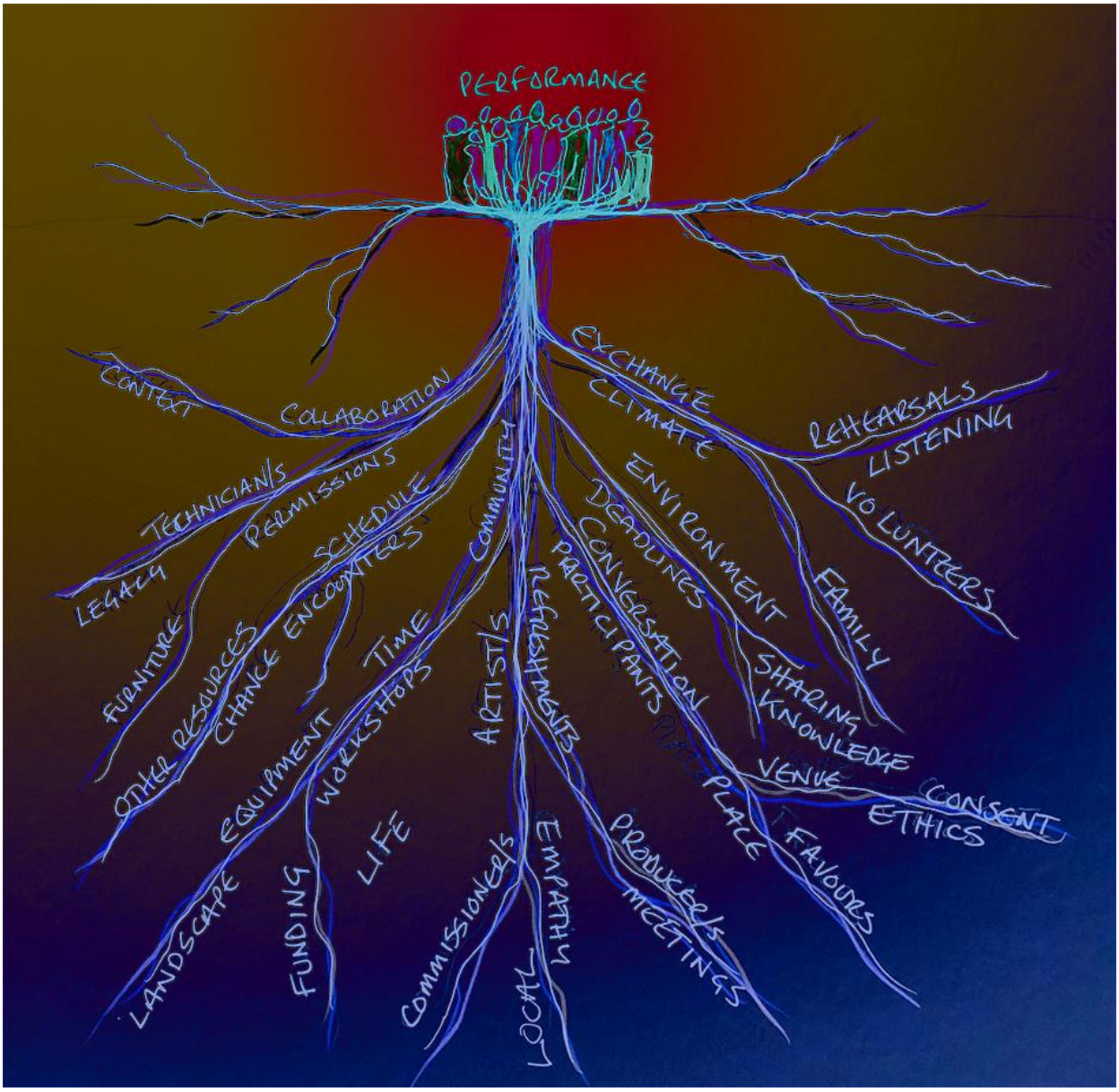

Fig. 3 Drawing of a basic root system for a performative artwork (Titley 2022).

As highlighted by Kester, the audience is privy to the performance but not to the extensive material below the surface. Throughout the thesis, I will revisit this notional system to help illustrate social art's often-unseen yet vitally vibrant material. These drawings help to reveal the intricate relations and an artists' attunement to the ecological system at a given moment. The drawings themselves are part of the methodology and emphasise the equity and materiality of a social art project. As becomes evident across the thesis, the more detail in the drawings, the more the system is brought to the forefront and takes on a qualitative dimension that is impossible to disentangle.

Methodology

My methodology falls primarily under the category of practice-based research. The focus is on the experience of chance and serendipitous encounters and the positive impact they can have on a social art project. While chance occurrences are random, serendipity occurs for me when I feel that I'm in the right place at the right time for the positive development of the social art project. Serendipitous encounters transform the project in some way, while chance encounters feel like they may benefit the project only on a short-term basis, i.e. the weather stays fine for a film shoot by chance, but the weather presenting an unusual light display while filming would be serendipitous.

This written part of my submission forms part of a reflection of this experience and serves as a way to communicate and share these ideas with others. It is just one aspect of a larger practice-led process that involves engaging with the world and allowing for serendipity to guide the research. The research also includes the actual experiences of chance encounters and the serendipitous relationships that result from them.

This methodology develops the notion of collaborative social art practice by questioning the theoretical binaries of artist/participant and control/freedom. Often in the social sciences, methodology comes first and is treated as the foundation from which congruent methods spring; in this research, because I already had many of the methods and practices in place, such an assumption was reversed. I investigated/looked deeply into the methods of my practice to understand better what their orientating approach - or methodology – was, to decide if this was appropriate for the research and its guiding questions, or not, and if so, to develop my methods and practices further. The methodology that emerged through this revelatory approach included an aesthetic openness to the materiality of everyday life and the potential of an aesthetic model that may, in a reciprocal movement, better account for the materiality of things in social art practice: registering the nuances of social art practice (as explored in *Chapter Four: Practice Consolidation*). The methods were the means used to put this aesthetic openness to work to pose/answer questions. Due to the emphasis on the practice leading me, it was necessary to

understand what deeper conceptual approaches these methods expressed. As Jane Bennett discusses in '*Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things'* (2010), this materiality is encompassed within and beyond the lives of people, and through this is proposing a non-hierarchical perception of humans and non-humans with the same level of vitality.[7] The methodology was revealed and developed through methods already active/used in my creative practice. It evolved further by recording my relations with things that revealed the materiality of my practice's physical and social relations, highlighting materiality as an animating and equalising method.[8]

I had been using dialogue and my embeddedness in the community and place before the research without really considering the deeper implications of this. The cycle of emergence began with my art practice in dialogue with the writing and ideas of Ingold (2013), Kester (2004), Manning (2016) and Saito (2017). The methodology that emerged through the research identified and enabled a closer look at the nuances of the material of my art practice; yielding useful new insights with research value beyond my practice. These nuances relate to the materiality of social art practice. They are illuminated by Bennett's philosophical project, which is a call to slow down the minds of modern humans long enough to see '*things*' differently. As explained further in *Chapter Four: [birdsong],* by using the method of digitally documenting my experiences, I was able to re-experience my encounters during the editing process and to stop and slow down time, albeit on a screen, to examine the nuances of my practice: a kind of multi-layered experiencing of the original encounter. While my space is digital, Bennett creates a conceptual space of estrangement in which one can see the vitality of the material and thereby appreciate and understand its materiality, agency and effect. This non-hierarchical approach towards material was the methodology underpinning the submitted film *[birdsong]* (2019), where I recorded my encounters with human and non-human affects; this was done not to control them or bend them

[7] This idea of non-hierarchical relationships between all things reflects current approaches to making social art, with many artists raising awareness to global ecological, environmental, and political issues as evident in world biennials such as Venice and Liverpool.
[8] Here I am talking about the effects of the material on the creative development of a given project, further discussion on this topic can be found in Chapter Four, section called [birdsong].

towards my artistic vision but to allow the materials in play to inform the creation of the film (discussed in detail in *Chapter Four)*.

Tim Ingold makes a similar but slightly different point to Bennett's about the artist working *with* materials who '*in the process of making [he] joins forces with them, bringing them together or splitting them apart, synthesising, and distilling, in anticipation of what might emerge'* (Ingold, 2013 p2). To work with material in this way, rather than imposing a vision upon it, aligns with Bennett's non-hierarchical approach in which the artist is situated alongside the material, or as Ingold might say, amongst the active materials. Ingold would also argue that *'it is not the form that makes the work, it is the engagement with materials'* (ibid, p22). Both Bennett's concept of matter and Ingold's modes of engagement identify a life force or agency of things. As explained in the thesis, it is this methodology that holds the art project together, driving it towards becoming a manifestation of the relational process, highlighting agency as a consequence of the sometimes-serendipitous coming-together of things. Ingold highlights two sides to materiality: one is a realist perception of physical matter, and the other relates to how humans engage with this physical matter. Bennett's project attempts to position all things on a more equitable level.

It is crucial that we move beyond simplistic notions of materials and instead adopt a more nuanced definition that incorporates the insights of Ingold and Bennet, and a more complex concept of materiality. Specifically, my work underscores the criticality of minor gestures coming together and non-extractive ways of working, which must be accorded their due attention. This approach emphasises the significance of chance encounters and serendipitous relationships, enabling a better understanding of the impact of materiality on our lives.

I have applied this methodology specifically to the serendipitous social encounters my research develops in the place where I live. This aims to create a greater sense of equity of liveness, which allows me to find the more-than-human equivalence between people, the weather, the environment, and serendipity, with my use of the term materiality in this research indicating this

specifically relational stance. It is about the equivalence between varied forms of being and, in this approach, sits close to Ingold's use of the term.

The methodology, as described above, emerged in the dialogue between these thinkers' stances and my own methods and ideas. I was able to develop between my ongoing research and Ingold's (2013) human correspondence '*with*' material; Bennett's (2010) activation of inert things; Erin Manning's (2016) minor gestures in a state of becoming; and Yuriko Saito's (2017) everyday aesthetics. These became important reference points for the development of my methodology because they see agency as belonging to more than human forces, and the thinking they expound allowed me to see my social art practice in the world in new ways: as being more than human-centric. My research takes this further by bringing thinking about material together in the crucible of artistic practice-led research to form a new model for social art practice through ethical and non-extractive ways of working with the materiality of things. An example of this is discussed more in Chapter Two in The *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* project. Through my growing sensitivity to the materialities of all participants, human and non-human, my ability to negotiate ownership changed over time.

While the methodology I am exploring and developing here is open to change, it should not be mistaken for a passive approach. Serendipity can occur all the time, but this is the case precisely because I recognise that things are relevant through intuitive attentiveness and by attuning to the materiality of the situation. This tuning-in involves understanding, skill, knowledge, and sensitivity, which is important to cultivate when working in this way continually. The more I tune into the materiality of things, the more they reciprocate that communication through a cyclical reverberation or resounding. When I tune into things, they start reverberating, and things come back to me, growing and manifesting as artwork. For that to work, I have to allow myself to be changed, and I have to be adaptable and flexible enough to recognise that previous decisions might be wrong. These attuned reverberations attributed to the methodology and made it possible, for example, to recognise a fortuitous opportunity to further my research when Suzanne Lacy began a residency in my neighbourhood. It wasn't a case study that fell into my lap; it was the ability

to recognise the value of participating in a prestigiously recognised artists' project in *my* place, the place where I have lived all my life, the place of this research, where the other participants dwell, a place full of meaning created from my dwelling and participating there as an artist over many years.

My methodological approach to social practice is informed by my longstanding emphasis on collaboration, co-creation, empathy, and community engagement. I believe involving the community in every step of the process is essential to creating impactful and sustainable projects. Additionally, I place a strong emphasis on building relationships and gaining a deep understanding of a particular community before creating projects. In terms of the practice as a whole, the thesis emphasises that effective social practice requires a methodological approach that prioritises community involvement, empathy, and understanding. The thesis also highlights the importance of creating projects that are not only impactful but also sustainable via non-extractive methods, i.e. empowering participants to utilise projects in ways that are meaningful to them.

The serendipitous coming together of the material in everyday situations is an openness not only of myself to the world but also of other humans and non-humans to each other in that place. It's fascinating to consider the role of chance and serendipity in our everyday lives, especially when it comes to our interactions with others in a particular place. Whether it's a chance encounter on the street, a serendipitous conversation in a coffee shop, or a random meeting at a local event, these unexpected moments of connection can have a profound impact on our lives. As a site where people intersect randomly, a place can be a rich source of inspiration and creative energy, fostering new ideas, collaborations, and relationships that might not have otherwise been possible. By embracing the unexpected and staying open to the serendipitous possibilities that arise from chance encounters, we can expand our horizons and enrich our lives in ways we never thought possible. Central to my way of working is the sustained embeddedness in the place, which is crucial to the culturing of this capacity to recognise serendipitous material.

More broadly, my methodology was qualitative. It incorporated literature reviews, techniques of ethnography, participation, and making, together combining into an inductive, iterative approach that emerged through the pursuit of the research and the creation of new artworks using digital video and personal field notes/diaries to capture and reflect on the intersubjective experiences of making social art sensitively with people, place and environmental influences. As such, the methodology was underpinned by an ethics of care not only for the human participants but also for the places and the environments[9] in which the artworks were made: each participant was given a consent form to sign and return, which explained the nature of the research and their choice to withdraw from the projects at any point and to be consulted upon editing of artworks on the release of finished works. Much of the initial design of the research and the critical analysis of my own and others' social art practice is informed by the studies of art theorists and critics, as covered above in this chapter, with gaps in understanding social art practice identified from the perspective of the artist out in the field.

My methodology is underpinned by what has also been referred to as research creation: it is speculative, open to emergent concepts, and relies on me to think in the moment. Research creation is aligned with my practice in its attuning to processes rather than the final artwork or outcome (Springgay, 2023). It requires me to reflect upon my creative process and to do this effectively, I have attempted to capture some of my reflections and insights through the medium of film, personal journals, and field notes to compare my experiences as lead artist on four projects, and in addition as a participant myself in two other international artists' projects. Using this qualitative and artistic methodology allowed me to reveal the ephemeral yet vibrant material of the social art I am involved in making and wish to espouse. Following this approach, I gained many insights and knowledge about the research questions through making (by doing). My making methods allowed me to shuttle between

[9] The way that many contemporary artists have engaged/used with their material is reflective of contemporary society and its utilization of the planet's resources. Recent history points to an almost global hylomorphic use of materials: from fossil fuels to toxic pesticides and single-use plastics. This research has the potential to impact not only on contemporary arts practice but also on the sustainable relationship with all material on the planet.

immersion and reflection, proximity and distance and, in dialogue with the literature and artistic practice of other social artists I reviewed, these methods being key to obtaining a critical perspective. Delivering projects in the town where I was born and dwell meant focusing on live works-in-progress, passing through time and space in sync with my own life, and evolving through chance encounters, serendipitous relationships and often unpredictable situations.

This methodology is a non-hierarchical approach to working with place and people and considers the physical and sociological attributes of a site's unique characteristics, future potential, and ability to inspire open-ended creative projects through a series of methodological encounters and experiences. The attitudes and processes involved in this work – from first impressions to face-to-face interactions, from project completion to a project evaluation – all support the integral theme of social engagement and recognise that places take on many personalities over time through a combination of external factors, internal effects, past histories, and unplanned interactions. This work involves equal parts reflection and observation to gather material for development; collaboration with individuals and organisations; group discussions; foresight sessions; workshops; design tasks (such as sketching ideas); objective research; hypothesis testing; documenting findings; publishing results; networking with insiders, outsiders, experts, amateurs, and authorities; sharing information with the public; keeping records of activities; following up after the conclusion of the project.

Within the realm of social art, chance and serendipity are essential components of the creative process. By centring the methodology around a particular 'place', the emphasis is placed on the convergence of individuals at fortuitous moments, which can ultimately lead to unforeseen and successful collaborations (see the section on place p.43) The uncertainty of chance encounters can cultivate a sense of inspiration and inspire new perspectives and methods that may have been unattainable otherwise. This particular approach to social art highlights the significance of being receptive to unforeseen interactions and the significance of creating opportunities for serendipitous encounters. By embracing chance and serendipity, the resulting endeavours can be more dynamic, inclusive, and impactful.

This methodology proposes a new model for social art that emphasises openness, ethics, non-extraction, dialogical development, questions of temporality, non-hierarchy, proximity to material, qualitative relationships, collaborative participation, and sensing the materiality of projects. The model recognises the critical role of chance encounters leading to serendipitous relationships in social art practice and prioritizes non-extractive ways of working that emphasise a deep understanding of the materiality of things. It advocates for respectful and thoughtful approaches to interacting with the world that recognize the distinctiveness of different social art practices while also recognizing their connections to art world conventions and the habits of social artists. My methodology suggests that successful social practice requires a thoughtful and ethical approach that is open to the unexpected and recognises the agency of all materialities.

New model

As outlined in the methodology section, the new model is designed to foster a culture of openness towards social aesthetics, self-transformation, chance and serendipity. It strongly emphasises nurturing ethical relationships with all material, observing life and things without extracting from them, and developing through informal/casual conversation. Time is a crucial factor in this process as it allows for reflection and the use of digital technology to revisit experiences, effectively slowing down my perception process and enabling an objective view of one's relationships. The model recognises the agency of all material and emphasises the importance of being embedded in the community/place while promoting one-to-one, face-to-face relationships and collaborative participation with other people. Finally, sensing is a crucial aspect of the model, as it encourages not just listening to human dialogue but also paying attention to the ambience of a place.

The idea of a transferable model for social art is alluring, but some reservations arise when I consider what that could mean. On the one hand, I want to have parameters to structure and better understand the potential impact of my projects; on the other hand, strictly adhering to a model can be constraining. That is why I propose an approach underpinned by an ethical ethos that

considers all materialities involved, human and non-human. This kind of project would have no fixed end date, but rather, it would join the dynamic liveness already unfolding within the place (see Fig. 4). [10]

Moreover, this approach has no singular focus, and it is open to evolving according to all sorts of encounters with the site, not just those that are visible or the loudest. Keeping this in mind allows me to recognise that all things present have a role to play in the future direction of a given project.

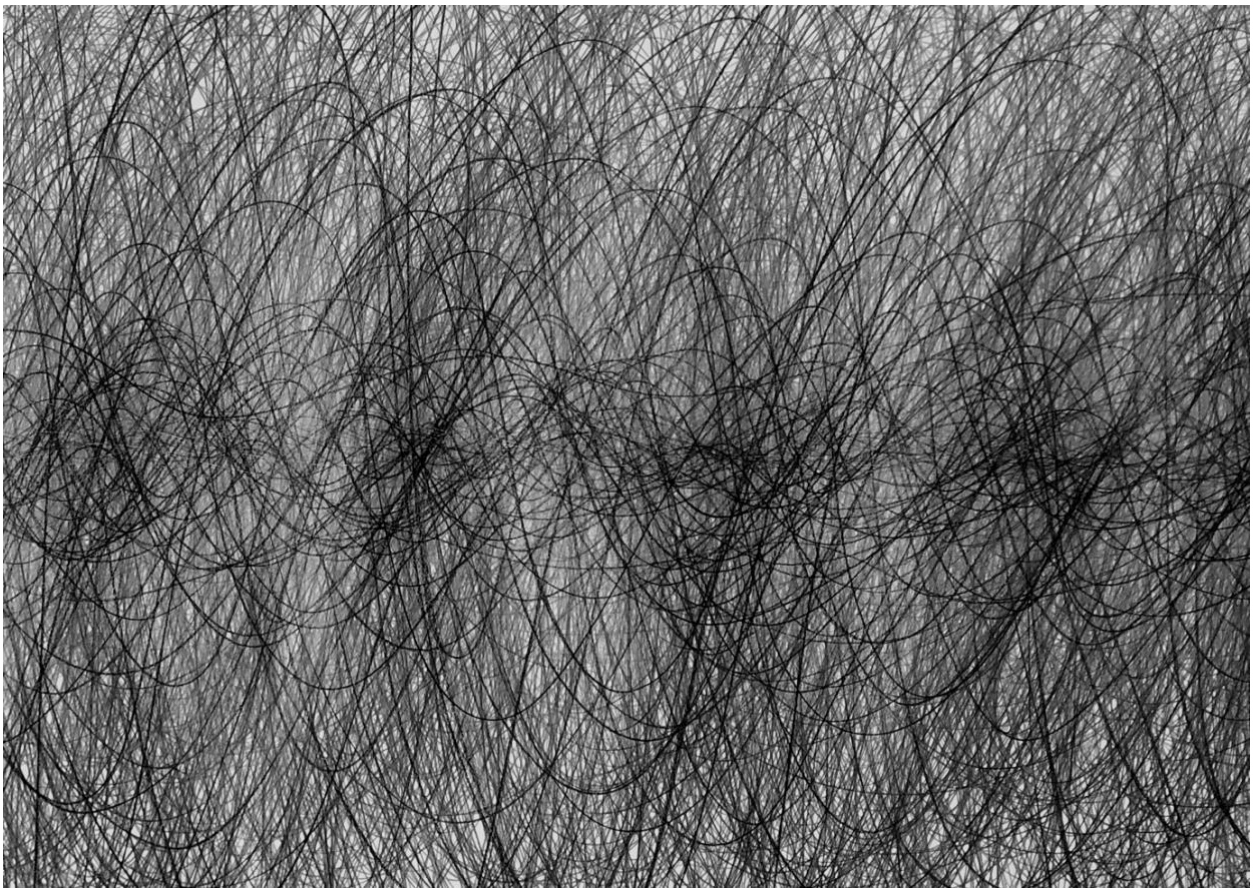

Fig. 4 The dynamic liveness already unfolding within the place: Pencil/Paper 90x60cms (Titley 2023)

The thesis highlights the critical role of chance encounters and serendipitous relationships in proposing a new model. The model prioritises non-extractive ways of working and emphasises a deep understanding of ‘materiality’, emphasising the importance of even the smallest gestures coming together. It encourages engagement with the world in a way that is aware of the impact of materiality on our lives. In conclusion, this model advocates for a respectful

[10] Fig. 4 characterizes the ecological system by its fractal nature and the magnification allows for a more detailed observation.

and thoughtful approach to interacting with the world that cannot be overstated.

In proposing this new model in the thesis, I consider how it can recognise the distinctiveness of my own and other social art practices, which, while they are distinct from each other, are also connected by art world conventions and the social artists' habits of moving between the spheres of art and life, thus agitating the boundaries by proximity to everyday life.

Aims, objectives & research questions.

The aims, objectives and research questions formulated as part of this quest - and which I will return to at various points in the thesis are as follows:

Aims

- To identify and explore the potential of the material, often overlooked in social art practice.
- To explore the potential of ethical social aesthetics.
- To reveal and rethink binary approaches underpinning social art practice by examining my making process.

Objectives

- Compare two approaches to making social art.
- Reveal my social art material and creative process through making new social artwork.

Research questions

- Given that the components of Kester's aesthetic model acknowledge the existence of durational social encounters with not just people but also place and environment, what is the significance of these 'materials' for social art practice?
- How do these materials become part of what the social artist and participants do, and what is their impact?
- How might we recognize, record and utilize this potentially significant material?

- How does this new model help to bridge Kester's (2004) dialogical model of aesthetics in the face of Claire Bishop's (2012) concerns regarding the impact of ethics upon creative freedom?

The use of previous and new artworks

As an artist, I think through making. I made new artwork as part of my research practice; as such, these works represent the development of my thinking and are integral to the research.

Using original documentation, I also present a work made before the research, *Demolition Street* (2004), which locates my practice before the PhD and sets up a context for my research into what constitutes the material of social art. Whilst the artwork itself is not being submitted for the PhD, the analysis of it is new and relevant and forms part of the thesis. This is followed by The *Gentlemen's Wardrobe (2016)*, a commission that involved me in working with men who cared for a loved one at home. This project took place during the early stages of my research. It became an opportunity to explore some of the questions raised in my previous practice around the artist as a participant, to test the effectiveness of reflective diaries/journals, and define new questions around the representation of participants in the final artwork. The idea of attempting to represent all the participants in the final artwork is explored directly in the third project, *Time Machine (2017)*. Using popular music and memory to explore notions of place, this interactive sculpture, made from an old jukebox, represented each participant by engaging with a tacit understanding of place and making visible a collective memory, which extended to include the audience and the participants. For the fourth project, I made an experimental film, which explored the potential of a new ethical-social aesthetic, using a variant or synthesis of Ingold's two approaches to making, hylomorphic and morphogenetic: becoming hylo-morphogenetic. The feature-length moving image artwork *[birdsong]* (2019) demonstrates how I shuttled between the two approaches and was influenced by the thinking of Kester (2004), Ingold (2013), Saito (2016), Bennett (2010) and Manning

(2017) to explore and reveal the branching and rooting materials of my social art practice.

The three artworks being formally submitted as part of this research are listed below, and for further details regarding when and where they were exhibited and for additional documentation, please see Appendix A: *Exhibitions*.

- ***The Gentleman's Wardrobe*** (2016) Interactive sculpture, see Chapter Two. Sample video (5:54mins) can be found at https://youtu.be/XRKyqCcG07k
- ***Time Machine*** (2017) Interactive sculpture, see Chapter Two. Sample video (3:18) can be found at https://youtu.be/q3PgVfcYZEc
- ***[birdsong]*** (2019) film 1:12:09, see Chapter Four. The complete artwork can be found at https://youtu.be/q3PgVfcYZEc

Participation

I employed participatory methods to experience first-hand two different approaches to making within social art practice (which I characterise initially following Ingold's models of hylomorphic and the morphogenetic).

Internationally recognised social artist Suzanne Lacy was commissioned to make *Shapes of Water – Sounds of Hope (SOSWOH:* 2016/17) in my neighbourhood and with my local community while conducting my PhD research. My experience of participation in SOWSOH raised questions about my own and other artists' practices, and this then led me to visit and participate in another international project at a different site and with a different community, namely Project Row Houses (PRH), Houston, Texas (2018). While participating in PRH, I experienced a different approach to working with the materials of social art that resonated with my way of working.

In addition to participating in SOWSOH and PRH, I use the term participant/s to refer to people I have worked with during my social art projects since the

late 1990s. *'The Ladder of Participation'* (Arnstein, 1969)[11] (Fig. 5) suggested eight different levels (rungs) of participation: from the lowest rungs indicating non-participation and manipulation through tokenism to the top rungs of citizen power involving partnerships and complete citizen control. In her book *'Artificial Hells'*, Claire Bishop points out the inadequacies of Arnstein's Ladder when applied to art practice, reminding the reader that art is sometimes inconsistent, absurd, ironic, contradictory, illogical, impossible, enigmatic, and puzzling. Bishop suggests that the ladder diagram *'falls short of corresponding to the complexity of artistic gestures* (Bishop 2012: 280).

[11] Sherry Arnstein, writing in 1969 about citizen involvement in planning processes in the United States, described a “ladder of citizen participation” that showed participation ranging from high to low. See Sherry R. Arnstein’s “A Ladder of Citizen Participation,” Journal of the American Planning Association, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224 (www.citizenhandbook.org 2022)

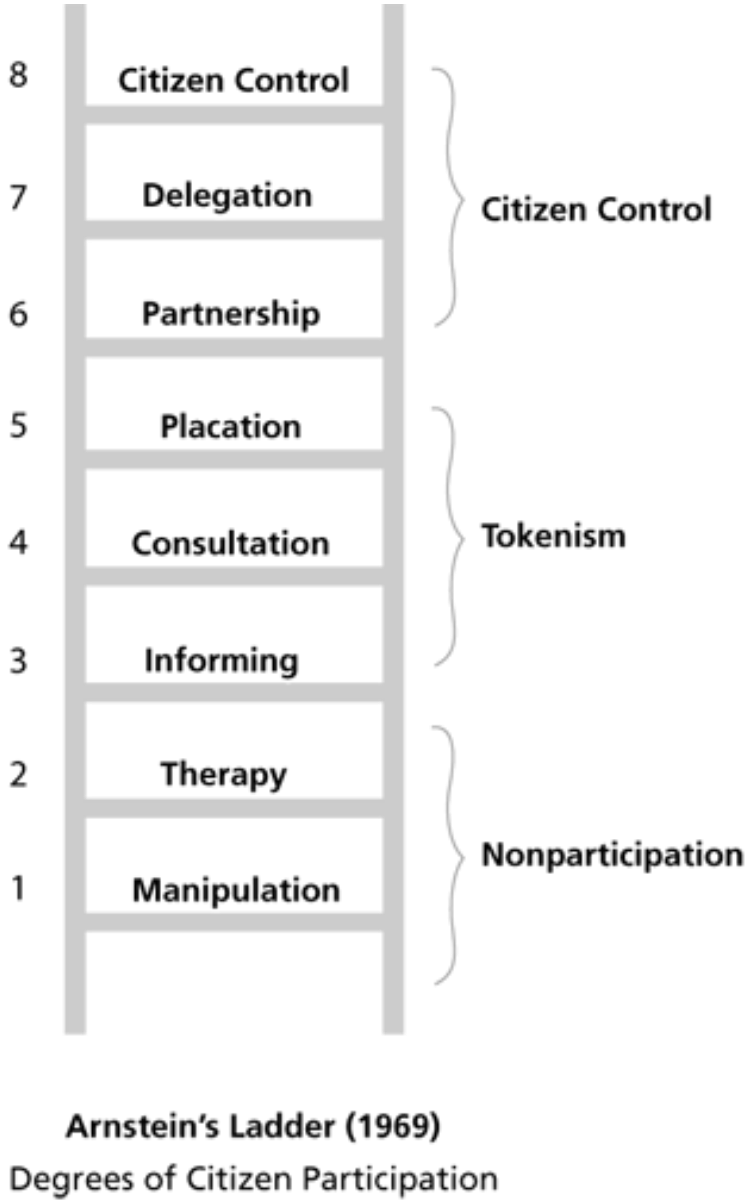

Fig. 5 Arnstein's Ladder from the website www.citizenshandbook.org (2022)

Another perspective on participation can be found in Pablo Helguera's *'Education for Socially Engaged Artists'*. Proposed as a '*tentative taxonomy',* Helguera simplifies the term and locates his condensed notion of participation firmly in contemporary social art practice (Helguera, 2011:14).

1. Nominal Participation – contemplative, passive.
2. Directed Participation – encouraged to do tasks.
3. Creative Participation – visitor provides content.
4. Collaborative Participation – shared responsibilities.

(Helguera, 2011:14-15)

Helguera's forms of participation relate to my understanding of social art practice as he points out that the first two tend to happen in a *single encounter* while the second two tend to occur over longer periods and that neither of the forms is more *successful* (*or desirable*) than the others (Helguera, 2011:15). For me, Helguera's taxonomy accounts for the durational experiences with participants in my projects and how participants contribute and collaborate in the sense that they often direct the project, either directly or indirectly through their presence and inter/actions in and with the place. While I agree with Bishop that art needs freedom to be '*inconsistent, absurd, ironic, contradictory, illogical, impossible, enigmatic, and/or puzzling*', I also believe that it is still possible for this to happen through creative participatory means: to participate is not in opposition to these qualities, or about necessarily protecting the participants from these qualities (as can be seen in my participation in Suzanne Lacy's project in Chapter Three) (Bishop 2012: 280).

An issue with the material

Material is the term I use to indicate seemingly insignificant things, often fleeting material that, before this research, I overlooked or considered to be insignificant, which this research drew my attention to. I use the term materiality as a complex and multi-faceted concept that encompasses the interactions and relationships between materials and our world. It goes beyond the physical objects themselves and includes the social and non-extractive ways of working that highlight the importance of these connections. This thesis argues that materiality can potentially influence the direction of the creative process and can include people, memories, the weather, light, chance (and serendipitous) encounters, conversation, temperature, environmental features, architectural features, landscape, foliage, animals, a sense of place etc. As explained in the methodology, this way of understanding and defining the material of social art is arrived at through the developing research practice and in dialogue with Jane Bennett's theory of vibrant matter (2010), Erin Manning's descriptions of minor gestures (2017), and Tim Ingold's description of creative materials in the process of making (2013). This material definition is dealt with in most depth (in chapters three and four). Identifying ephemeral material of a social kind was a complex process, not only because of its fleeting nature but also because I

was deeply involved in *event time*, described by Manning as'*… the nonlinear lived duration of experience in the making',* which for the social artist is the immediate present where '…*the minor gesture tunes the event to what it can do'* (Manning 2016: 14-15). The artist is in and amongst the fleeting; they are part of the active material being observed, and Manning aligns that experience with autistic perception,[12] making it difficult *'to parse the field of experience'* (2017: 14). The challenge of objectively perceiving my subjective social relations was exacerbated by my neurodiversity, which was diagnosed during the latter stages of the research.[13]

Employing digital media to video my encounters, while not fully resolving the impossibility of simultaneously being in the moment and observing it, did enable reflective analysis after the moment had passed, enough to reveal and explore the materiality of my social art. The digital recordings, while proving useful for close inspection and analysis of my creative process, were also integral to producing the artwork film *'[birdsong]*' (2019), discussed further in Chapter Four.

Place

'Places are at once the medium and the message of cultural life. They are where cultures, communities and people root themselves and give themselves definition' (Anderson, 2010, p.37). Anderson explains that what the actors do (both human and non-human) makes places, imbuing them meaningfully. This research is deeply connected to where the artworks were conceived, as a site where humans and other materials overlap randomly, working with the materiality of those relations. For example, while my network of friends and family acts as an initial representation of the community, this mesh of

[12] A way of experiencing the whole before registering individual details such as objects, people that make up the whole situation. The process of registering is referred to as chunking, which occurs much quicker in non-neurodiverse people, however on the autistic spectrum '…there is an essential time-lapse between the direct perception of the emergent ecology and the actual taking form of objects and subjects in its midst (2017: 112).

[13] I was officially diagnosed with ADHD, caused by the limited processing speed of my working memory. This means that when my working memory becomes full of information (it happens quickly) my attention span diminishes consequently, and it takes me longer to process information. My diagnosis (in my sixth year of the part-time PhD) enabled me to trace its impact on my personal development since childhood, and across the following chapters the neurodiversity might also be reflective of the development of my creative process.

connections soon extends and grows through the people I know, knowing others I don't yet know, and so on.

As discussed in Chapter Two, my lifetime of dwelling in one place is fundamental to developing the methodology. A lifetime in one place has enabled a significant depth of material engagement – a collaboration with friends and family through informal/casual invitations to participate and the development of a project through dialogical processes and random encounters with the materiality of my place. As pointed out above, my ability to work with the serendipitous nature of social art is energised by my proximity to the people and the location. I dwell amidst the material, and I can mediate and reciprocate the repercussions of my practice, enabling me to act more nimbly than someone not having lived there for over 50 years (examined further in Chapter Four).

I employ a humanistic geography interpretation of place to indicate somewhere endowed with meaning, developed from experiences of that place, the parts of which include landmark buildings or topographical features. In the case of my research, examples of this include the town hall clock, the steep cobbled streets, and nearby Pendle Hill. These features contribute to the overall image and sense of place and make up the environment of everyday life. In the context of this thesis, my social art practice occurs in the borough of Pendle in East Lancashire. My concept of place is influenced by Christian Norberg-Schulz's theories on human interaction (through dwelling) with the landscape, consequently connecting with the genius loci (the spirit of the place) (Norberg-Schultz 1998: 36). Given that I make art (and usually exhibit) in the place where I and most of the participants have lived for decades, the genius loci is revealed through my artwork *[birdsong]* (2019), which informs part of the thesis (Chapter Four and the submitted film).

Making work in the place where I live means that almost all the participants had some resonance with me as a resident. I employed a dialogical process, which could be a more carefully considered strategy. It is a natural form of interaction with my place, going about my everyday business and chatting with people I met in shops, cafes, etc. I captured as much of the social aspects of

my practice as possible and revealed the ephemeral qualities of my relations, the materiality. The recordings helped to alleviate the challenge of reflecting on the direct experience when I was otherwise in the event and helped to produce an emotional distancing from the original experience. The recordings helped to pinpoint critical moments where I reflected on the data (post-event) and revealed aspects of social art from my perspective.

Proximity

The advantages of being fundamentally local include a familiarity with the landscape and the community: I worked with friends, family and acquaintances.[14] However, I was also aware of the disadvantages of being objective about my experiences; thus, the data recordings helped me step back and observe what I thought had happened. As Heather Davis points out, employing friendship as a method can positively and negatively impact working with people. On the one hand, it has the potential to create *'ties across differences to create new and vibrant worlds', a*nd on the other hand, it is susceptible to *'glossing over, forgiving, or overlooking oppressive acts, words, gestures'* (Davis 2015: 3). With that in mind, I have attempted to be honest in my diary reflections and critical of my observations.

Throughout the thesis, I strive to investigate the possibilities of a novel aesthetic model that acknowledges the value of seemingly insignificant things and fleeting moments within social art, which can impact the trajectory of a creative journey and ultimately shape the form of an artwork. This way of working is a valid contribution to the understanding of social art practice and is not always reliant on validation from the wider art world; instead, it is validated by the community and participants in the place it was made. [15]

Thesis chapter descriptions

The thesis proposes a paradigm shift in understanding around the materiality and aesthetics of social art practice, and it does this over this introduction, the

[14] Please see Appendix H. for more information on the participants' relationship to me and the place in the project called *[birdsong]* 2019 (Chapter Four).
[15] The places where I have exhibited/performed include empty houses, demolition sites, community centers, libraries, a bedsit, common/park land, public footpaths, a cotton mill basement, Town Hall, and a pop-up cinema.

three following chapters and a conclusion.

Chapter Two. Practice development: towards a new social art aesthetic.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a context through which to understand my art practice. The chapter is in two parts and maps the development of my artistic interests leading to PhD research, which consequently impacted my social art practice. I do this in Part One by recollecting early memories of art, social, and local landscapes, and then in Part Two by examining three of my relatively recent social art projects. The last two projects in this chapter (*Gentlemen's Wardrobe* 2016 and *Time Machine* 2017) are submitted as part of this research. Influenced by the thinking of Kester (2004), the two artworks help to identify key aspects of my progressive social art process, evolving from initial explorations into themes of displacement and on to a more focused creative inquiry of the types of material available to the social artist. The projects introduced me to the potential of allowing the participants to move from 'subjects' of the work to collaborators. I talk about this concerning the *Gentleman's Wardrobe,* which is the first point I see the hylo/morpho distinction playing out.

Chapter Three. **Practice analysis: the hylomorphic and the morphogenetic**.

In this chapter, I reveal further the hylomorphic and morphogenetic from my perspective as a participant by defining their characteristics as social art approaches and reflecting on what they make possible, what their value is, and relating this to the broader field of social art practice and theory so other artists and artist-scholars can use it. I present an examination of my participation in two artist projects: Project Row Houses (PRH) by Rick Lowe (2018) and Shapes of Water-Sounds of Hope (SOWSOH) by Suzanne Lacy (2016). By participating in and observing the nuances of the social art practice of these artists, I offer a closer inspection of what I come to argue are two radically different attitudes and ethical approaches towards the materials of social practice, elements of both that I seek to incorporate into my practice. I do this through the lens of Tim Ingold's hylomorphic and morphogenetic (2013) and Erin Manning's thinking around minor gestures (2017).

Chapter Four. **Practice consolidation: [birdsong]**.

In this chapter, I explore further the creative potential of what I have defined as the material of social art upon the development of a final artwork in a social project and its effect from a position embedded within the emergence of a project called *[birdsong].*[16] I examine the extent to which this potential can be achieved by combining hylomorphic and morphogenetic approaches to making and using field notes to reflect on my intersubjective experiences. I conclude that the film models one way to bring the often lost and intimate relational elements of social art practice into the completed artwork. *[birdsong]* was the culmination of my PhD research, drawing on Ingold's hylomorphic and morphogenetic approaches to making, Kester's dialogical aesthetic model (how the context of place might transform an artwork), and the potential of Saito's familiar aesthetics to make visible the everyday lives of participants through the identification and presentation of Bennett's vibrant matter and Manning's minor gestures, through an intuitive and intimate meshwork of collaborative relations with people and place.

Chapter 5. Conclusion.

Reinstating the research aims and objectives, I present the research findings concerning questions raised throughout the thesis. I conclude by highlighting a shift in social arts practice and calling for a new social-ethical aesthetic, which considers the often-forgotten nuances of the material of social art. I end with evidence of this shift towards a more morphogenetic approach to working with the materiality of social art.

[16] While this position was not unusual for me, it was the first time I had experienced it with a critical eye.

Chapter Two: Practice development: towards a new social art aesthetic

This chapter aims to reveal something about the proximity and ongoing relations I have had with my community and the place I live and work in (since 1966). I present the development of my sense of art and place, beginning with my first experiences at school, then through further education, and into the development of professional practice including two projects made as part of the PhD research (*Gentlemen's Wardrobe*, 2016 and *Time Machine*, 2017).

The chapter provides a context through which to understand my art practice, by briefly mapping the development of my sense of place, community, and art and its impact on my social art practice. I begin by recollecting my early memories of art, social and local landscapes, and then pay close attention to three of my social arts projects, the first, *Demolition Street* (2004) carried out before the PhD research began, and then *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* (2016) and *Time Machine* (2017), each made during the PhD research period and submitted as part of the thesis. Together, the three projects help to identify key aspects of a progressive social art process, evolving from initial explorations into themes of displacement, and on to a more focused creative inquiry of the material potentially available to the social artist.

The chapter is structured in two parts. Part One begins with a brief anecdote of an early artistic experience, which, while seemingly unimportant at the time, resonates with my conceptual framework, by revealing to me in hindsight something of the material of art. The sharing of memories from my personal life – while reflective of my overall methodology and the projects in this chapter – also aims to reveal something of my deep-rootedness to the place where I live and make art.

Part Two maps the development of my artistic practice through a process of making, immediately before starting, and during the earlier parts of the PhD. This is done first through revisiting and reflecting on *Demolition Street* [17]

[17] Demolition Street (2004) was revisited as an exhibition in June 2015, just before starting the PhD in August.

(2004), second by adopting diaristic methods to record my social art process and revealing the artist as a vulnerable participant in a social art commission during the early stages of the PhD called *Gentlemen's Wardrobe*, and third by making an artwork informed by the previous two projects called *Time Machine*, which explores the idea of making visible more of the social art material within the final artwork, rather than treating the final artwork as entirely removed from that material.

Part One. Remembering place

I live in the borough of Pendle[18] and my earliest memories of the moorland landscape come from being part of an annual ritual of walking from my home to Pendle Hill. On Good Fridays[19] in the 1970s, members of the local Church communities, of which I and my 5 brothers and sisters were part, would take a simple picnic of boiled eggs and Hot Cross Buns and walk the rolling hills through fields, villages and along riverbanks to the top of the hill, setting off early morning and returning late evening. This local tradition is still practised today and if you were to venture up the hill over the Easter period these days you would see the addition of a large wooden crucifix chained to the Trig Point at the summit, where local reverends deliver their sermons on Good Friday. They take symbolic ownership of the highest point in the borough by installing the crucifix for the whole of Holy Week and beyond: effectively extending their presence, and ownership of the hill.[20]

Those long walks[21], exploring the local countryside were a welcome escape from the poverty experienced by most families in my neighbourhood. I was too young to remember any sense of it being a religious occasion. For me, it was all about the adventure of the journey; navigating the various footpaths/roads, knocking on the doors of farmhouses or in villages for a drink of water, testing one's ability to jump across streams, finding a good walking stick (and sword) and sharing the adventure with family and friends. It became so embedded in my mind that long after I had stopped attending church, I still went '*up Pendle'* as a teenager with friends on Good Friday. Today the hill continues to hold that

[18] The Borough of Pendle (Post-industrial East Lancashire, population 92K) gets its name from the local landmark Pendle Hill (557 meters above sea level), which dominates the western skyline of the borough. I was born and raised in a nearby market town called Colne (often referred to as 'Bonnie Colne on yonder hill'), which is positioned on top of a much smaller hill (190 meters), 5 miles away (as the crow flies) on the eastern edge of the borough. The town sits between two parallel valleys running east to west: the North Valley which is a main artery for traffic bypassing the town centre on the hill, and the South Valley, which has been undergoing urban/industrial regeneration of various sorts since the 1960s. Travelling West takes traffic further into Lancashire and travelling East immediately crosses the border into North Yorkshire.

[19] Good Friday is a Christian holiday commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus and his death at Calvary and is observed during the holy week of Easter.

[20] A relatively recent addition to the annual pilgrimage: a few weeks before the crucifix is installed at the top of Pendle Hill, one may witness it being dragged around the borough by a man; it has little wheels at the bottom to protect it from damage and conjures a powerful image of the Christ and the cross.

[21] Approximately 12 miles there and back.

same attraction for many members of the community and is something revealed inadvertently in the artwork '*[birdsong]*' (Chapter Four).

Remembering those first trips up the hill also takes me back to a parallel event at school, which perhaps signifies the beginning of another adventure; one into the world of art. I was at that age (8-9 years old) when teachers at primary school used to ask, *'what do you want to be when you grow up?*' I remember wanting to be a 'space man'; just the idea of being able to float about appealed to me. But something happened at school, which immediately changed my career ambitions; I won a school competition for a mural design, to be painted on the schoolyard wall. I stayed in the classroom at *'playtime'* for a week to complete the drawing of a T-Rex wrestling with a Triceratops at the edge of a clifftop.

I remember being disappointed at the painted version of my pencil drawing. The teacher and his assistants (older children) painted it using bright primary colours, with sections of the animals in different colours, which made them look like they were wearing colourful sweaters. In hindsight, I guess I struggled with the fact that I didn't own the project: I may have made the initial drawing, but I didn't control what happened next in the process of it becoming a schoolyard mural, I was evicted from the project. I had invested a lot of playtimes in producing a finely detailed pencil drawing, only to see it reduced to simple outlines, filled in with blocks of garish colours.

Is it possible that a childhood experience – almost fifty years ago – impacted directly upon my artistic practice today? The event can be aligned with the theories in this thesis, particularly around the idea of participation, and materials. My pencil drawing was perceived (understandably, and perhaps inadvertently) by the teacher as material for the school mural project, together with the paint, paint brushes, student assistants, the wall, and the school yard, but to my younger self, the drawing itself was the art. For the teacher, the drawing was a means to an end, as a resource towards completing the mural (artwork), whereas I saw my drawing as the ending (as the completed artwork), to be transferred as accurately as possible to the wall. My concept of art and my approach to the school yard project was dominated by the end result, with

my understanding of materials limited to the commonplace understanding of the pencils and paints used to make marks. The question of what we mean by materials links to my current practice. What does my material consist of today, how do I engage with it, and what does that say about social art practice? However, regardless of my initial concept of art at that time, the experience of my participation being eclipsed nevertheless imbued me with the ambition (and confidence) as a 9-year-old to bravely proclaim that I wanted '*to be an artist when I grow up'*.

I was a 'fine art' or 'modern' artist rather than a 'contemporary' artist of the times, with my fixed design made available to being implemented by the teacher and his assistants, even if that was a shock to me when it happened. The teacher himself was also in the same mode, particularly regarding the style of how he would transfer the drawing as a simplified line drawing onto the wall, in the style of a child's colouring-in book. Perhaps if he had explained how it was going to be transformed, rather than transferred then I might have been prepared for it. Or maybe he did explain, and I didn't listen? Either way, there was at that moment, my first glimpse of being part of a creative process rather than being solely responsible for a work of art. The mural was a community work of art, made possible by the availability of materials under the guidance of the teacher. We can recognise the materials as the wall (bricks/mortar, and permissions), paint colours/brushes (funded or donated), my drawing (cartridge paper, pencil, tracing paper, dinosaur picture book, sacrificing my playtime to draw, other children also drawing at playtime etc.), the mural assistants (pupil volunteers), the teacher/s (commissioners, directors, producers), and the process (the competition and selection of a drawing to be used as the mural, and it's transformation onto the wall of the yard).

In the 80s, and despite my earlier proclamation to be an artist, I spent the final years of senior school playing truant, wandering the countryside, birdwatching and hiding behind bookshelves in my local library, researching natural history. Art was still part of my life, albeit more in the way of a teenage rebellious streak as I would draw tattoo designs on desks (and tattoo my school peers during playtime), and paint pop music imagery onto my bedroom walls. I left school at 16 to work my way through various jobs: from barman to builder, and eventually

settling down with a job working in the aerospace industry[22] where through books I eventually rekindled my artistic interests.

Towards an education

It was during those 8/12-hour shifts in the aerospace factory that I started reading again, but instead of bunking off work to hide in the library, I smuggled books from the library into work (to read while waiting for a machine to finish its 30-minute automated process). After 11 years of automated employment (and reading), I had managed to complete two years in Further Education (first a B-Tec and then a Foundation: both in Art & Design), followed by the first two years of a degree while operating the machine, with the help of a string of sympathetic line managers.[23] I left to complete my final year of a BA (Hons) Fine Arts degree at The University of Central Lancashire, Preston (2001), and then a Master's in *Art as Environment* at Manchester Metropolitan University (2002).

It was during those formal educational years on the BA that I began making work about where I lived. I remember a lecture by Prof. Paul Humble called '*Chess as an artform'*, where he argued for an aesthetic evaluation of the mechanics involved when two grandmasters play chess. Humble, referencing Duchamp's love of chess, proposed that the very calculations in the minds of players, processing their next move held aesthetic qualities (Humble, 1993). This was a key moment in developing my sense of an expanded field of art, and the materials, of which art might consist of. The idea of strategy, response, approach, build-up, pace, positioning etc. contributing to the overall aesthetic of an unravelling game of chess could be transferred not only to other games such as football, snooker etc. but also to other forms of doing in everyday situations.

[22] I worked in a department at the end of a very long and technical process, making jet-engine fan blades prior to dispatching them for installation in airplanes. The process is covered by the Official Secrets Act (1911), thus making it impossible to describe my role in any detail other than that I was operating a variety of machines.

[23] I worked the later shift so that I could go to college or university for most of the day then back to work in the afternoon. If there was an afternoon lecture then I would arrive late for work and book some time off in lieu (I worked overtime at weekends to bank time-off-in lieu, for such occasions). Much to the shock of my family and friends, I took voluntary redundancy to pursue an artistic career.

It is with hindsight that I recognize the impact that Humble (1993) had on my thinking and ultimately this thesis. His lecture revealed to me that the concept of art had boundaries and that those boundaries could be explored, challenged, and/or further expanded. Much of my work at that time was inspired by the experimental art and theories of US artist Allan Kaprow (particularly his '*Happenings*' in the late 1950s and early 60s), who '*hypothesised that artists looked to and framed aspects of life, arguing that life itself was more 'art-like than art'* (Coessens; Kathleen, Crispin; Darla 2009: 133). In addition, the Italian '*Arte Povera'* movement also influenced my thinking around the use of material and offered me the freedom to engage with non-precious materials, as opposed to the more traditional use of oil paint, bronze or marble.[24]

The projects of Kaprow and Art Povera permitted me to express my ideas with whatever material was available, and I felt that everyday life was rich with creative material. Consequently, I spent my degree making work inspired by the history of a particular place in my hometown using local resources, working with friends, family, and acquaintances, borrowing equipment, and with local organisations/businesses to produce and present art in the place it was made. Many artworks were exhibited in the South Valley of Colne, at the site of a lost village called Waterside, which had been demolished in the 1960/70s (as part of the 'Slum Clearance Act' 1933).[25]

Traces of the village were (and still are) visible, which is outlined by cobbled streets, and a landscaped footprint of the lost buildings. I researched the history of the site via the local library archives, and collaborated with historians, archaeologists, schools, local businesses and interviewed ex-residents of the lost village, to develop ideas for workshops, performances, sculptures and installations. One of the largest works was '*Mapping the Landscape'* and involved superimposing a map of the lost village onto the site. I borrowed a line-marking machine from a friend, (and some eco-friendly paint), and another

[24] The Arte Povera movement (1960/70s) challenged conventional art gallery aesthetics by employing the use of what was considered then to be unconventional materials such as discarded clothing, soil, tree branches etc. and translates into English as *impoverished art* and reflects the use of impoverished materials.
[25] Government strategy in the UK to clear slum dwellings and rehome communities in better quality housing.

friend helped me to mark it out and paint it over one cold weekend in March 1999.

Fig. 6 A large section of the white line drawing on the site of the lost village at Waterside: '*Mapping the Landscape'* (Titley: 1999).

Towards an art-like life

Kaprow's experiments and theories assured the undergraduate me that I could make work about everyday life, in the place where I lived, and exhibit the work in unconventional gallery spaces. Art could be made from impoverished materials like Kaprow's discarded car tyres, household furniture, natural resources, and my methods could include everyday actions. That way of thinking about art, while sympathetic to my financial situation at the time, also aligned my art to my personal life: both through an economy of accessible material, made up of free things that I could use or borrow, and the material that came directly from the community which included my family, friends, acquaintances, and friends of friends. Working with my immediate surroundings, the artworks engaged the wider community as the audience and enabled it to view the work in the community's place without a need to travel to the nearest art gallery (two hours away on public transport). It made sense

to me to bring art to that place, and it felt economically efficient in terms of making work with people, place and the environment.

Fig. 7 '*Illuminating Ground*' (Titley: 1998): the community excavated artefacts, which I set in a 30cm thick block of clear resin and installed into the ground on the site of the lost village (the block was illuminated from below by torchlights).

I had made a conscious decision to make work with local resources and to exhibit the work locally, and I was exploring the boundaries of art through site and materials, which located my practice outside of the conventional gallery system. Working in this way, through a series of short-term, relatively small-scale projects offered a level of creative freedom and control over the development of my practice. By tapping into local resources, I was able to deliver projects without the pressure and anxiety of applying for Arts Council England (ACE) funding. I'm not sure if at that time, it was just me who felt that way about the funding system but when I look back, my work was a response to a policy, which made it difficult for me as a post-graduate (with little professional experience) to attract funding. I remember spending months on an unsuccessful ACE application and found it more productive to find other

ways of making that didn't rely on cash funding, and on predicting what I was going to produce. My practice evolved through an act of bypassing certain expectations from the art world. An art world that refused to see my world and which felt a million miles away from my working-class surroundings, and at that time it felt good to be free from it.[26]

This freedom of being able to respond intimately to a situation as it unfolded allowed me to produce work, which had an immediacy about it. Rather than planning an exhibition (two/three years in advance) through the gallery system or proposing an ACE application with 'expected' outcomes, I was able to act upon ideas almost immediately, moving through a process of making as a way of thinking it through to completion. I was unwittingly working with the material of life: people, environment and place. While this was not the complete creative freedom that Claire Bishop (2012) identified in her argument (see Chapter One) regarding the impact of ethics on creative practice, it nonetheless gave me the freedom to be creative, without which I would not have been able to deliver my projects and publicly exhibit the work.

In 2002 a family member offered me a room in a bedsit to use as a studio, and I turned it into a 24-hour artist residency programme called '*Pavilion*'.[27] The project ran for two years and exhibited the work of 11 artists from the local area and other parts of the UK.[28] Artists would spend a night in the bedsit and show their work the following evening.

[26] By refusing to relocate my family closer to the artworld (into a city), I affectively created my own version of an exhibition system in my hometown. Rather than networking curators and gallerists, I approached the gatekeepers of local life: landlords, small businesses, schools, and other organizations for spaces to show the work, for equipment and materials.

[27] A single room, which shared a kitchen and bathroom with other occupants in the building. No money was exchanged, and I paid for a box of wine and nibbles for the opening night. However, after two showings the Arts Council England contacted me and offered to cover artists fees. There was no fee available for me directing/curating the space, and its eventual closure coincided with new ownership of the building, who wanted to charge me rent for the room.

[28] I placed a call-out advertisement in the Artists Newsletter magazine (AN), I curated the programme around my interest in place, and showed works that explored the bedsit and its community.

Fig. 8 *Pavilion* was in the front ground floor room (Titley: 2003).

I invited artists with an interest in exploring a sense of place, and the most interesting projects for me at Pavilion were the ones where an artist responded directly either to the building and/or its residents (in the 24 hours) as they felt to me more connected to the place and the people. The project allowed me to witness other artists exploring and improvising with the materials of place: from a Japanese performance artist painting randomly heard dialogue onto the bedsit walls (using her hair and freshly brewed tea), to a regional artist turning

the bedsit into a padded cell made entirely from oil-based plastics, influenced by his personal circumstances.

Organising the exhibitions and maintaining the space at Pavilion was all-consuming and its closure coincided with an emerging situation across town around issues of enforced displacement: a situation not dissimilar to the residents of the lost village of Waterside and one that became a recurring theme in my work and is discussed in Part Two of this chapter. Through the PhD, I realised that I had made my own art world where I lived with the materials that I found: the materials were wide-ranging, and art and life were enmeshed together.

Fig. 9 *Pavilion* – '*Tea*' a performance by Naoko Takahashi, video still (Titley 2002).

Fig. 10 *Pavilion* – '*All is not as it seems'* by Geoff Parr (Titley 2003).

Part Two. Making place

In this second part of the chapter, I present three projects which contextualise my art practice through research and examine my intimate proximity to materials, and my growing interest in what that material might consist of, through a method of reflection (*Demolition Street* 2004), and through two practical projects (*Gentlemen's Wardrobes* 2016), and (*Time Machine* 2017).

Demolition Street

In 2004, I began working with the residents of Bright Street in Colne to document the impact of a national government regeneration strategy to demolish their homes (Housing Market Renewal Initiative, HMRI).[29]

Fig. 11 One side of Bright Street: *Demolition Street* (Titley: 2004).

[29] The Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI) programme was a controversial regeneration scheme, which included the demolition, refurbishment and new buildings of many streets across the north of England between 2002 and 2011. It aimed to reinvigorate a failing housing market.

The remaining few residents of the street included my younger brother and his wife. As the residents came to terms with a predetermined future, I interviewed them over a cup of tea in their homes and documented our conversations using a video recorder (fly-on-the-wall style). I explained to each participant that my involvement was not likely to halt the demolition strategy and at best might help to show others how life on the street had been affected by the HMRI government initiative. Unsure of how (or if) this material might be exhibited, I focused on documenting as much as possible of the situation.

It's worth noting that the local council, by now aware of my activities on Bright Street, offered me a commission to work with residents on another street affected by the HMRI, in another town 6 miles away, which I accepted. The project was cancelled after a few weeks, and I learned that the council had not consulted with the residents before starting the project. While it was a negative experience, it had a positive impact on the *Demolition Street* project because I was able to continue visiting the council buildings where the keys to empty properties were stored. The office staff assumed I was still employed by the council, and I called in regularly to collect keys for the vacated homes on Bright Street. Each time I called for a key I expected to be turned away, but thankfully the news that I no longer worked on a project for the council never reached that department. I was not unlike a Lewis Hyde *trickster* flitting between the two very different worlds of the residents and that of the local authority (Hyde: 1998). As soon as a house was vacated, it was a race against time to visit the property before the vandals got there: they would rip up floors and walls to take valuable scrap materials like metal radiators, boilers, and stone flags.

"I meandered through deserted hallways, uninvited to a world of homes without hosts, without service, and with a distinct feeling of being separate' from the world outside" (Titley and Manley, 2016).

I collected a range of objects, which had been left behind: unclaimed mail, door handles, and light fittings. Things that I couldn't collect physically I photographed. Sometimes, I would set up my video camera in an empty house, press record and leave it recording as I went to interview someone in their home across the street – the camera captured the changing light conditions

and the eerie silence of the empty homes. One such recording contained an ironing board against a bare plaster wall, with natural light coming through a broken board above the front door in the lounge. I was struck by the way the light hit the wall, the arrangement of objects, the paint samples on the wall and the unopened mail on the floor. It felt like I had stumbled into the studio of an old master painter who had just left the room for a break after carefully arranging the objects in preparation for a painting.

Fig. 12 *'Ironing Board'* : Demolition Street (See Appendix E: Titley 2004).

Someone had stripped off the wallpaper and organised paint samples on the wall (perhaps this was already underneath the wallpaper?). Someone had at some point chosen the carpet and put the objects against the wall close to the front door, intending to collect them later, and the postal worker had continued to deliver the mail, despite the house being boarded up. And I happened upon the space to witness the weather playing its part in illuminating all the components through a loosely fitted board above the front door. All that we see in the *'Ironing Board'* photograph is Kester's tip of the iceberg, below which is a mass of unseen material effects.

When I look at the image today, through the lens of the research I realise that it wasn't some elusive grandmaster's still life arrangement, nor was I the sole creator of the image but that various other things had contributed to the scene. I may well be the maker of the photograph (I set up the camera), but the composition was affected by other things, other people's actions/choices, the architecture, and the natural environment i.e., light/temperature conditions. We might read the image as a string of events, but it's less important in what order they happened, than that they happened before my arrival, highlighting my presence amidst already active material. And the video captures something of those goings-on, not forgetting the audio also: we can hear footsteps walking past the door, and the town hall clock chiming out the passing of the event. It is not difficult to imagine how those things might have been playing out since the houses were built in 1905, and how each might have played a part (one way or another) in making the image.

The following sketch illustrates the potential array of material, with most of it hidden out of sight to audiences and connects the photo *'Ironing Board'* to the community and place where the artwork was made.

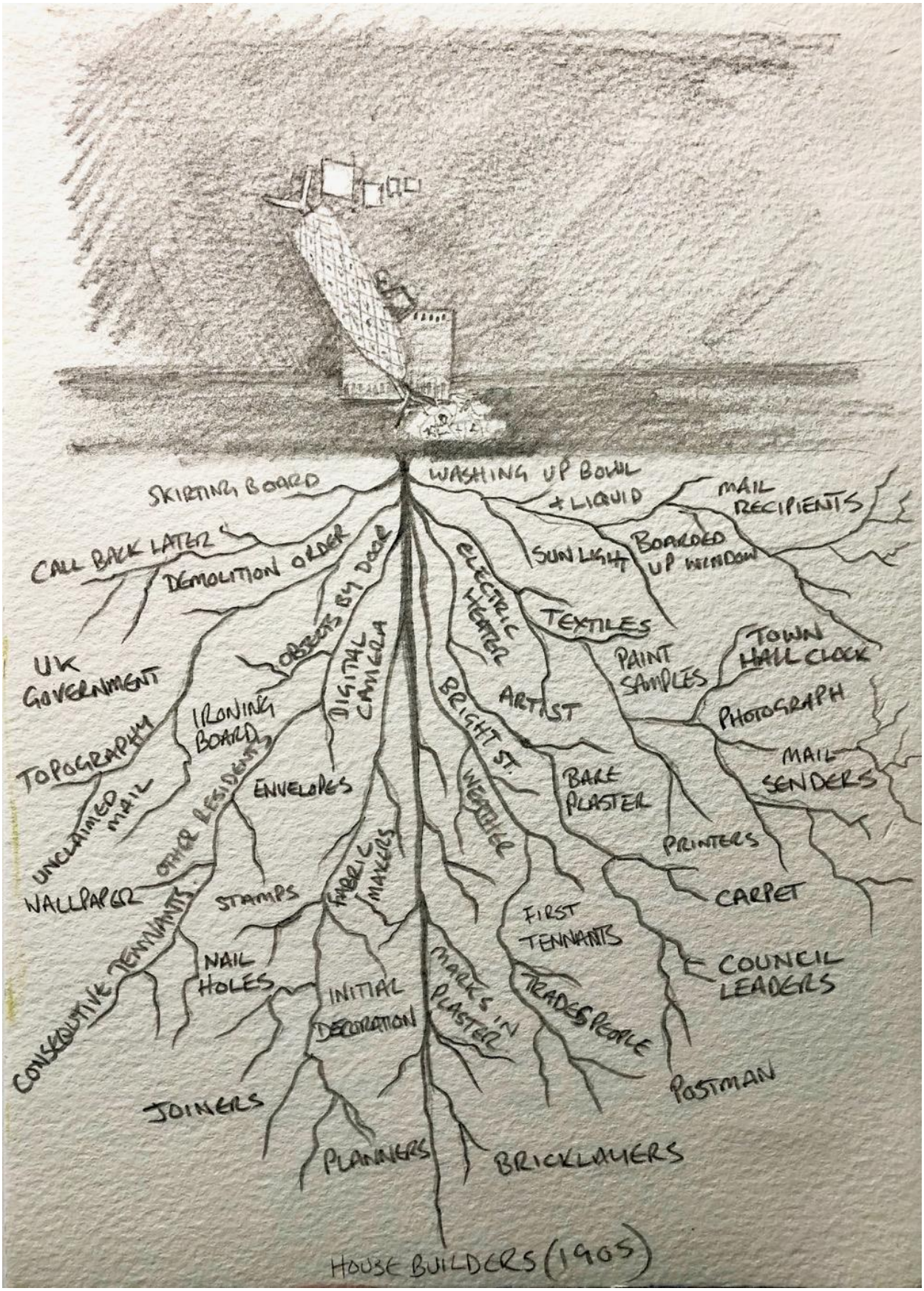

Fig. 13 Pencil sketch of the potential material contribution to the photograph *'Ironing Board'* (Titley 2022).

The ironing board photograph marked a turn in my practice towards a growing interest in the non-human things of social material, which are nonetheless capable of affecting the artist, thus the artwork. I was amongst the traces of life and more importantly I was starting to see the often-overlooked material.

I spent the following 18 months adding things to the makeshift archive and photographed the eventual demolition and landscaping of the site, which took another 7 years. The collection, exhibited at various sites since 2006, includes photographs, community video interviews and many found objects such as door handles and unclaimed mail. There were 17 houses on each side of Bright Street, but it was my first time in No. 8, which shifted my attention to inanimate things. I was fascinated by the fixtures and fittings, which appeared much older than in the other homes. It was there that I started collecting objects to explore the potential of representing the residents who had already left the street.[30]

A more developed concept of the relations of things in the *Ironing Board* photograph would have roots beyond the edges of the paper and look more like the drawing on the following page: the roots of the things in the photograph connecting to other things in its process of becoming.

[30] Apparently, an old lady, who had lived in No. 8 all her life had died about four years before the demolition order, and it had been left empty.

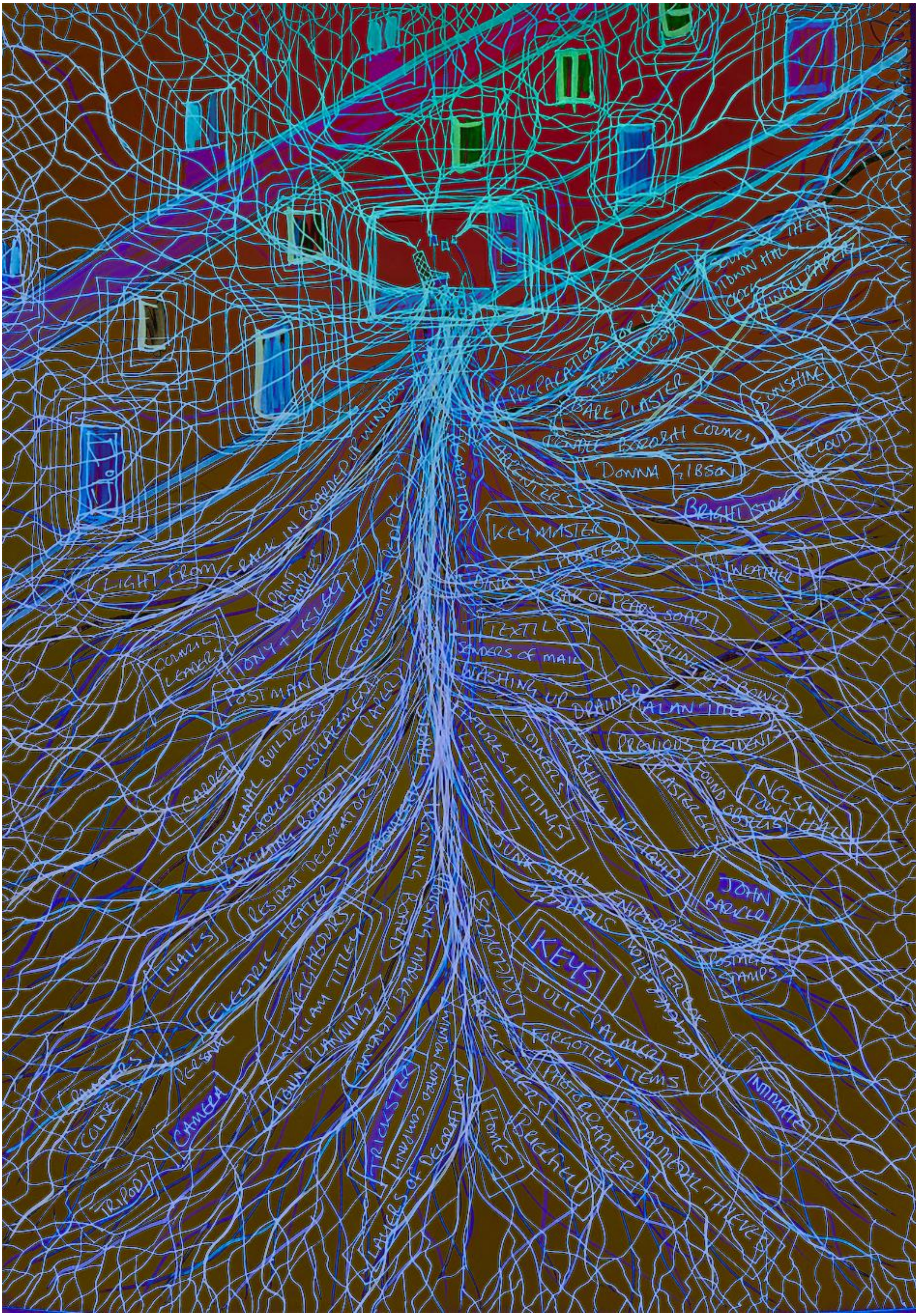

Fig. 14 Digitally enhanced sketch of the potential material of the *Demolition Street* project (Titley 2022).

Fig. 15 *Demolition Street*. Door Handle from No.8 (See Appendix E: Titley 2004)

In hindsight, I was seeing for the first time, the non-human and yet very active material, and I had attempted to capture some of the material before it disappeared. As part of that community, I was dwelling in the life of the material and unlike my experience with the council clerk at the key office (*Demolition Street*), it didn't feel like I was outside of the community flying in to take something back to my world (like an in-between worlds trickster). Instead, it felt to me like I was speaking from within the situation. I felt more like the neighbour who had the means to record and document a wrongful situation. Thus, I

started listening, recording and collecting evidence as if for some future audience.[31]

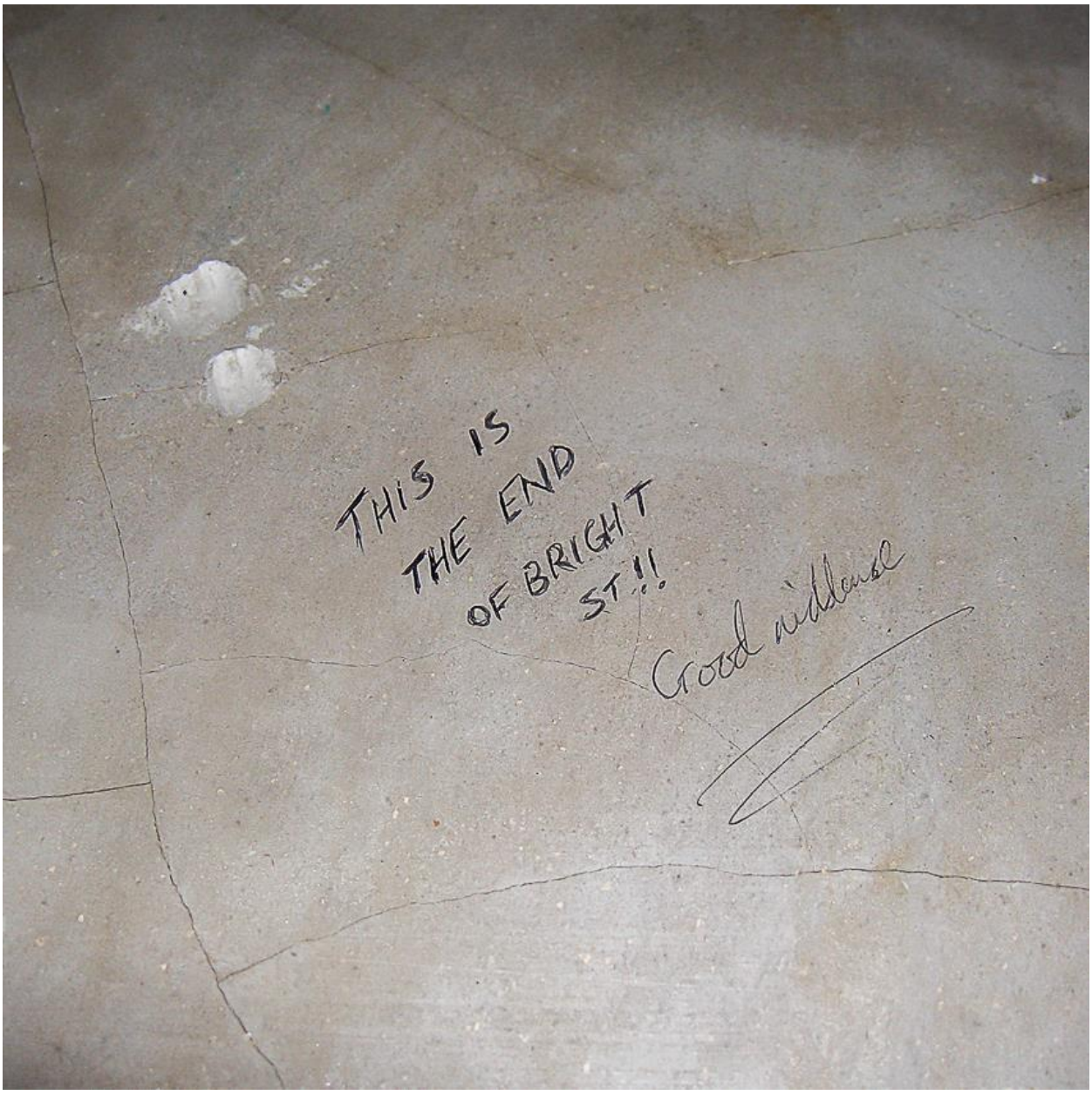

Fig. 16 *Demolition Street.* Found correspondence on chimney breast at No.14 (See Appendix E: Titley 2004)

Demolition Street was initiated through intimate documentary-style interviews and developed into a kind of spatial audio-visual audit of the situation. The residents had no direct involvement in the way the final artworks were formed,

[31] Under the premise that people today are not the same people they were yesterday, artists are technically making work not for the current community but for the community yet to be, a message for the people of tomorrow, and the artwork contributes to that transformation of communities. Brian Massumi describes this thought dynamic as a play between a sense of '…*what is'* and '…*further thinking'*, which *'gives the present perception its own momentum, even though it can't presently signpost exactly where it's going* (Massumi, 2011 1056).

or how the work was exhibited, and I was operating according to my art school training (with a hylomorphic approach) and believed that I was solely in control of the forming of the artwork.

Fig. 17 *Demolition Street*, rubble with Pendle Hill in the distance (See Appendix E: Titley 2009).

However, influenced by my PhD research, especially the thinking of Grant Kester, things were about to change. Revisiting *Demolition Street* revealed to me that there was more material being utilised in my art practice than was visible in my completed artworks. The following project *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* provided an opportunity to examine how I engaged with that material and to begin to formulate a question that was to become central to the research. How might I make visible more of the material in the final artwork?

Gentlemen's Wardrobe 2016

In contrast to *Demolition Street* (2004), *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* (2016) took place during my PhD and was the first project to be directly influenced by my thinking around Kester's model for a dialogical aesthetic, specifically listening, recognizing co-ownership, and allowing time in the project for emergence to occur. Therefore, the *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* project became part of the research (and is submitted as such) and continued my examination of what my material consists of today, how I engage with it, and explored the potential of an ethical-social aesthetic.

Gentlemen's Wardrobe (2016) was a 12-month commission working with a small group of men who cared for a loved one at home. The commission came about through a collaboration between a local healthcare organization, whose aims were to support and connect voluntary carers in Lancashire, and the arts organization 'Super Slow Way', which was one of 21 projects across England called Creative People and Places (CPP). The CPPs were funded by the National Lottery and Arts Council England (ACE) and aimed to create opportunities to involve '*more people choosing, creating and taking part in brilliant art experiences in the places where they live'* (Arts Council England, 2022).

The project presented itself as an opportunity to implement my learning from a position within a live project as it was happening. The method of using reflective diary entries, together with my thinking around Kester's model, inadvertently revealed the effects of social relations and evolved through an intimate process of collective creativity which revealed the artist's position as a vulnerable participant. Through reflecting on the regular encounters with the group, I will show that I, too, had experienced what Kester referred to as transformative moments, where participants go through a process of change through social interactions with others (Kester, 2004). While the commission was to design and build a shed for the men, it transpired that they were desperately in need of someone to talk to.

We started meeting up in places of their choosing – from local cafes and city museums to favourite walks and antique shops. Those regular meetings were

essential for the men who often spoke about how the sessions were a welcome relief from the 24/7 caring responsibilities and worries of looking after someone they loved at home. During our visits to antique shops, we purchased two old wardrobes, not knowing what to do with them. There was pressure (felt by the participants) to make something. That pressure was made visible by their concerns about whether I would get fired for spending our time having breakfast meetings to catch up and share problems.

Fig. 18 *Gentlemen's Wardrobe:* Crown Green Bowling (Titley 2016)

Fig. 19 *Gentlemen's Wardrobe*: Galleries and museums. *'Hard Times'* Lubaina Himid. Oxheys Mill, Preston. (Titley 2016)

Fig. 20 *Gentlemen's Wardrobe:* Breakfast Meeting (Titley 2016).

However, inspired by Kester's call to listen to the context, I learned how the carers felt let down by a dysfunctional support system, which they felt rendered them invisible. This was exacerbated by a general lack of interest in what they had to say, shown by one of the project partners (a local care support organisation) who failed to attend more than one session. Despite the project partner's lack of interest in talking with the group, we kept up our meetings and more and more time was spent considering the potential of the wardrobes.[32] The objects looked different from each other on the outside (in style and size) but inside they were more-or-less the same with shelves marked for specific

[32] We met at The Canal and Rivers Trust offices in Burnley (they were one of the project partners). It was located at the side of the canal and had a workshop and kitchen, and around the corner was a small café where we would sometimes have breakfast.

items of clothing: socks, ties, shirts, collars, cufflinks etc. and for many weeks they functioned as oversized larders for tea and coffee making items.

Fig. 21 *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* (Titley 2016).

We considered them as representations of a forgotten generation of men, which led to discussions about daily life and their rituals, each quite different and yet connected through the context of home care. I listened intently as they put their trust in each other with their pains and frustrations of feeling alone while I put my trust in Kester's dialogical aesthetic, not knowing what would emerge from it all. It felt like a long and arduous journey; often darkened by harrowing personal stories, it would occasionally brighten up through lively discussions of what art might be.

Eventually, an artwork did emerge in the form of an interactive sculpture enabling audiences to sit inside and listen to audio recordings of the everyday lives of the men involved, including a poem about caring for someone with dementia.

Fig. 22 *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* playing with furniture (Titley 2016).

Fig 23 *Gentlemen's Wardrobe*, back-to-back (Titley 2016).

We played with the material components and arranged them in a variety of positions: upside down, flat on the floor etc. But the turning point in the project

came on the day we stopped perceiving the wardrobes as functional furniture and instead saw them as raw materials (wood). We had imagined flying machines and boats until one day, I started removing the back from one of the wardrobes. I remember the surprised (shocked) expressions on the other participants' faces – as if I was destroying something quite precious. However, before I had completed the task, one of the men got up and started stripping out the insides of the other wardrobe, and there they stood, backless but still resembling wardrobes (from the front, at least). At the end of that session, we stood the backless wardrobes in the corner back-to-back, and that's when one of the men opened one of the doors and sat down inside this now twice-the-size container (one of the wardrobes had a set of drawers in the bottom half which acted as a seat). It was a light-bulb moment for the group, and we began to discuss its potential. We considered putting wheels on it to push around town and raise awareness of the groups' concerns for men who home-care and invite other people to sit inside and experience the intimate darkness and solitude of being a home carer.

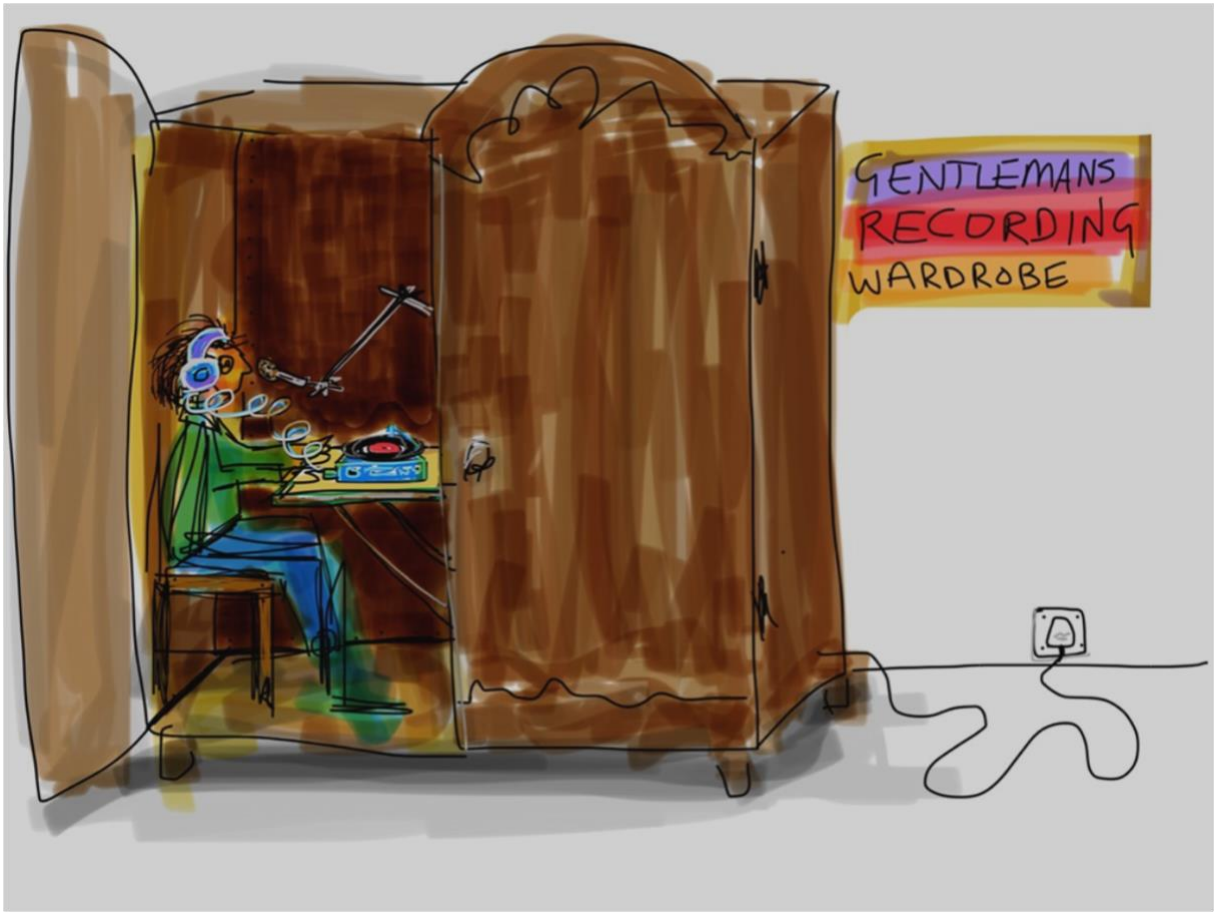

Fig. 24 *Gentlemen's Wardrobe*: One of the ideas was to use it as a DJ studio (Titley 2016).

During those conversations about how we could make other people aware of their situation, one man brought in an audio recording he'd made (on his phone) about his daily routine of looking after his ill wife and another man read out a poem he'd written about caring for his wife who had dementia. The new form emerged as a repository and platform for their stories through a process of what Ingold refers to as '*intuition in action'*: it evolved intuitively with the flow of the lives of participants, or as Ingold might say, with the '*grain of the wood'*, rather than against it (Ingold, 2013: 25).

Fig. 25 *Gentlemen's Wardrobe*: '*Into a better shape'* curated by Lubaina Himid: Harris Museum, Preston (Titley 2018).

Going with the grain of the wood can be taken as a metaphor for a wider conception of what the materials of social art might include: the improvisational character of these and for more nuanced interaction with, rather than forceful action upon them.

The process described above produced moments of self-reflection and in effect, held up a mirror to all participants, including myself. I had my own moments of realisation about my personal life during the project. I was transformed by the experience of being a participant in that project: I reconnected with old school friends and bought season tickets to the local football club. My position as a participant in the social process has been the same in many of my art projects and the PhD research has made visible my vulnerability. It was virtually impossible not to be affected by the material of that project, with my research acting as material too. The stories and shared experiences, together with my research into theories of social practice, set me on a trajectory of change in my practice towards a more emergent method.

Had I adopted a more prescribed approach with a focus on building a shed for the commissioner, the social activities we did together would not have emerged: '*Crown Green Bowling, gallery visits, browsing antique shops, home-cooking, and walking in the local hills etc'* (Titley, 2017a).[33] With a pre-planned approach, I might have steered the group towards developing and producing the commissioner's vision, with little time or space for digression, and consequently little room for collective emergence to occur. While this approach might have deployed participants as labour in the production of the vision, the approach I adopted allowed for a shared creative experience to emerge through a process of intersubjective exchange, and although the participants may have perceived me as the artist/maker, the idea of the maker being in sole control was undermined by the process we developed together, as I was part of the materiality, vulnerable to the effects of other material.

To begin with, I was leading this project as the commissioned artist. By the end of the project, in contrast, I had come to a position of offering participants an

[33] Taken from my diary notes, some of which were published in *Creative Relations*, a chapter in The Journal of Social Work Practice, Issue 2, 2017, Taylor & Francis (please see Appendix D).

equal share of the sculpture exhibition fee and invited them to help transport and install the work at the exhibition spaces. This emergence of a non-extractive model isn't of course, a simple blueprint of how to solve ongoing and potentially insoluble issues of ownership in participatory social art practice. I don't claim to have a perfect way of doing things in terms of ownership because it's a process still going on. However, the people in that project now feel like they could have their names on the work in a way that they did not beforehand[34], something that came about through the methodology I developed in the research, which in this case involved me sharing my exhibition fees.[35]

In the completed artwork (interactive sculpture), aspects of the lives of participants were made audible inside the intimate space: only one or two people could sit inside (at any one time) to hear the recordings and experience a glimpse of the lives of the men who cared.

Please see the project blog for more text and all the photographs relating to the *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* https://malecarers.wordpress.com

[34] It wasn't that I so much excluded them originally as them not feeling they had authored the work, they saw me as 'the artist'.

[35] Since the commissioned project ended, the sculpture has been exhibited at 2 different venues and I invited the participants to help transport and install the work and shared the exhibition fee with them: Harris Museum & Art Gallery (2018) and Greenfield Arts Centre, Darlington (2019).

Time Machine 2017

The *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* provided an opportunity to deploy elements of Kester's dialogical model and emergence in the creative process, and whilst the project gave insights that revealed the artist as a vulnerable participant it also raised a new question for me; how was my stance as an artist up to this point affecting the relations and the form of the social artwork? Through exploring this question, we might begin to recognise more of the social art material through a focus on seemingly unimportant things (such as Erin Manning's thinking around minor gestures),[36] the place and environment (local context) and/or my entanglement in the life of the other (material).

This question was explored in my project *Time Machine* (2017). A self-initiated and self-funded interactive sculpture; and before I explain more about the work, I want to describe the creative process by which the sculpture came to be, as it will shed some light on my creative process, which carries over into my engagement with the materials of social art.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when one gets an idea to make art. Whether a sudden spark or a light-bulb moment, often it appears and then it's gone in a flash. If we can identify the precursors to the light-bulb moment, then we might also be able to understand the agency of the material of social art.

Many of my local projects have grown out of my everyday life experiences and encounters and *Time Machine* was no exception. My obsession with collecting 7" vinyl records from 1979 was the grounding for the project, in the sense that I was one day browsing the internet looking for a jukebox to play/display my collection. It wasn't until I got it home to start cleaning and refurbishing it that I began to see it as a potential repository for something else. Echoing the moment in the *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* project (where we stopped seeing them as wardrobes and started seeing them as wooden containers), I saw it no longer as a jukebox in its conventional purpose (made for displaying the titles of its records), but as an empty mechanical storage system somewhat disassociated from its original use. This shift in how I perceived it opened its

[36] All the chance effects, and in the context of social art practice, the chance encounters with people, place and environment, which through their agency might affect the form of the final artwork.

potential to evolve into something different and raised the question of what else could be stored in it, and how perceiving it in this way might affect its eventual art form.

Those questions led to the machine being dismantled into its key functioning components: a rotating record storage wheel and popularity wheel, selection arm and 7” turntable (it picks up the selected record and places it onto the deck), the amplifier (sending sound to the speakers), the power unit, the speakers, the selection panel (displaying the names of records and their corresponding number), and the coin recognition switch (determining the number of plays per click of the switch).

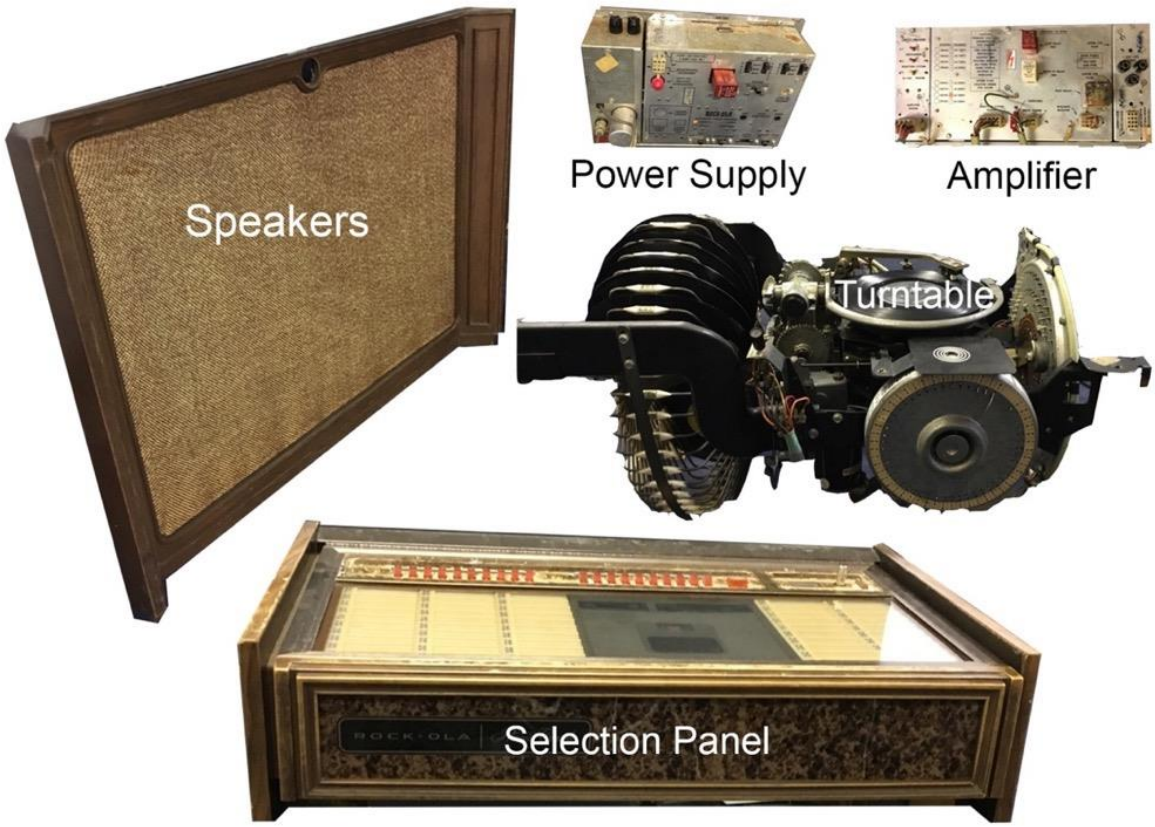

Fig. 26 *Time Machine*, a selection of the main components of the Jukebox (Titley 2017).

It was in this state for some weeks as I cleaned it up, removing 40 years of cigarette smoke and pub grime from its mechanical parts. Meanwhile, I continued to converse with family and friends about records from my collection

– as and whenever I bumped into them; sharing memories from the days when we used to hear those songs. At some point during the refurbishment, I asked myself ‘what if I didn’t put it back together in its box, and what if, instead of displaying the titles of records in the display panel, I displayed a title influenced by someone’s memory of each record in the machine?

This was a moment where different materials coalesced: the machine components – particularly the title display panel, the 1979 record collection, other people and their memories of the songs (effectively their lives), myself and my openness to the potential of the other material. As with many of my self-initiated projects, *Time Machine* grew from my life and my interest in popular music, which has the power to somehow capture memories and wrap them in the sound of a particular time, storing them away like a tightly coiled spring, only to be triggered seemingly at random in the future by just a few overheard musical notes.

I asked people via my social media and local networks if they had any significant connection to any songs from my 1979 record collection. Participants then sent me stories (via email) of their memories related to a chosen record. For example, *‘Whenever I hear this track, it takes me back to the first time that I was allowed to go to the fairground on my own, I can smell Candyfloss’.*

Fig. 27 *Time Machine*, installed at The Asia Triennial Manchester (ATM18) at HOME, in Manchester (Titley: 2018).

The memories were shortened into song titles to be displayed on the selection panel (i.e. *The Smell of Candyfloss*), with the corresponding record lined up in the sculpture ready for play.[37] The sculpture housed 50 memories evoked by the 50 songs in the machine and when the audience interacted with it the songs activated their audio triggers[38] to reveal additional memories of forgotten people, places and, meaningful moments in the lives of the initial participants and the audience. The interaction with the sculpture transported audiences to a moment when they were different people, in a different space and time, and enabled them to leapfrog decades of everyday life experiences, to arrive at seemingly random places in their memory. The participants who contributed memories to the project were thrilled to see their memory on the selection

[37] In contrast to how we would normally engage with a jukebox the memories were displayed on the selection panel for the audience to make their choice (not a song title but a memory), thus only revealing the song after someone selected a memory.
[38] A sound that evokes a memory or a feeling.

panel, although some of them still failed to recognise their memory, as they had been condensed to fit in the display panel.

Fig. 28 *Time Machine*, the selection panel displaying the memories (Titley 2017).

In comparison to *Gentlemen's Wardrobe*, the work made visible many participants (anonymously) in the final artwork; most could recognise themselves in the list of memories (see Appendix C: *Who Do you think you Are?*). Furthermore, when the participants came together in the exhibition space (the local town hall) something unexpected happened. As each song was played, other people began to share their memories of it and exchanged stories about the place, people and the environment. Thus, cross-pollination occurred, which made it difficult to listen again to that song without someone else's memory creeping into your new memory of it. For example, whenever I used to hear George Michael's *Careless Whisper* (1984), I used to remember my first job behind the bar of a now-defunct pub. However, because of the project, my original memory has been merged with someone else's minibus

ride through the Pakistani Himalayas. [39]

One member of the audience (during a video interview) described a memory of her and a friend walking in the countryside, singing '*Video Killed the Radio Star'* by Buggles (1979). She went on to tell me how for a long time she didn't even know who the song was by, only that she enjoyed singing it with her friend when out walking and smiled as she revisited that place and time in her mind. [40] Other members of the audience described forgotten places: driving their first car, local discos, clothing, dance moves, and personal relationships. All those memories were entwined with the imagined places and people of the selection panel display. In its previous life as a pub jukebox, *Time Machine* would have been monitored by the supplier to see which records were being played the most, thus making the most money. Now in its repurposed form, its popularity wheel monitors the memories selected by the audience.

[39] The process of merging someone else's memory with their own experiences (past and present) creates new imaginings of time and space, and further discussion on the topic, while interesting, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

[40] The audience member was only 23, suggesting that the machine can work across generations even though the music was mainly from 1979. The interview can be viewed in a 3min film showing people interacting with the machine at https://youtu.be/q3PgVfcYZEc The interview starts at 2:10 mins.

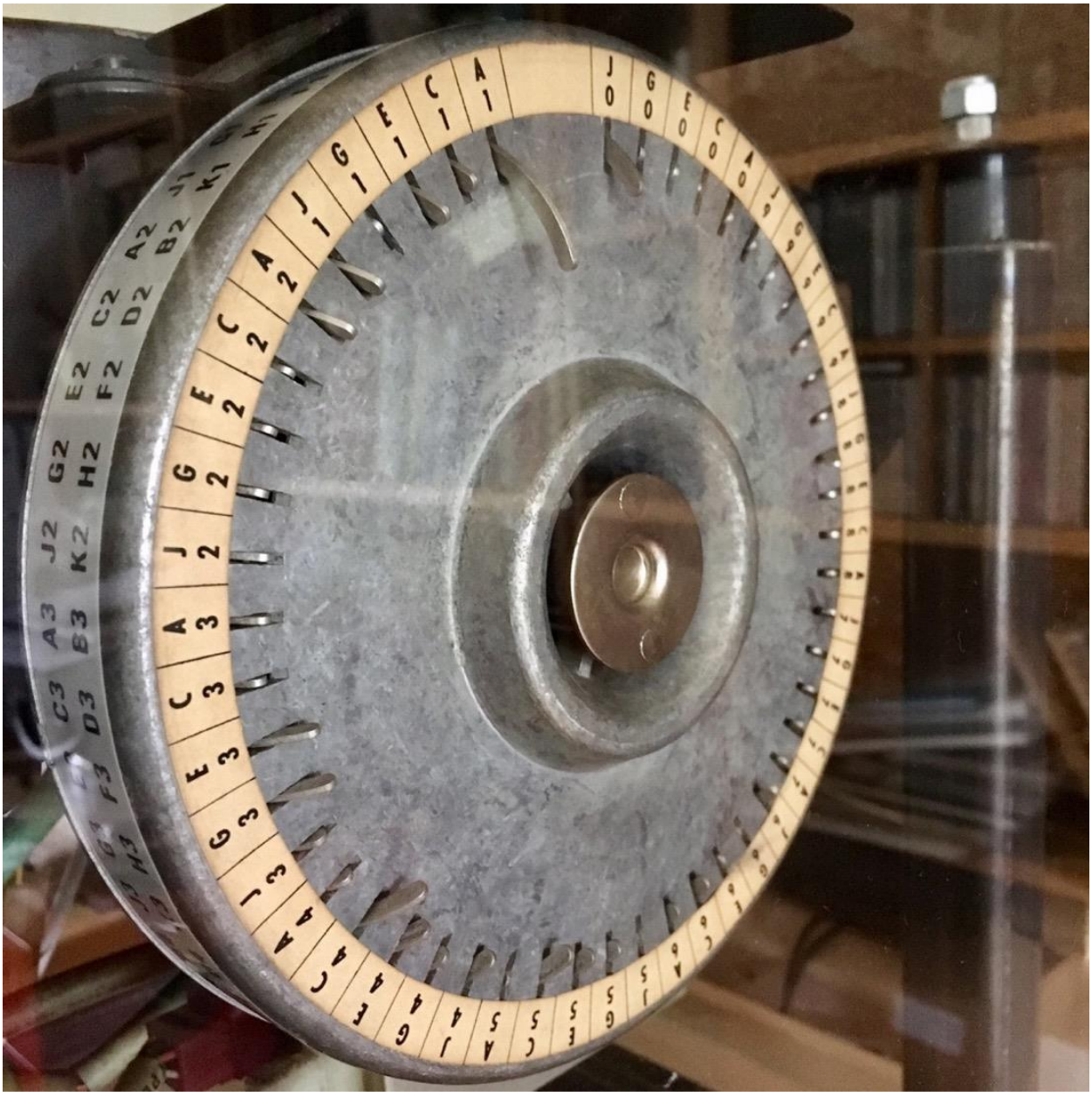

Fig. 29 The popularity wheel – the song/memory called *Candyfloss* at position A1 (Titley 2017).

As an artwork, the project exposes some of the active material of social art, which includes memories, the sharing of histories, and the emergence of a collective sense of place.[41]

The *Time Machine* reveals that I initiated the work with a vision of making a time machine from 1979 (hylomorphic), but then allowed that vision to be altered according to participant dialogue (morphogenetic). One person claimed

[41] The psychology of how and what is occurring when people interact with the sculpture is beyond the scope of this thesis and is something that I am interested in exploring and developing further in the future, particularly around issues of how the work might reveal deep rooted connections to place, and how it informs and reveals collective memory. What we remember is never what happened.

that they couldn't relate to any song from that year but did have a record that always took them to a particular place and time in their mind. Their response expanded the parameters of the project, and in effect started a process of the work evolving into an imaginary map of the local area. Had I stuck to my vision the sculpture would have been about a particular year of popular music, and I would have had to seek more participants to fill it with memories from that year. Instead, it was rooted, just like *Demolition Street* (2004), deep in the local ecology by listening and responding to *'the social context from which others speak'* (Kester, 2004: 113).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a profile of myself as a person and as an artist who has developed a way of working in a particular way and who, through this PhD research, became increasingly engaged with the aesthetics and materials of social art. The anecdotes and projects revealed my community (of over 50 years) which was simultaneously the participants' and in most cases, the audience for the work.

Firstly, I have mapped out my journey towards being a professional artist, presenting key moments in my early life which may have impacted the development of my concept of being an artist. I include them here as examples of how Manning's minor gestures (2017) can affect the direction of a given trajectory. If we are to consider Manning's minor gesture as living amongst the plethora of Bennett's active material (2010) with its potential to change the direction of a social art project, then my aim in the chapter has been to evoke glimmers of how my early art/life experiences (in that place: from primary school onwards) affected my trajectory toward a particular relationship with materials today.

Secondly, I have explored how my conception of the different materials of social art was extended and revealed through social processes of making: from my earlier work involving spatial auditing of a community situation in *Demolition Street* (2004) from people to objects; to identifying relations with people and playing with physical materials in *Gentlemen's Wardrobe (2016);* and through *Time Machine* (2017), which employed an initially prescribed approach to

making a 1979 jukebox, only to discover and become intrigued by a number of unanticipated social processes from which, emerged a collective sense of place and time: an underlying theme since those early *Waterside* (1998-2001) projects at the site of the lost village.

Gentlemen's Wardrobe began with people out of which emerged an artwork, whereas *Time Machine* began with an object and brought people into it. Both starting points produced a social artwork, regardless of whether they were initiated by a hylomorphic or a morphogenetic approach and raises the question: How do other social artists approach initiating and developing their projects?

Having focused in this chapter on the development of my expanding conception of materials in the evolving research project, the following chapter uses observational and reflective methods to examine my participation in two projects led by other artists also involved in social art, both of which allowed me to experience and observe the nuances of social art from a participant-observer position.

Chapter Three: Practice analysis: the hylomorphic and the morphogenetic

In the previous chapter, I mapped the development of my art practice and my interest in and arguments for what might be recognised as social art material. I did this through a reflection on my previous project *Demolition Street* (2004), and the making of new works, *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* (2016) and *Time Machine* (2017), which introduced my evolving approaches to working with materials.

In this chapter, I aim to identify the defining characteristics of the hylomorphic and the morphogenetic, as developed by Ingold (date), by examining how they apply to the work of two highly respected international artists. This will allow me to reflect on what the two approaches make possible, what their role and value within my practice, and then how to relate this to the broader field of social art for use by others. The morphogenetic approach involves a sensitive response to materials, considering what they can do in the relationship with the maker and other potential materials. For example, the morphogenetic artist would begin with a partial vision of what they wanted to make, they would review the available material and work with it to see what might emerge from the relationship.

On the other hand, the hylomorphic artist would begin with their vision and strive to resource the desired material to make that vision. For example, they would search for specific material to produce their pre-formed vision: the artwork has been preconceived, whereas the morphogenetic approach allows the artwork to emerge from the relational and durational process. My understanding of Ingold's theories of these two ways of approaching making, and my practised definition of the two approaches is something that I develop as the chapter progresses.

The chapter presents a participatory-observational (P-O) based examination of two artist projects: *Project Row Houses* in 2018 (PRH) by Rick Lowe and *Shapes of Water-Sounds of Hope* 2017 (SOWSOH) by Suzanne Lacy. SOWSOH was being delivered in my neighbourhood (in Pendle, East

Lancashire) during the middle part of my PhD research and provided a unique opportunity for me to be a local participant in an internationally recognised social art project. Soon after the SOWSOH project, I travelled to (place) and stayed in one of the shotgun houses at PRH to further investigate ways of making social art.[42]

Under the premise that to observe is to make assumptions about what is important to record and '*put it together in a certain way, in a certain structure'* I have tried to be critical and reflexive via the context of my research questions, while making visible some of my assumptions, thus, in the act of observing, the writing reflects something of my assumptions about social art practice[43] (Bohm, 2014: 79). By participating in and observing the nuances of the social art practice of these two artists, I offer a closer inspection of my arguments around hylomorphic and morphogenetic approaches to making social art, developing my understanding and definition of these approaches.

My involvement in the two projects has helped to shape my understanding of how my practice has evolved into its current inquiry into a social-ethical aesthetic. I first experienced PRH during visits in 2011 and 2013 and then again in 2018, this later occasion specifically as a participant-observer as part of my PhD research. The process of experiencing PRH allowed me to identify and articulate in more detail the ethos of my own approach and how this relates to the materials of social practice, through what I found and find to be shared ways of relating to people in place. In the case of SOWSOH, it similarly allowed me to articulate my approach to materials and to link this to considerations of social practice as a wider field, but with the difference that it provides a contrasting approach to my own, particularly in the way participation and aesthetics are conceived of in SOWSOH.

Rick Lowe, together with other residents had started to refurbish a row of run-down shotgun houses in the 3rd Ward, Houston, Texas in 1993. His story,

[42] I had visited PRH twice before my research visit, once in 2012 with 8 other members of my community in the early stages of setting up In-Situ. We took the community members to see how a social art organisation might work together with community. And in 2013 I was a PRH artist-in-residence representing In-Situ (Lowe, 2022a).

[43] There are different versions of history depending on the writer's cultural identity. For example, the history of the world is different according to different cultures, religions and faiths. I aimed to be impartial about my subjective experiences.

which underpins the beginnings of PRH, can be found on the PRH website[44] and in art books and newspaper articles discussing current social art practices and so will not be repeated here. PRH today is a multi-million-dollar organisation, which owns many properties for community use: a women's refuge, artist studios/galleries, a dance hall, a laundrette and a row of shotgun houses [45] (Lowe, 2022a).

The SOWSOH project was delivered by Suzanne Lacy in the place where I live (Pendle) in 2016-17. I saw this as a unique opportunity for me to participate, as a resident, in a project by an internationally recognised social artist. While I learned much about how Lacy operated in a different way to myself as will become clear, an important turning point in terms of this research related to another participant in SOWSOH, and reflected Lacy's aesthetic position, and as I will go on to suggest, revealed a more purely hylomorphic approach to working with the material of social art than one the research led me to advocate for.

Shapes of things

To explore the nuances of each project let us first consider two photographs taken of seating arrangements at each of the two project sites. Both are images of an arrangement of chairs: one is inside an empty cotton mill in East Lancashire, England, and one is in the backyard of a row of shotgun houses in Houston's 3rd Ward, Texas.

[44] The full story of PRH is available on their website at https://projectrowhouses.org
[45] The term shotgun house comes from their size; with the emancipation of slavery, the free men, women and children had to be housed, and they were given the smallest possible space to dwell, so small that apparently one could fire a shotgun at the front door and the 'shot' would travel out the back door before it started to dissipate.

Fig. 30 *Shapes of Water-Sounds of Hope*: S. Lacy (Graham Kay. 2016).

In the SOWSOH image above, we see a group of people sitting in a formally arranged square of chairs under a chandelier of microphones. We see a standing person in the square conducting and a cameraman filming the activity. The symmetric composition of the image is held together by the industrial architecture and has a sense of choreographed performance given the microphones and cameraman.

Fig. 31 Project Row Houses 25-Year Celebration event (Titley 2018).

The PRH photo above shows three people sitting around a table decorated with flowers and a candle in a small vase. Two people are eating/drinking, and the third is looking at their phone, and there is a handbag and empty cups on the table. None of the three people are looking at one another, and in the background are other people and other chairs, including a row of three facing a raised stage/platform and several other chairs around another table, a photographer just visible behind the tree, and two people stood behind a table full of framed certificates. In place of the standing pillars of the mill surrounding the people in the SOSOH project, a tree trunk acts as the architectural place-maker. On the stage is a table with four bouquets, and the composition is framed by the bright/dappled sunlight and the white buildings that surround the garden venue and a banner in the top right corner reading Project Row Houses. The two photographs suggest to me the contrasting ways (hylomorphic and morphogenetic) of conceiving of and working with the materiality of social art practice, and I will return to the images at the end of the chapter to say more about this. First, though, let's consider my experiences of participating in the

two projects and some background information regarding how the projects began.

Project Row Houses (PRH) by Rick Lowe

A participant observer's experience of a predominantly morphogenetic process.

The following observations (recorded in my field notes) are from 2018 when I stayed in a shotgun house for 7 days as part of my PhD research. By using a narrative form in what follows (diary extracts, field notes), I intend to stay close to the dialogical and narrative methods that I used to reflect on my participation in, and observation of, the two projects.

1: Going with the flow

I called in at the 2-storey,[46] where I found an artist setting up a painting workshop. She explained the use of an acrylic flow medium to create unique paintings with different coloured paints on small canvas boards for participants to take home with them. Guided by the artist, I layered different coloured paints in a plastic cup and tipped it over onto the little canvas, pressed the cup hard on the surface, slowly lifted the cup, and allowed the paint to slowly ooze out, producing abstract effects as the paint reacted to how I moved the canvas board.

[46] At the end of the row of shotgun houses there is a red brick two storey building used as PRH headquarters and is referred to by residents as The Two Storey. It has a kitchen, and community space downstairs and an office upstairs.

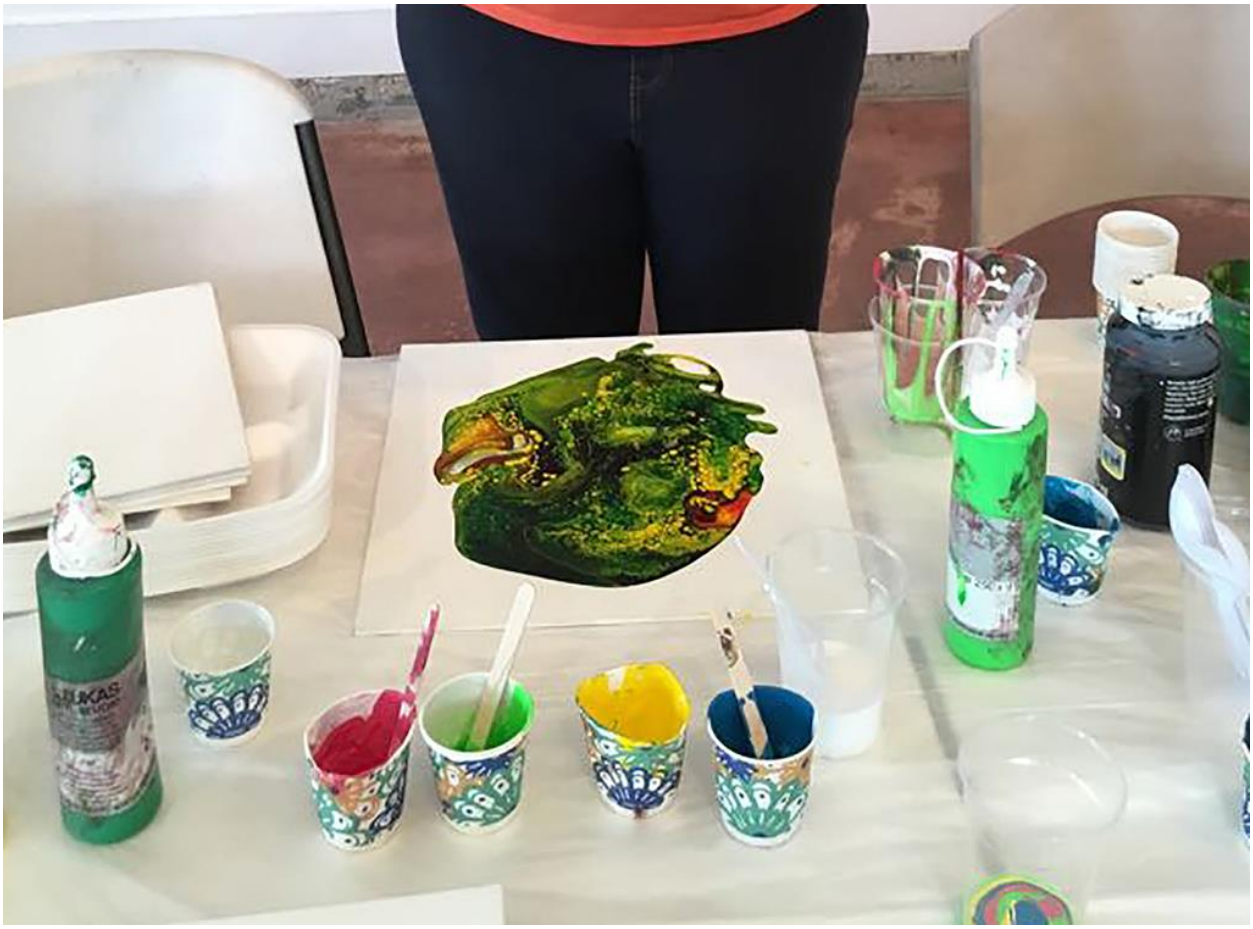

Fig. 32 Drop-in workshop at the 2-storey building headquarters for PRH (Titley: 2018).

The artist enquired about my practice and, while moving the board, this way and that, I borrowed Ingold's concept of going with the flow[47] to describe my approach to making, and how I relinquish some control over the material itself, not dissimilar to the paint on the board in front of me, trying to understand how the medium moves, and what is possible within the confines of the scenario and its materiality: the artist guide, the paint, canvas board, natural forces of gravity, me as a participant (Ingold, 2010).

Meanwhile, the docent[48] joined in the conversation and explained her belief in dialogue as a crucial tool for learning, and for connecting and rooting communities. I explained my interest in Ingold's writing on 'entanglements' and that I was there to try and capture something of what PRH is and means to

[47] In *Creative Entanglements* (2010) Ingold refers to it as 'following the forces and the flow' and in Making (2013) defines the morphogenetic way of working as going 'with the grain of the wood' and the hylomorphic as going 'against the grain of the wood' and suggests to me something of the natural potential of a material.
[48] PRH front of house, and tour guide, who also lived on the block, in PRH accommodation.

people who live and participate in the project, and she agreed to a recorded interview.[49]

We met at her home on the top floor in one of the new Duplex houses (referred to at PRH as the two-storey with single apartments on both floors). She spoke in metaphors of a creative drifter who settled on the block which has grown into PRH, a safe space, with loving people, a home full of love and support, and when I asked her if she was referring to Rick Lowe as the creative drifter, she replied that she was referring to everyone connected with PRH. Her comment suggests that everyone is potentially the creative director of the project, which resonates with the idea that there are other things besides the artist influencing/directing the project.

She went on to explain the importance of PRH providing a space, that allowed people to be who they are. This suggests that PRH provides fertile ground for nurturing the community towards a positive future, responding to the needs of the community: some young mothers needed safe accommodation with an education programme, some artists needed studios/galleries, and some people needed a safe space to be themselves, some families needed safe spaces for creative workshops, and some people needed a platform to fight the gentrification of their neighbourhood. PRH provided all those things by evolving through a deep relationship with the materiality of the community and the place.

2: Minor gesture

That evening I went out for a meal with a PRH board member to a café-bar known for its live music. It was great, people just kept bringing their instruments to join in with the pianist, guitarist and singer: trombones, trumpets, saxophones, Tonga drums and singers, they all came together in one mass improvisation. There was a special moment when I thought I recognised a tune and everyone in the place was singing in harmony. Not boisterous like a sports bar singalong, but gentle, almost a humming, soothing

[49] In his paper Creative Entanglements Ingold talks about the flows of material, which I understand as the potential of the material, its plasticity, its perpetual transformation, and employs the idea of lines as a way of understanding how things become entangled with each other as they flow (Ingold, 2010).

collaboration.[50] The pianist was happy to play alone, and happy for others to participate in the improvised jamming session. There would be occasional stuttering or change in the rhythm as new participants brought themselves and their instruments into position, pulling up outside the café in vans to unload their instruments. It was the first time I'd ever seen a Titanic Tuba (two meters tall), there was rapturous applause from the audience, who were also participants as they swayed to the rhythm and clapped softly to the beat while singing in harmony with each other.

At the time, I remember suddenly being mindful of Erin Manning's minor gestures in action. Particularly recognising how the minor things might significantly alter the major simply by being in the same place and affecting each other. The improvisation of the situation was made visible as I observed the minor gestures arriving and being amid becoming, *'where force'* had *'not yet attuned to form'* and the major event was *'still welling',* with all the *'potential for new diagrams of life-living to be drawn'* (Manning, 2016: 15). Each additional gesture brought its attributes (audio-visual materiality) and transformed the major gesture (the situation) into something else: the musicians, the audience (humming), and the space.

The front of the café was made of glass sliding doors, which were open onto the street, which allowed the audience to witness the vehicles arriving and the musicians unloading their instruments and stepping from the pavement and officially onto the stage, although the stage was arguably extended into the street. The scenario resonated with how I understood PRH as being in a constant state of comings and goings, a kind of perpetual motion, each coming and going influencing the overall major event and in the bar scenario, the major gesture was my experience of the culmination of everything present in that space at that moment, not unlike the '*Ironing Board'* image in Chapter Two (the *Demolition Street* project).

[50] I later found out that the tune was called *Mas que Nada* by Jorge Ben played on Nike adverts during the 1998 Football World Cup.

3: Proximity

On another occasion, I bumped into an acquaintance Robert Hodge who used to be the maintenance man at PRH back in 2012 (my last visit). He told me how important it was for him to hang out with artists like the PRH founder Rick Lowe, an international artist who is down to earth, still living in the neighbourhood and playing dominoes with the community. Socialising with all the visiting artists during Hodge's time working at PRH inspired him to pursue his creative pathway. He mentioned how having Rick on site as a member of the community was an inspiration to everyone.

On reflection, Hodge's association with the artist through proximity was a result of spending time with the artist over many days, months or years and can be attributed to Lowe's morphogenetic approach and friendship as a method (Davis, 2015).

4: Tango and participation

One evening I accompanied a member of staff at PRH to their monthly Argentinian Tango. They explained that there was no talking allowed during the dance and that dancers communicated through the gentle touching of heads, with one leading the other, but they don't know who will lead until the dance begins. Thankfully the session was not for beginners, and I enjoyed observing their tacit form of participation and collaboration. Their tango faces were super serious while they moved around the dance floor until the music stopped, then it was all smiles and casual chatter… then almost immediately back to super-serious tango faces as the music started again. I noticed a fleeting routine that they followed when looking for a partner to dance with; no verbal invitation, just eyes meeting and head nodding in agreement of a match up, then rushing into each other's arms to make the most of the 3-minute tracks.

The dancers were clearly of a particular skill level and experience, which arguably made the non-verbal form of communication accessible to them. They knew the non-verbal language, together with a knowledge of the dance moves, and they had an experience of being part of the temporary community,

and they met regularly to repeat the performance. The dancers and arguably everyone in attendance at the gathering was in some way part of the performance as Polanyi reminds us that we know and understand a thing, in this case, a person, through indwelling *'by entering into its performances, and we appreciate it as an individual, in the interests of which these performances have their meaning'* (2009:51). It suggested to me the existence of a tacit form of knowledge operating within a community and raised the question of how I might reveal and amplify in the way Tango does that knowledge through my social art practice; a question I explore in Chapter Four *[birdsong].*

5: The domino effect

I spent my final morning playing dominoes with resident Miss Marie and artists Jesse Lott and Rick Lowe (both of whom are credited with founding PRH). I asked if I could switch on the recorder to capture the sound of the dominoes and we just sat and played for 2 hours. Playing dominoes allowed me to observe Lowe as a member of his community from within the community. He spoke with a different accent to his Artworld accent, or indeed his guest accent, and was arguably talking as a member of the community. People were coming into the room to enquire about PRH tours, or to take part in the workshop (a repeat of the painting workshop which I had done at the start of my visit with painter Stephanie) and all the time Lowe was playing dominoes, greeting people, commenting on the workshop, and feeding everyone with a bag of lychees from a brown paper carrier bag.

The community gave Lowe the utmost respect for what he started back in the 90s, along with Jesse Lott, to transform the block. They gave the community hope for a better future. The row houses have taken on symbolic meaning about local heritage, about black history.[51] This is a man at ground level and just because the community (and the art world) put him on a pedestal for his amazing achievements, he comes across as a man with his feet firmly on the ground. [52] Lowe and Lott, as founding members of PRH, are embedded in the

[51] PRH questions Helguera's argument that socially engaged practice is actual and not a symbolic practice. PRH controls a situation in an *'instrumental and strategic way in order to achieve a specific end'* (Helguera, 2011: 7).
[52] In 2014 Lowe was among the annual awards to 21 individuals in the USA from The MacArthur Fellows Program. The awards are commonly referred to as Genius Grants.

life of the block as the embodiment and spirit of the project. There was no pressure to get any information from anyone. No deadlines. No script, only the materiality of PRH: in this case, a couple of tables (one for the Dominoes, one for the painting), a safe space (the two-storey), and the freedom for people to be themselves.

Shapes of Water – Sounds of Hope (SOWSOH) by Suzanne Lacy

A participant observer's experience of a predominantly hylomorphic process.

SOWSOH offered me a unique opportunity to experience Lacy's project from the perspective of a participating member of the local community, and through this, to further understand my approach to social art. Taking up the role of participant-observer happened in a somewhat different way from PRH and it's important to acknowledge that while the context is different (one in my hometown and one elsewhere), I have aimed to be as reflexive as possible regarding my personal experiences and the observable behaviour of both lead artists and participants in the respective projects.[53]

To add some context to my involvement in SOWSOH, I present here some background information. I was involved in the initiation of the project by inviting Suzanne to visit Lancashire to talk about her work at the University of Central Lancashire, where I worked as a lecturer in Fine Art. During a director's meeting to establish our long-term plans at In-Situ, Lacy's name was on a list of people we would like to have a conversation with about social art.[54] As part of the invitation, we (the other directors of In-Situ: Paul Hartley and Kerry Morrison) saw it as an opportunity to introduce Lacy to the projects that we were delivering in Pendle, and we had hoped it would lead to a collaborative project between Lacy and In-Situ. However, during a conversation with Laurie Peake, the director of the newly formed Super Slow Way (SSW), we were informed that Lacy was not interested in collaborating (with In-Situ) but would be happy to deliver a project in Pendle. Peake had met Lacy during her time living in LA and offered to liaise with her about a project for our area.

Around the same time, it was agreed during a meeting between In-Situ and Peake that SSW was in a better position financially to support such a project and that SSW would be the major funder and that In-Situ would be a producer,

[53] Having visited PRH twice as an artist, (2011, 2012 before the start of SOWSOH), I revisited PRH once again in 2018 with a critical eye more akin to my research observations of SOWSOH.
[54] It was a business strategy meeting to set up aims and objectives of In-situ: the concept was around who we would like to have to dinner, if we had the budget, Kerry was a big fan of Lacy's since being a student, and I had also come across her work during my art school research.

acting as a conduit to local community groups. One of the other In-Situ directors Kerry Morrison and I (both fans of Lacy's since art school) were disappointed at not being able to work with Lacy, but we could see the benefit of Lacy doing a project in our local area. Paul Hartley took on the role of producer, Kerry became a volunteer, and I aimed to turn my disappointment into something positive by being a local participant in the project and documenting my experiences as part of my PhD research. I was very excited at the prospect of learning about the potential materials of Lacy's social art practice.

The SOWSOH activities included an initial introductory meeting with the artist and local community groups including male Sufi chanters, a mother's group and individual members of the immediate community. I present here a series of instances from my position as a participant observer, which indicates an approach to working with people much different to PRH.

Fig. 33 Workshop 1, participants talking with Suzanne Lacy (Titley 2016).

The following anecdotes are taken from fieldnotes, which I wrote immediately after each encounter with a SOWSOH activity, and which reveal something of the nature of Lacy's approach to making social art, and something of my art practice.

1: Workshop Two, finding a focus

After the initial introduction to the SOWSOH project, I perceived the sessions as part of what felt like an organised timetable working towards the generation of a predesigned output. My realisation of this occurred during this second meeting, which included a demonstration of Sufi Chanting and Shape-note singing. That second workshop was more formal than the first, this time with seating arranged in a square and a circle, as opposed to all facing the front for a presentation.

Fig. 34 Workshop Two, Ron Pen teaching Shapenote to the participants (Titley 2016).

There were several Sufi Chanters (more than the first session) and a Shape-Note expert from Kentucky called Ron Pen, who believes that '*Musical harmony forges social harmony'* (Lacy, 2017).[55] We all took seats in the circle of chairs and as the Sufi chanting began in the centre of the circle, the chanters began to sway ever so gently to the rhythm. Afterwards, one of the chanters explained that the lyrics were not religious, which prompted a female participant (from the non-Muslim community) to question the inclusion of the word *Allah* in the chant. He answered by saying '*it's just another word for god'* (Titley, 2017b).

It concerned me that the question had been dismissed without further exploration through debate, especially given the dialogical nature of Lacy's previous projects. *The Oakland Projects* (1991-2001) for example, brought together different social groups (especially the police and young people), who engaged in dialogue to learn about each other and work through issues. I had hoped (assumed) that Lacy's project in Pendle would engage communities in that same kind of learning experience.[56]

The question from the participant did not affect proceedings, and without sounding melodramatic the lady's voice was silenced, due in part to a project focused on the aim of teaching the community to Sufi Chant and sing Shape-note. In the context of social art material, her voice was not needed and the act of ignoring its potential points me to begin to identify a predominately hylomorphic approach; a focus on sourcing material as a means to the end of making the artist's vision. The question wasn't explored openly as part of the project and suggests that the voices (the materiality) sought at that time were Sufi Chants or Shape-notes. The question was perceived as insignificant material, a fleeting minor gesture.

I felt at that point, that the project had suddenly become focused on something beyond the things in the room (the community), and that certain decisions had already been made regarding how, and what was going to be made. The Sufi

[55] Pen's quote is taken from the SOWSOH booklet, which was given to attendees of the community dinner in 2017, containing profiles of the artist, collaborators, producers, and supporters of the SOWSOH project.
[56] Given the duration of The Oakland Projects, there was never going to be enough time in SOWSOH to work through any issues to the same degree.

chanting group and the Kentucky Shape-note expert were central to the project and the rest of the community were peripheral material, or perhaps some kind of contextual backdrop. We could either witness others participating (singing), or we could attempt to learn how to participate (how to sing Shape-Note or Sufi Chanting). The remaining sessions proceeded around the performance and practice of the Sufi Chanting and the Kentucky Shape-note singing.

2: Workshop Three, shape notes

The practice of shape-note singing proved to be a disempowering experience for me and it was during this first official practice in Workshop Three that I felt rejected by process. Participants were given 3 pieces of paper in varying sizes, a musical score on A4 (Fig. 35), a short song on A4 and a small piece of paper with the Shape-note symbols on it (Fig.36).

Pen then began to explain the sounds of the symbols Far, Sol, La, and Mi and then went into singing the words on the song/music sheet. After the first line, I was completely lost and couldn't catch up as Pen quickly switched from the score sheet to the song sheet and all the time referenced the symbol sheet. I felt like I had just been squeezed out of the project; alienated by my lack of Shape-note skills going unnoticed by the facilitator. Unaware of it at the time, I was invisible material, my materiality went unseen by a hylomorphic focus on the final artwork, which was to create the '*best quality of sound possible*' (Lacy et al., 2017).[57]

[57] The Public Talk on aesthetics and ethics in the SOWSOH project.

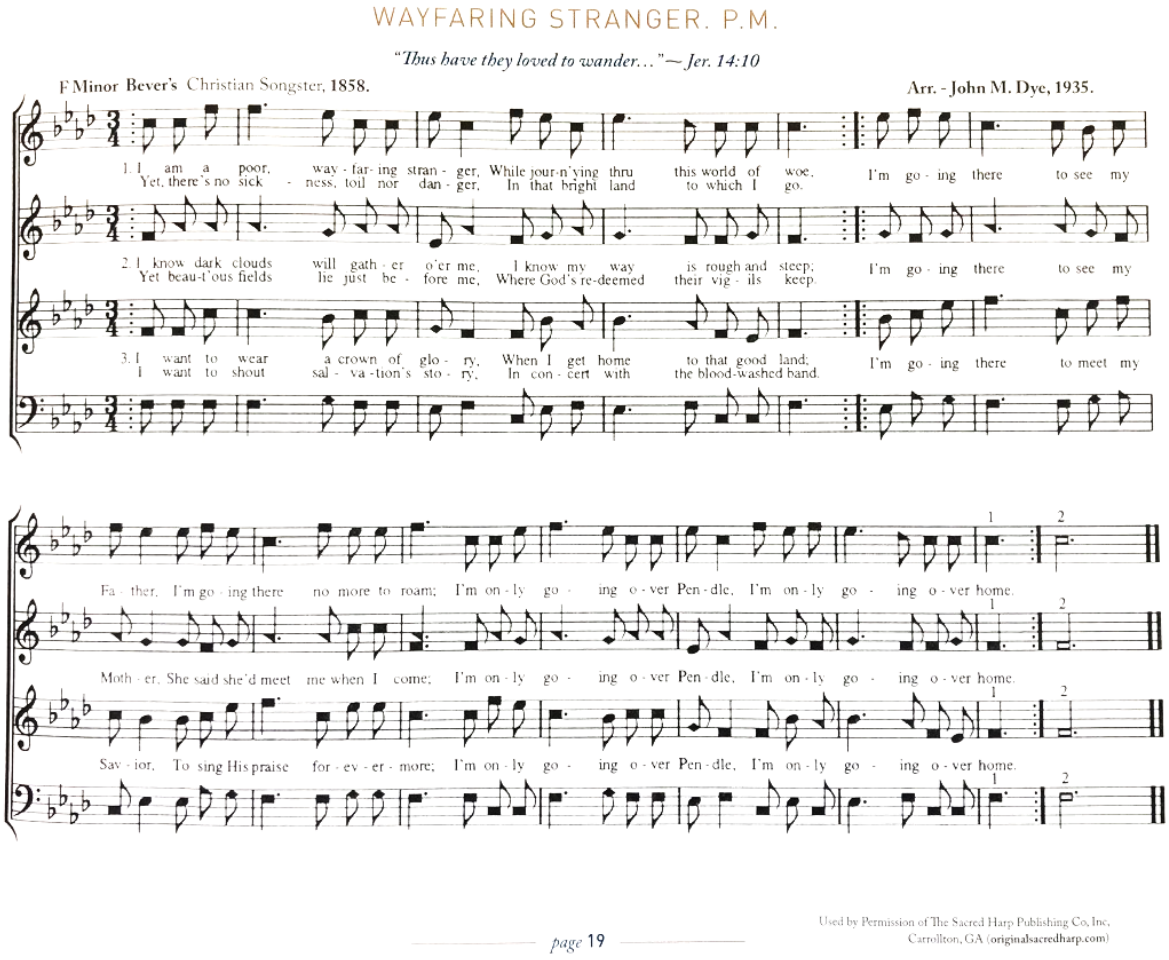

Fig. 35 Musical song sheet, from the project book *Shapes of Water-Sounds of Hope* (Lacy, 2017).

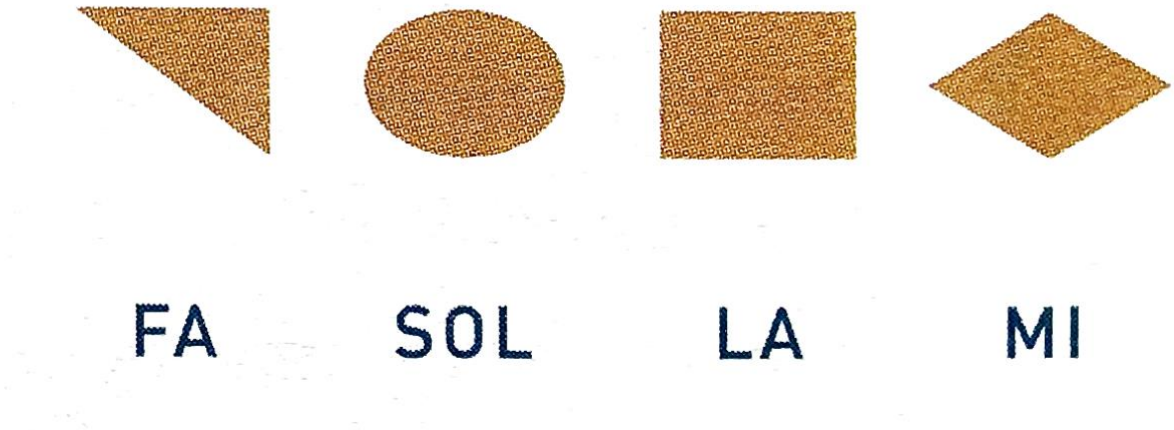

Fig. 36 Shape-note symbols/sounds from the project book *Shapes of Water-Sounds of Hope* (Lacy, 2017).

I was disconcerted by the speed at which Pen passed through the demonstration that I was incapable of joining in with the Sufi Chanting part of the session. During the introduction, one chanter pointed out that when they sang the word, Allah, that '*it's not the Allah as in God but in 'A la carte'* (Titley, 2017).[58] I came away from the evening believing that I could not sing Shape-note. With hindsight I felt it should have been made clear from the start, that we were participating in a competition to find or train a company of Shape-note singers, to which high standards of singing we might not attain, thus being eliminated (voluntarily or otherwise) from the project.

Had it not been for my research, there were some key moments during that 3rd workshop where, as a member of the local participating community, I would have dropped out of the SOWSOH project. They are listed below.

- My inability to read sheet music (Fig. 35)
- My inability to make sense of the Shape-note symbols (Fig. 36)
- My feeling that the project had a fixed agenda, a top-down approach, with little room for it to grow from the ground up through a collective experience with the materiality of participants and the place.

While my negative experiences are in part pedagogical and could be attributed to me having ADHD, the third point is more critical of a predominantly hylomorphic approach, with evidence of having a fixed vision and a focus on gathering the material to film two very particular groups of singers.[59]

3: Workshop Four, being brave

I shared my experiences informally with a fellow director of In-Situ: Paul Hartley who was the SOWSOH producer, working closely with Lacy. And in

[58] The question raised at the previous session by a female participant was 'if as you say it's not a religious thing, then why is the word *Allah* repeated in the chant?'.

[59] At a 'planning meeting' (Workshop Four), we were informed that there would be a community dinner with singing. A female participant suggested adding some local songs to the list and one of the official singers explained how the Shapenote and Sufi connection was very important to the project, and how they will form the central piece of audio for the whole event, and that other forms of singing could occupy the perimeter of the plan. The 'planning meeting' was about organising volunteers to help manage the event. I had naively assumed it was about planning the next stages of the project (Workshop Four).

session 4 Lacy and Pen (Shape-note expert) were absent and Hartley introduced participants to a new element of the project: collecting oral histories (via video interview) regarding life in the old mill where In-Situ was based, and where Lacy's completed artwork (film) would be premiered. Participant numbers had been dropping steadily with each session and this additional element suggested an attempt to attract participants through a new angle of engagement, a connection to the people and place. It engaged with collective histories and the exhibition site. Whether this was a response to my feedback or not, the project appeared to be aiming for a more meaningful relationship with the community and the materiality of the site.

During the introduction to that session, we were encouraged by a member of the production team, to write down some questions about local communities that we would '*normally consider important but too scared to ask'* (Titley, 2017). Our host then went on to speak about being '*brave enough to ask questions and to accept questioning from others'*, and Laurie Peake (from SSW) added how internationally important the project was, stating that there was *'no other community in the UK asking these kinds of questions and working through them like us'* (Titley, 2017). To me their introduction contradicted the way that the question in a previous workshop (about the inclusion of the word *Allah* in the chanting) had been dealt with; it had been neither accepted nor worked through in any collective way.[60]

That was my last workshop, the remaining sessions were scheduled for organising and preparing volunteers for the main event and for the singers who made it to the final performance to practice. Despite not participating in those final sessions, I was excited and looking forward to the final performance at the community banquet.

4: The performance

I received my ticket for the big event through the mail and I ordered one each for my sister and my mum, who used to work at the mill. Each ticket would only be sent out to the address of the participant and my mum and sister felt very

[60] I heard from Paul Hartley that a private conversation was had with the lady who had asked the question. My point was that it was not worked through with the community (2022).

special to receive their tickets, complete in a golden envelope. The tickets themselves were equally fancy and we felt privileged to be going to such an event on 1st Oct 2016. We got wrapped up (as instructed in the accompanying letter) and were among the first people to arrive.

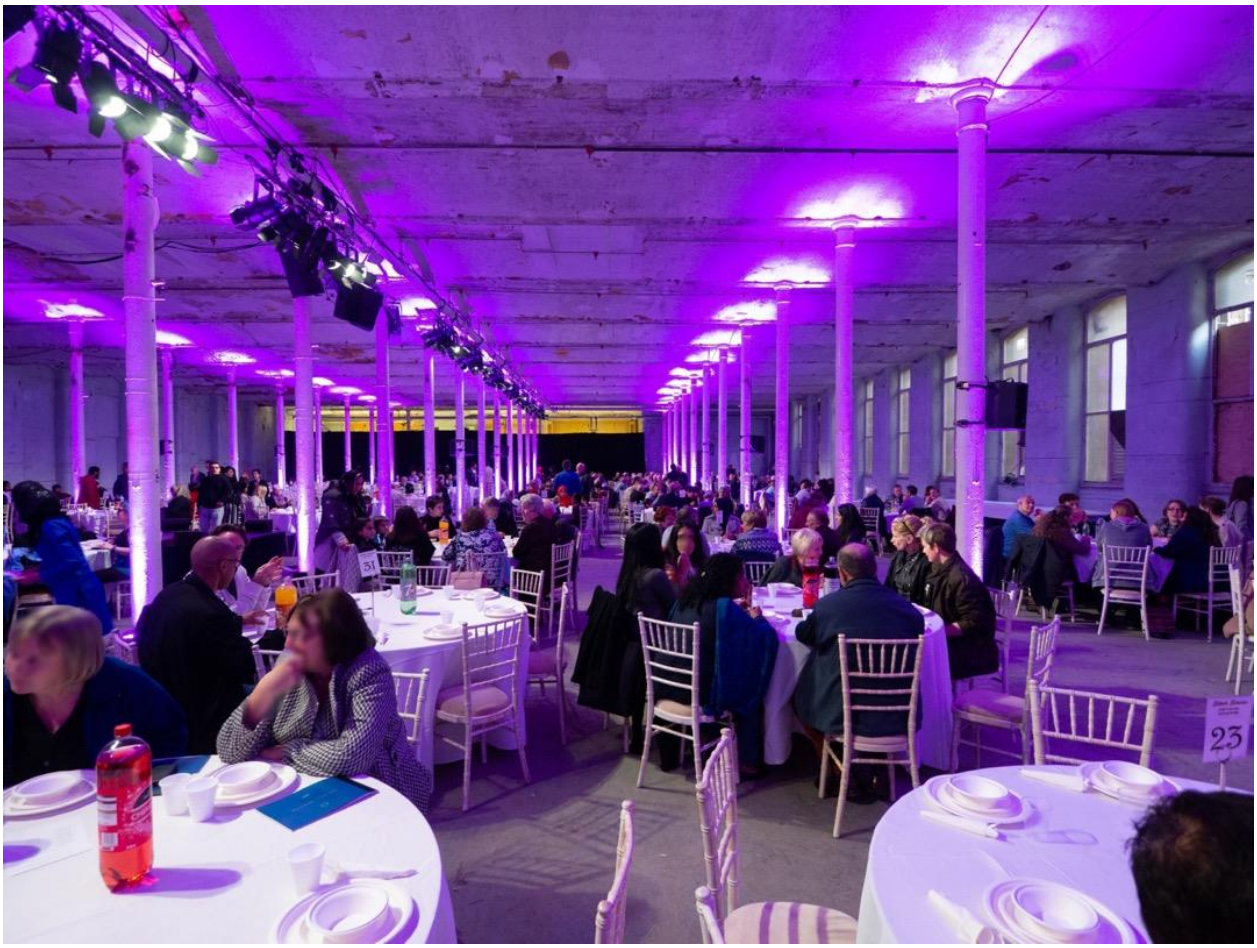

Fig. 37 *Shapes of Water – Sounds of Hope* (SOWSOH) Celebration Meal (Titley 2016).

Guided to our allocated table, a local singer enquired as to why I wasn't at the Shape-note singing event earlier that day. I couldn't hide my disappointment and replied, '*I wasn't aware of that, but I'm sure I'll enjoy the big performance tonight*'. He went on to explain that the main Sufi Chanting and Shape-note performance was executed earlier in the day and that the evening was only the community dinner and a short collaborative performance by three local people: himself, a local folksinger and a local singer-songwriter.

I was very disappointed at missing the culmination of all the hard work by everyone involved. It had been going on all day upstairs on the 1st floor of the mill and was filmed. That moment confirmed to me that my role had

significantly changed since being eliminated from the Shape-note singing sessions. I was no longer a participant in the production of the artwork, I was an audience member invited to attend a community dinner.

That is the last of my journal notes from my participation in SOWSOH.

An effect of the hylomorphic

After the major event (the final singing performance and the evening dinner), additional details arose concerning another participant's experience of the project, which revealed a potential side-effect of the hylomorphic approach to working with materials, in this case, its negative impact on the lives of people.

The day after the community dinner event (1st Oct 2016), I heard from Paul Hartley (the producer) how a participant had been left '*devastated*' after being omitted from the final performance (earlier that day) due to a lack of chairs for all the singing participants. The floor manager (one of Lacy's students from OTIS College, California) had been instructed by the artist (Lacy) not to change the number of 40 chairs (Titley and Hartley, 2022).

As an artist, a participant and a member of the community I was completely shocked to learn that a participant was treated that way after investing so much time and energy in practising Shape-note singing. All three directors at In-Situ (Paul Hartley, Kerry Morrison and myself) voiced our concerns to Lacy regarding the treatment of the participant which not only conflicted with how we (In-Situ) had been working with the community up to that point (for 5 years) but also shattered our assumptions of Lacy's approach. We had assumed, based in part on Lacy's writings (*Mapping The Terrain* 1995, *The Oakland Projects* 1991-2001 etc.) that Lacy worked in the same way that we had been doing, with a focus on the social care of participants, not dissimilar to PRH. [61]

I also learned from Paul Hartley that most of the Shape-note singers in the final performance had been transported in from around the UK's Shape-note singing network to make up the participant numbers and to increase the quality of the Shape-note singing (Titley and Hartley, 2022). This raised a question

[61] The source of our assumptions about Lacy's methods can be attributed to the documentation, representation, dissemination, and the mythology of social art projects in books and journals etc.

for me regarding the omission of the local participant, who for me was an important part of the materiality of the place: Why had they, as a local participant who had invested so much time in the project, lost their seat to additional singers who had just arrived for the major event at the last minute so-to-speak?

Forming an art shape

In a bid to unpick the situation, I will now pull together 4 interviews recorded as part of the research in an attempt to reflect on these experiences and their meaning for the research questions. I use them here to present the different perspectives and to unpick the incident where a local participant lost their seat in the final performance because there weren't enough chairs.

- 2017 in public with Lacy and a panel of speakers
- 2017 in person with both Lacy and Paul Hartley
- 2021 via the telephone with the participant affected by the chair incident.
- 2022 in person with Paul Hartley

Almost a year had passed when the film '*The Circle and The Square'* (TCATS)[62] premiered at the same empty mill where it was recorded in Pendle, Lancashire (14th September 2017). The name change (from SOWSOH) represented the shift from the *social* half of Lacy's practice to the *art* half (Lacy and Kester, 2008). As part of the TCATS (the film) exhibition launch there was a public discussion to unpick some of the issues of social art and I caught up with the artist (and Paul Hartley) the day before the public discussion to learn more about the situation with the participant and the chair, described by Lacy as '*a moment in the project that if we look at it without judgement is an interesting point'* (Titley et al., 2017).

Lacy put a question to Hartley about '*how could we value a local participant over someone who had travelled many miles to participate?'*, and Hartley argued that it was because of the '*time and energy invested'* by the local

[62] '*The Circle and The Square'* (2017) (TCATS) is the film created from the footage of the singing performances at the end of the project '*Shapes of Water – Sounds of Hope'* 2016.

participant at that point of the project (Titley et al., 2017). I explained that '*I would have installed another chair without hesitation'* and while our conversation identified a significant moment in the project where ethics came up against the aesthetics of the artist, for me it also differentiated SOWSOH not only from PRH but from the way In-Situ had been working with the community since 2012 (Titley et al., 2017).[63]

The following day the public discussion, organised by SSW, took place in a central community space (the old council buildings in town). It was promoted as…

> *'Suzanne Lacy (Artist, Writer and Lecturer at USC Roski School of Fine Arts) and a panel of artists and curators unpick practice, process, product and people; discussing the aesthetics and ethics of socially engaged practice and the challenge of presenting it in the gallery.' Laurie Peake (Director of Super Slow Way) will chair the discussion and will be joined by Ailbhe Murphy (Artist and Director of Create Ireland), Rauf Bashir (Director of the Free Spiritual Centre and Building Bridges Pendle) Paul Hartley (Director of In-Situ), Carolyn Hassan, (Director of Knowle West Media Centre, Bristol), William Titley (Artist, Lecturer at UCLAN and Founding Director of In-Situ) and Alistair Hudson (Director of Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art)*
>
> (SuperSlowWay Website, 2022).

In the public discussion, Hartley raised the issue regarding the local participant in the context of it putting him in an uncomfortable situation (as a producer and as a local person), and while he understood that Lacy had always said that there would come a point in the project where she would oversee the aesthetic part of the production, he felt that the moment had stuck with him. Both Murphy and Hudson discussed the transitional challenges of making a social artwork that then had to move into the art world. Lacy pointed out that the gallery/museum allows the artist to achieve *'a level of aesthetic pleasure that*

[63] Lacy's question about how we could value one participant over another raises an interesting point about ownership within social art projects and is beyond the scope of this thesis.

you can't when working in the community', which supports her thinking for defining two parts to her practice: one where she can engage with the community and one where she can focus on '*the shape'*, or form of those relations (Lacy and Kester, 2008; Lacy et al., 2017).

The overall discussion identified a shift in museum thinking from places to go and observe objects, to places more akin to social art projects, where people can go and participate in creative pedagogic events. In defence of the artist making objects, Lacy shared an anecdote that attributed Allan Kaprow's artworld invisibility (in his lifetime 1927-2006) to him not having an '*art professional mechanism'* in place. Unlike Joseph Beuys, who made objects for collectors to pick up in the '*wake'* of his creative processes, which suggests that Beuys may have had a belief in the currency of the art object equating to visibility on the art world stage (Lacy et al., 2017).

Hartley pointed out that Lacy was always *'looking at the image'* in SOWSOH, and she stated that the challenge in SOWSOH was *'How do we work authentically in, and with this community, to make something that will represent this community and move back into a museum or a screening and move into another world and represent it'* (Lacy et al., 2017). The SOWSOH project, at that point, was in transition out of the local context from which it was made to a more symbolic representation of that context as a contemporary work of art. This transitional point within social art practice flags up not only the concerns of Kester and Bishop (See Chapter One) regarding ethics and aesthetics but also makes visible the hylomorphic approach and its focus on making some *thing* for exhibition at the expense of the materiality of social art.

I left the discussion desperately wanting to hear the participant's perspective regarding their eviction from the artwork due to the lack of a chair, but I was aware that they were still upset by their experience, and they were not at that time ready to talk about it. [64] [65]

[64] I liaised with Paul Hartley; he was in contact with the participant.
[65] Instead, influenced by my experiences of PRH and SOWSOH I focused my attention on making a new work called [birdsong] (2019), which I will discuss in Chapter Four.

It was late 2021 when Lacy was having an exhibition of her projects at The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, and the film TCATS was included in the exhibition that Hartley informed me that In-Situ was taking a busload of participants to the exhibition launch evening and that it would be a good opportunity to meet the participant and record their side of the story.[66] I planned to catch up with the participant at the preview evening. However, they didn't arrive, and I learned from Hartley that they had travelled on the bus with the other participants but didn't go into the gallery for fear of Covid infection and made their travel arrangements to return home instead (via public transport). Liaising with Hartley, I caught up with the participant on the telephone a few weeks later in November 2021 and asked them about their experience of participating in SOWSOH. The following is made up of notes from the transcripts of my interviews with the participant in 2021 and a separate interview with Lacy and Hartley in 2017.

From the telephone interview, I learned that both she and her husband were experienced singers, herself having sung in choirs since school days, and while she thought the Shape-note system was '*different*' she had '*managed to get her head around it'*. She and her husband '*had taken part in the rehearsals every week, in anticipation of being a part of it'* (the final performance) and I was surprised to learn that they hadn't yet seen the film (*The Circle and the Square: 2017*), despite it premiering in the local mill, and with it being exhibited at The Whitworth Gallery 35 miles away in Manchester [67] (Titley, 2021).

She went on to explain that she couldn't remember much about the incident but did remember an issue involving two chairs (not one). With help from her husband in the background, she told me that they volunteered to step back because they felt that there were better singers in the group now that more established Shape-note singers had joined them for the film shoot.[68] This to me suggests that there was an awareness among local participants of the

[66] They had agreed that we could catch-up at the exhibition launch to talk about their experience on SOWSOH.
[67] The reason for them not having seen the film at that point is interesting in the context of the potential psychological impact of the project on participants but it is beyond the scope of this thesis.
[68] According to Hartley, the additional and more established singers were brought in from as far away as Scotland and were contacted via the UK network of Shape-note singing groups (Titley and Hartley, 2022).

artist wanting the best quality of Shape-note singing possible: no doubt emphasised by the artist herself, but also by the arrival of extra and more experienced Shape-note singers to make up the 40 chair arrangement. The situation was defined not by a desire from the artist to capture the local community of singers using the best recording techniques and equipment available but by the artist's wish to create a vision to capture the highest level of quality Shape-note performance; this consequently led to literally (and symbolically) silencing two members of the participating local community (omitting the materiality of the community and place).

Hartley in conversation with Lacy and me (2017), explained that the floor manager hadn't heard any singing at that point and had made the decision to ask for volunteers on '*the logistics of numbers'*, but also noted that the floor manager '*didn't have a relationship with us,*' which suggested a disconnect with participants, which might have led to the situation escalating into the '*interesting moment'* (Lacy et al., 2017; Titley et al., 2017).

The two conversations (one with the affected participants and one with Lacy and Hartley) revealed something of the aesthetic aims of the artist's vision. The fixed position and quantity of chairs, together with a need to capture the best quality Shape-note singing signified that aesthetic shift in the project, away from the social towards the production of a very particular kind of art object aligned to western contemporary aesthetics, as purporting "*to make something that will represent this community*." The situation made visible a point of conflict between the two realms of the 'social' and the 'art' and reminds us of what Claire Bishop sees as that '*necessary tension'*, which prevents any reconciliation between the two realms (Bishop, 2012: 278). Lacy has developed one way to navigate the complexities of the in-betweenness of social artist practices and its dual function of social change and as cultural objects, which is successful in meeting established artworld conventions about how professional artworks should look and sound.

Audience, participant and participation

To illustrate a potential relationship between ethics and aesthetics, I use a participation diagram from Lacy's '*Mapping the Terrain'*, with its *'permeable*

membranes' allowing people to move between layers, back and forth Fig. 38 (Lacy, 1995: 180). Considering the layers, I suggest that the ethical-aesthetic relationship in social art might be sometimes understood as behaving like tectonic plates between each layer: as two fragile crusts created by the perpetual friction, pressed firmly against each other. Occasionally, through the build-up of tension in social art processes, the crusts shift violently in opposite directions, causing '*devastating*' effects to some of the materiality and *'interesting'* effects to others,[69] depending on their position in the circles at the time (Lacy et al., 2017; Titley et al., 2017).

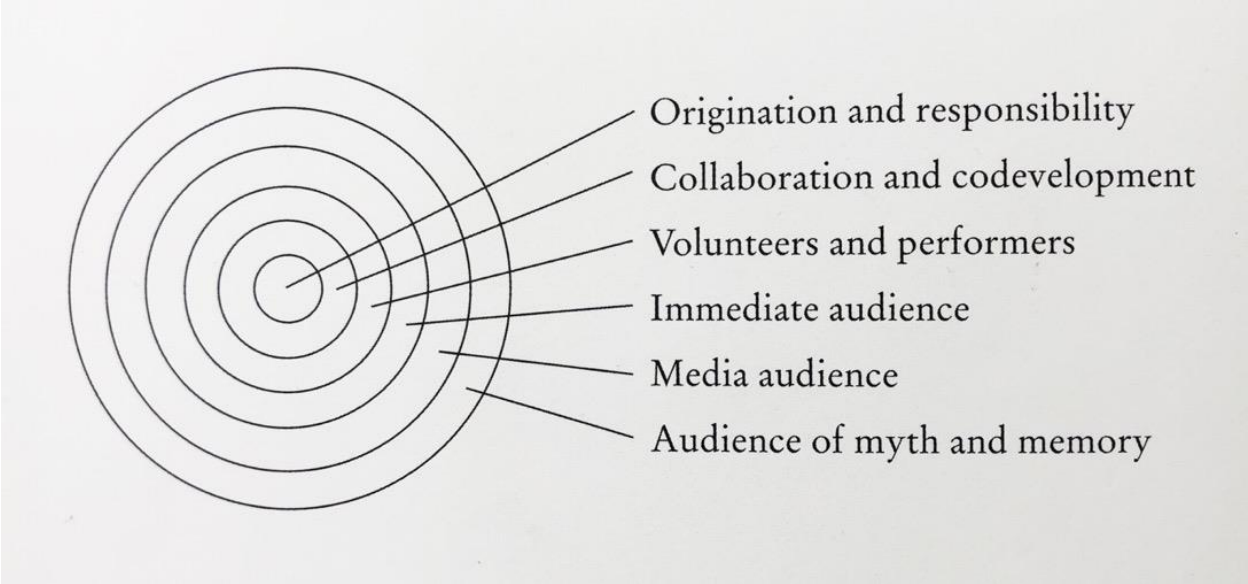

Fig. 38 Diagram of audiences, '*Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*' (Lacy, 1995: 178).

The notion of an ethical-aesthetic crust (a presence) between the layers recognises that people might not flow from one level to the other without consequences. I, for example, experienced a journey through the different levels by participating in the SOWSOH project. Initially as a project partner in the early planning stages (as a director of In-Situ), as a member of the local community (as potential material invited to participate), as a participant in the process of making the artist's vision (as useful materiality), as a disempowered participant (as unsuitable material for the artists' vision), then returning once again as a participating audience member of the local community (as material

[69] Paul Hartley, at the Public Conversation, regarding the situation with the chair in SOWSOH, he described the participant as being '*devastated*', and Lacy described it as '*concerning'* and *'interesting'* (Lacy et al., 2017; Titley et al., 2017).

for the mass-participation event/community dinner), and finally as a secondary audience for the screening in the gallery in Manchester in 2021.

Referring to Grant Kester's proposed model for a dialogical aesthetic and its inclusion of an ethical component for evaluating social art projects, we can imagine how the '*interesting moment'* might have registered a potential flaw in SOWSOH. Meanwhile, on the register of contemporary art aesthetics, it might show up as a concern and *'interesting'*, albeit in pursuit of a beautiful thing [70] [71] (Lacy et al., 2017; Titley et al., 2017).

In conversation with Kester, Lacy confirmed that the aesthetic, for her, is always with the artwork and not in the process and that she considers her practice existing in two parts: the social and the artistic (Lacy and Kester, 2008). The hylomorphic approach evident in SOWSOH focused on producing a work of art (the film TCATS) for exhibition in a gallery and dominated the direction of the project and created two parallel project timelines (the social and the aesthetic). One timeline worked with the material towards producing the artist's vision (SOWSOH activities provided material for the film TCATS) and the other timeline worked with the material to bring to the fore the topic of social cohesion (SOWSOH activities leading to the community dinner event). Both timelines represent the modus operandi of Lacy's social art practice.

Conclusion

Both the PRH and SOWSOH case studies represent contextually successful and effective ways of navigating the social and the art world, through the artist's engagement with the materiality of social art practice. On the one hand, the SOWSOH case study suggests an overall hylomorphic approach, with a focus on gathering and working with the materiality to create/develop the artist's vision, in this case, to produce a recording of two sets of singers. The social materiality is in service to the vision. On the other hand, the PRH case

[70] Lacy explained '*it really is of concern, … it really is an interesting thing to look at without judgment, I mean really without judgment, if one could extract ones moral values in a sense or ones condemnation of 'one is right and one is wrong', then could really look at that as an interesting moment'*… and raised the question 'at what point does a social action end up coming up against an aesthetic decision?' (Lacy interviewed by Titley 2017).

[71] On several occasions during the Public Discussion (2017), the artist, the other panel members and audience members used the term '*beautiful'* when referring to Lacy's film TCATS.

study suggests an overall morphogenetic approach, influenced heavily by the potential of the materiality to define the form of the artwork (the artwork as the life of the community in that place).

Returning briefly to the two photographs of chairs and people presented at the beginning of the chapter, these can be seen to operate as metaphors for the two artistic approaches to working with people and place and consequently represent two different art aesthetics. On the one hand, we see a composed and carefully choreographed arrangement where people position themselves in a preconceived structure (SOWSOH Fig. 30, p99), and on the other hand, we see an arrangement co-composed by the materiality – the actions of people and the place, and the environment in PRH (Fig. 31, p100).

The SOWSOH arrangement of chairs might be the result of subscribing to what Saito describes as '*twentieth-century Anglo-American aesthetics'* and the arrangement at PRH might be the result of an underlying (and as-yet-undefined) social art aesthetic (Saito, 2017: 10). The SOWSOH chairs are fixed in number and position and are in the final stages of becoming the artist's vision: metaphorically speaking they represent the point at which an artist might press soft clay into a skilfully crafted inflexible mould. The chairs were a core part of the artwork, which formalised a group of people singing in harmony. Lacy had insisted that they could not be any more or less than 40 chairs in the filming of the community singing, and it led to a member of the local community being left out of the final artwork. The rigid composition parameters revealed a moment of conflict between ethics and aesthetics and imply that if the social artist leans too far towards either of them, it becomes problematic. Too far towards the social and one might end up making social work rather than social art, and too far towards an aesthetic and one might end up making poor social art due to a lack of ethical considerations about how a community are given agency and ownership in an artwork purporting to represent them and their concerns.

The second photograph of chairs (Fig. 31) at the PRH 25-year celebration event shows groups of chairs around tables for the participants/audiences to sit and hear formal speeches, and life-changing stories from the *Young*

Mothers Programme.[72] The photographer position is among the audience-actor participants, and some participants may have moved chairs around according to where they wanted to sit. Whatever their reasons, the photograph represents the freedom and presence of the community as an active material with a sense of collective agency. For me, the chairs evidence the materiality, and a community voice, proclaiming this is where/how we want to be, and is representative of an ethical-social aesthetic, which has also been influenced by the environment; chairs placed in the shade of the tree out of the searing Texas heat, and/or moving chairs closer or further away from other material (cool drinks table, other people etc).

The image reflects how PRH came to be what it is today and epitomizes the morphogenetic approach or process, and my experiences at PRH felt like I was a valued part of a thing in the process of becoming, part of the life on the block so-to-speak. That sense of being welcomed into the project (as part of the materiality) enabled me to wander around and be a part of life, which is no coincidence given that life can be framed as art and was a motivating factor for Lowe setting up PRH in the 1990s, heavily influenced by Joseph Beuys' concept of social sculpture (Lowe, 2022b). Despite the project having a clear vision for the community and the Third Ward as a place of economic growth, there was room for other materials to participate and affect the direction of PRH, through the potential of multiple timelines.

The hylomorphic focus on making some *thing* and the morphogenetic inclusion of the potential of the material are elements of making that I explore in the next chapter. I reflect critically on the final artwork made as part of the PhD research, borne out of my personal experiences of participating in PRH and SOWSOH. I initiated, directed, edited and produced a film called *[birdsong]* with the aim of identifying and revealing the ethic-aesthetic potentials of the material in my social art practice, through a blend of the hylomorphic and the morphogenetic approaches.

[72] Providing housing and education for single mothers in Third Ward, Houston.

Chapter Four: Practice consolidation: [birdsong]

In this chapter, I explore the potential of applying both the hylomorphic and the morphogenetic to a social art project and examine the impact of seemingly insignificant material, and its materiality, upon the development of a completed artwork. I do this from a position embedded within the emergence of a project called *[birdsong]* (2019). I propose that the *[birdsong]* project models a new way to bring the often forgotten and intimate relational elements of social art practice into focus via the completed artwork by effectively shifting the social into material and shaping that materiality into an artwork.

Through reporting about the *[birdsong]* project, I share some of the interactions which took place between myself (the lead artist) and the participants and other materials (such as the environment), which I consider to be key moments in the development of the artwork that also reveal hidden aspects of my creative process. I do this by drawing on my journal notes, made while the experiences were still fresh in my mind, which aim to illustrate the nuances of what could be described as the materiality of social art and its creative potential to affect the final artwork.

[birdsong] was the culmination of my PhD research. Through an intuitive and intimate meshwork of collaborative relations with people and place, it draws on ideas from Tim Ingold, Grant Kester, Yuriko Saito, and Erin Manning. In addition to my reflection on Manning, Saito, Kester and Ingold's ideas, my approach to making *[birdsong]* evolved from my previous social art projects, specifically the two practice-as-research projects in Chapter Two, *Gentlemen's Wardrobe (2016)* and *Time Machine* (2017), together with my first-hand experiences (Chapter Three) of participating in Suzanne Lacy's *The Shapes of Water – Sounds of Hope* in 2016-17 (SOWSOH), and Rick Lowe's *Project Row Houses* in 2018 (PRH).

Influenced by Kester's model for a dialogical aesthetic, the participants in *Gentlemen's Wardrobe (2016)* affected the direction of the project and those relations with participants and place were explored further in *Time Machine*

(2017) through a process of exchanging community memories and enabled a sense of collective memory to materialise in the space of the exhibited artwork. The idea of participants and other materialities being visible in the social artwork was explored further in *[birdsong]* from my position as part of that social materiality. Working with the hypothesis that the materiality of social art is often forgotten because it was used in the process of creating an artwork, as part of the creative process, I aim to present it not as pre-artwork material/process but as the actual artwork itself: theoretically shifting the status of the social art materiality (minor gestures) to a position of being the artwork, which I will argue offers the potential to transform social art practice. In other words, I'm proposing to reveal the often-unseen materiality of social art as the artwork itself, not as documentary supporting material, but as the final work of art and as representative of the material relations of the project; thus, the relations between all the material become the artwork. I'm not proposing that all materiality is always artwork, I'm presenting the material relations of the creative process as the artwork.

The chapter is in two parts. Part One: Venice Biennale (2017) explains the development of my thinking towards making *[birdsong]* and Part Two examines my creative process in the light of the PhD research and reflects on insights to my initial questions about what might be the materiality of social art. *[birdsong]* should be watched before reading this chapter.

https://youtu.be/xYLQyG6Ktdg?si=0HgutLg1BUH86_BD

Part One: Venice Biennale (2017)

I have often felt that something was not quite right when faced with social artwork presented in a gallery environment. As part of the audience who was not privy to the live event (in that sense as a secondary audience), I am usually presented with the remnants or artefacts of some past event, and while I appreciate the project as art, I am left feeling somewhat ill at ease. It was during a visit to The Venice Biennale in 2017 when the possibility of two aesthetics revealed itself to me most clearly and the following is a brief account of that experience in Venice informed by notes in my personal diary.

I visited the official biennale sites: the Arsenale[73], and the Pavilion Gardens, which presented hundreds of international artworks in many formats: sculpture, film, 2D, performance and social art projects not dissimilar to PRH and SOWSOH. It was in the Arsenale where I saw '*A stitch in time'* by David Medalla (1968 – ongoing); an installation comprising of a long sheet of fabric hanging (like a hammock) from the ceiling, which had paper tags and other ephemera attached to it (Fig.39). The work had been exhibited in different venues around the world, and Medalla invites the audience to embroider onto the fabric thus rendering them both authors and performers. However, there was no one contributing embroidery during my visit, and I experienced the work as an artefact of past contributions/performances.

Nearby was a large ceramic sculpture by South Korean artist Yee Sookyung made from fragments of broken vessels glued together using gold: a Japanese technique known as Kintsugi, used for repairing broken pottery (Fig. 40). The work was catalogued as an object borne out of a collaborative process where, during a residency in Italy, the artist heard collective and personal stories related to the ceramic manufacturing industry (Exhibition Guide, 2017). In contrast to Sookyung's work, in the exhibition, Medalla's installation

[73] One of two official exhibition venues at The Venice Biennale comprised several huge dockland warehouse spaces originally used to house artillery. The other venue comprised of Pavilions: a series of purpose-built exhibition spaces each one funded by a different country, thus in different architectural styles and exhibiting an artist from the respective country, and 2017 saw Louise Bourgeois in The British Pavilion.

encouraged the audience to add something to the form and attempted to extend the duration of the making process.

Fig. 39 *'A stitch in time'* by David Medalla, Arsenale, Venice Biennale 2017 (Titley 2017).

Fig. 40 '*Translated vase nine dragons in wonderland'*: Yee Sookyung, Arsenale, Venice Biennale (Titley 2017).

The two works appeared to me as representing two different aesthetics, one observing the object and the other attempting to represent a process through

the audience's participation in an emergent form. Sookyung's work didn't (and doesn't) invite the audience to participate in developing the form of the artwork, whereas Medalla's work was initiated by an invitation to participate and still offered (in the gallery) the opportunity to sew additional material onto the original textile hanging.

I had seen Medalla's installation on my first day in the city, and it had been puzzling me for the whole of my three-day visit. On my final day, I was making my way to the main bus terminal on the other side of the island, meandering through the maze-like alleyways and over tiny footbridges so typical of Venice. I chanced upon a fringe event in *The Garden of Ca' Bembo*,[74] a large plot of land owned by the University of Venice and used by student groups and local children throughout the summer for film screenings and other public events. It was a project called '*Indian Water - The Native American Pavilion'* (2017), by Oscar Tuazon & Nicholas Galanin who had recovered large wooden poles from the lagoon to form a circle representing a Native American Longhouse: a welcoming space for discussing access to clean water.

I entered the lawned enclosure, which was bustling with children, teachers, and university students. Some were sat in groups eating lunch, others were standing in groups in deep conversation. Given my lack of time, I swiftly walked around the garden and sheltered from the sun under a tree to take a couple of photos. Suddenly something occurred to me regarding the Medalla installation. Could this be what was missing; being amidst becoming the artwork, or artefact?

I felt much closer to the experience of the project, I was in the place, with the people, and I was amongst the action: as an observer, only time prohibited me from engaging further in the project. In *The Garden of Ca' Bembo*, the boundary between art to be observed and local life was blurred. There were

[74] The Venice Biennale represents artists (and attracts collectors/curators) from all around the world and thus attracts unofficial fringe activities during the period of the biennale. Outside of the official biennale venues, other artists and curators organise their own events across Venice effectively turning the city into one large art exhibition.

tables and chairs arranged inside the makeshift symposium space, and a printed schedule of discussion events.[75]

[75] My presence renders me a participant given that observation of the project is what drove the artists to install it, to be seen, to be heard on the global stage. I was part of the material, with potential just like the students, children etc. to get more fully involved in the fight for clean water.

Fig. 41 '*Indian Water – Native American Pavilion' by* Oscar Tuazon & Nicholas Galanin, Garden of Ca' Bembo, Venice Biennale (Titley 2017).

Fig. 42 '*Indian Water – Native American Pavilion'* by Oscar Tuazon & Nicholas Galanin (2017) Garden of Ca' Bembo, Venice Biennale (Titley 2017).

The objects (tables, chairs, flags, posters etc.) were not yet remnants of the project like the ones I had seen in the exhibition space; instead, they were still in use, and I experienced, albeit briefly, a moment of local life, the place and the people driven by collective energy, connected by their situation to another place on the other side of the Atlantic (I witnessed the materiality). I was not looking at the documentation of the process post-event. I was in the work of art itself: being so close to the community as they chatted about previous events in the space and prepared for their next scheduled session, I witnessed their collective energy and hope for a fair and sustainable future for the site and the community.

Exhibiting social art projects in a gallery frames them in what Saito (2017) refers to as a contemporary Western aesthetic: that of the object and the gaze of the major gesture (the spectacle). The gallery audience is usually faced with an artefact and/or documentation of the social process in the form of text and photos with little or no evidence of Manning's minor gestures: the materiality, including the decisions, random encounters, the relations with other potential material, which lead ultimately to the production of the artwork. I began to wonder what would happen by giving prominence to those elements of the social process in the final artwork, offering them as the artwork rather than documentation; all that materiality, those interactions, chance encounters and serendipitous relations with the site itself.

This raised questions for me. How might the social artwork be affected by shifting some of this seemingly insignificant material from a position of the minor to a collective major gesture? This question came to be the one I went on to explore in *[birdsong]* (2019). In Part Two, I examine the *[birdsong]* project through the presentation of field notes from my journals, made during the creative social process.

Part Two. [birdsong]

As a child, I remember being told of a movie that was filmed at a farm near the foot of Pendle Hill. Each time we passed the farmhouse on our annual walk up the hill,[76] I would think of the film called *Whistle Down the Wind*[77] (Forbes: 1961). The idea of remaking *Whistle Down the Wind* appealed to my long-term interest in people and place, and the more I thought about it, the more I got excited at the prospect of exploring the local landscape and working with the community. The resulting project *[birdsong]* emerged from a coming together of my social art practice in that place over many years and my PhD research.

My initial aim was to ask the community what they could remember about the film and whether they wanted to help remake it. With that in mind, I did a talk at the local film club to see if members wanted to help with the production and while a handful of people wanted to get involved, the logistics of synchronising their availability with that of the interviewees proved impossible, and after several weeks of being held up by the issue, I decided to press ahead without a film crew. I mention this here because it was a point in the early stages of the project where I realised the significance of my proximity to the lives of the community, which is revealed as the chapter progresses. Initially, I had tried to sync my life and that of the project to the lives of the camera crew and it wasn't until I decided to carry on without the camera crew that I realised how important it was to align my life with that of the actor participants, if any progress was to be made.[78]

[birdsong] is a 72-minute film that captured my intimate relations with the materiality of people, place and environment. *[birdsong]* explores local areas of outstanding natural beauty as people share memories in different places and then come together for a walk-up Pendle Hill and ended up in a shed on

[76] Referring to my early experiences of landscape in Chapter Two - Practice development: towards a new social art aesthetic.
[77] Starring Alan Bates and Hayley Mills and directed by Brian Forbes, the film follows the story of a group of children on a Lancashire farm who mistake a fugitive hiding in their barn for Jesus Christ.
[78] Trying to synchronize the availability of the camera crew with the availability of the actor participants held up the progress of the project.

an allotment discussing contemporary interpretations of the original film and an emerging topic of homelessness.

The project was initiated by me asking people what people could remember about the original movie *Whistle Down the Wind* starring Hayley Mills, which involved many local school children. This new film followed over 60 members of the local community as they remembered old scenes and imagined new ones while revealing the majestic presence and power of Pendle Hill and the surrounding countryside and inadvertently revealing contemporary social issues in the process. In the second stage of the project, I put a call out on social media for people to turn up at the foot of Pendle Hill in their Wellington Boots to be in a film and was surprised when 27 people and a dog turned up, including Diane Poole who starred in the original film as Hayley Mills' sister (Nan). Diane's experience of the original film was merged (as a voice-over) with footage of that community walk up Pendle Hill: the materiality was given space in the film.

There were three stages in the project, which I refer to in this chapter as Stage One: *Interviews*, Stage Two: *March of The Wellies* and Stage Three: *Man in a Shed*. I had intended the film to be a remake of *Whistle Down the Wind,* but circumstances and the influence of my research practice alerted me to the hylomorphic and morphogenetic approaches to making, and to the materiality (or minor gestures) overlooked in my practice, and I wanted to work with these more to examine my relations with material and the creative process: an approach where form emerges from the social.

Note: It is assumed at this point that the reader has watched the film *[birdsong]* 1:12:10 and ideally again (optional) after reading the thesis.
Please use the following link: https://youtu.be/xYLQyG6Ktdg

Initial interviews and editing of the footage.

I put a call out through my local community network via online social media and more directly through serendipitous social encounters as I went about my daily life. I interviewed sixteen people in their chosen locations and videoed the conversations using digital media, some indoors but mainly outdoors,

walking and talking in various places in East Lancashire. At this stage, I considered the footage part of the pre-production process for reshooting *Whistle Down the Wind* (1961) and began to go through it in search of information regarding potential locations and ideas for shooting the individual scenes. However, the materiality was often a conduit for further ideas, as can be seen in what follows.

Fig. 43 Walking and talking during the initial interviews: film still (*[birdsong]*, 2019).

The following are reflections from my field notes and reveal something of that creative process and start from the day I was faced with over fifteen hours of film footage collected from the interviews: my journal notes are denoted by the initials JN.

Technical process

> JN. *Not really knowing what to do next, I began to separate the footage into shorter clips according to the dialogue and organised*

> *them into folders based on items of clothing, phrases like 'it's not Jesus'*[79]*, or topics such as 'Pendle Hill'* (Titley, 2019).

The practical process of reorganising the footage into folders enabled me to see connections across the interviews and enhanced my relationship with the materiality of the participants (their thoughts and actions on screen).

Intimacy

> JN. *It felt somehow very intimate, almost intrusive: scrutinising every word that was spoken. I also felt vulnerable about my presence in the footage* (Titley, 2019).

The film editing process of intense listening/looking created in me a heightened sense of proximity to the participants.[80] I felt emotionally invested in them as I listened and watched their every nuance, reconnecting with the social encounter.

An emerging narrative

> JN. *This way of working directly with the footage (organising it into folders according to topic) provided me with a holistic view of the content, enabling me to correlate, connect, link and reveal narratives. More themes were revealed and cut and pasted into folders: cats, kids, clothing, fear, children playing, Jesus, adults, secrets, naivety, a woman's work, a child's place, rural life, mental health, power, religion, artists, teaching, historical, biblical, homelessness, technology. I needed a way of interweaving them together as one narrative* (Titley, 2019).

This organisational exercise of putting the footage in folders consequently led to the merging of all the narratives as they played on screen at the same time in a grid formation. It was a way to interweave the different interviews together as one narrative and was a necessity that inadvertently created the onscreen

[79] '*It's not Jesus, it's just a fella'* is a famous line from the original movie (Whistle Down the Wind, 1961) and used by the community in *[birdsong]* (2019).
[80] While the mechanics of my sense of proximity is interesting in the context of social art practice it is beyond the scope of the thesis.

aesthetic and highlighted how, in that process, I felt deep proximity to the actors and yet also some distance away, far enough for me to observe the materiality of the encounters.

Temporal shift

> JN. *The film editing process felt like time itself had slowed down, enabling me to observe more closely the relations and my intuitive decision-making. Specific sequences became visible to me only in the editing process, perceived in a way that was impossible during the original encounter* (Titley, 2019).

That crucial part of editing enabled me to stand back and see my social process.

Collective narrative

> JN. *I could see how during those moments, through a process of dialogue, I shared with the interviewee information from previous interviews, especially if they touched on similar topics. I observed how overall conversations evolved and grew richer with each additional encounter through an intuitive, creative and collectively dynamic process* (Titley, 2019).

I acted as a conduit, a medium through which the collective materiality of the dialogue was composed.

In and out of control

> JN. *A collage of conversation ultimately emerged as a collective voice through my voice (as editor) and vice versa: my voice emerged (as a participant) within the collective narrative and was embodied via the film editing process. It was a kind of emergence; the film was emerging from a complex editing process. I wasn't editing a pre-existent script towards a vision, I was teasing out an emerging film, allowing a film to reveal itself from the plethora of audio-visual artefacts. The process involved re-experiencing*

footage of the people, landscape, the weather, and time itself, and sometimes all those things on the screen at once. There was a coincidental audio-visual choreography going on between the enunciators and the continual movements of the other 'silent' interviewees during the 16 heads onscreen at the same time (Fig. 44) (Titley, 2019).

Fig. 44 Interviews in a grid format, film still ([birdsong], 2019: 16:11).

It was at that point that I realised I wasn't in complete control of the medium; on the contrary, as the artist, I was engaged in revealing its form. As the editor of the emerging narrative, I was responsible for ordering the sequences in a way that made sense to me, and that was also accessible to the audience.

A practical idea

JN. *During this painstakingly complex method of editing, there was a moment when I had all the films in my head at the same time, together with an urgency to manifest that moment into an audio-visual logic: seeing the whole picture (all the clips) and trying to make sense of them all as one, a moment of grappling with the material, to see the entangled, togetherness. Or was it an*

> *untangling of the mesh into a singular narrative, our narrative?* (Titley, 2019)

It lasted only a moment, holding all the materiality in my mind, but an idea needs only a moment to reveal itself. The on-screen grid arrangement was something which I simply needed to make so that I could see and make sense of the data (of the materiality). The grid played an essential part in revealing to me some of the materiality of my practice: not only the people, place and environment but my way of thinking. It was a moment in the creative process, which crystallised the morphogenetic approach as one in which the artwork (as object) still operates but arises from within a social process.[81]

Influential Materiality

Social Art and all its previous manifestations e.g., community art, socially engaged art, participatory art etc. are recognised for empowering communities. However, there were specific moments throughout the project where it was the materiality of the participants that was empowering me, as an artist, to give form to their experiences by enthusing me with ideas to move the project forward. The following journal note demonstrates just how those everyday life encounters influenced the direction of the project.

> JN. *I went for my flu jab yesterday and the nurse who was also an interviewee participant asked me how the project was going, and her inquiry inspired me to contact the camera crew with some dates for checking out the site for the next stage 'March of The Wellies'. That social encounter propelled the project forwards and spurred me into action* (Titley, 2019).

Before my conversation with the nurse, I had stalled, unsure of where to go next with the project. They suggested contacting the local running club for children to participate in the next scene (Stage Two), which involved a walk-up Pendle Hill. My stalling was because the local film club volunteers were

[81] It is also an interesting contrast with Lacy's use of geometry (and grids) and the collective as an aesthetic. Lacy's grids seem to operate more like a kind of testimonial of the many, while the grid in *[birdsong]* is polyphonic: building up more and more resonances as the film progresses.

unable to match the flexibility of my proximity to the lives of participants when it came to the filming dates (see p136).

Proximity to material

I was flexible enough (with my time) to be able to interview participants, sometimes at just a few hours' notice. This was impossible when trying to organise the film crew of two or three volunteers; they needed at least four weeks' notice. I eventually set a date for filming according to the availability of participants and it felt good to have the project moving again now that I wasn't relying on the availability of the Film Makers club.[82] Allowing community availability to dictate the interview schedule rather than the availability of a camera crew made it easier to organise, particularly if a participant made themselves available at short notice. I realise now that I had been synchronising my own life with the participants, I was effectively on standby [83]. In the act of making, I had coupled *'… my movements and gestures with the becoming of the materials'* (Ingold, 2013: 31). It felt like the method was more in tune with the everyday lives of the participants, with the materiality: it was not so invasive as a camera crew, and it allowed me to go with the flow of the conversation (with no conventional film script). Directing a camera crew during the social encounters would have taken me out of the conversation, reducing my proximity to the materiality of the participants.

Shared ownership

The informal process captured ideas from participants and demonstrated overt forms of ownership. For example, Cerise (see Fig. 42) recalled a line from the original movie and pointed out (literally pointing at me, the camera and the audience) that I should ask all participants '*to say that line'*, which inspired me to include a sequence where everyone tries to remember the phrase '*it's not Jesus… it's just a fella'* ([birdsong], 2019). Another participant suggested (during their interview) that '*a screening of the original film would be good'.* The original film *Whistle Down the Wind* had been premiered in 1961 (19th July

[82] Three members of the local film club showed interest in being the camera crew but getting them to agree on a date for filming proved impossible at short notice.
[83] Not unlike John Berger's '*fortunate man'*: a country doctor shadowed by Berger who recognised the GP as being embedded in the lives of his patients (Berger, 1967).

in Burnley) and as a result we premiered *[birdsong]*, the same week as the original film (19th July 2019). One participant recalled a memory of hundreds of children running around on Pendle Hill in their wellington boots and another proposed (during their interview) that we '*get the local kids involved and let's do a walk'*. Those memories and the enthusiasm to do something with local children (the materiality) inspired the second stage of the project, which at the time I referred to as *The March of the Wellies* (this took place in 2018).

Extended shared ownership

While this shared control over the direction of *[birdsong]* contributed to a sense of ownership among participants, there was also a sense of ownership among non-participants. I showed the initial interview footage (Stage One: Interviews)[84] at the Social Art Network *(*2018) event in Sheffield and two people on social media took offence that it wasn't shown in Pendle beforehand (one participant and one non-participant). They assumed the whole film was complete and that it had been premiered in Sheffield. I had to quickly explain that it wasn't finished and that it was merely a screen test with other like-minded artists. The local community felt that they had the right to see the final film in their place before it was screened elsewhere, revealing the materiality of that community in that place.

Place and time

During the interviews, each participant brought with them a sense of place by choosing to walk and talk in their respective location. Consequently, the interviews captured an audio-visual topographic materiality of the area (weather conditions, landmarks, terrain etc.) as we moved not through, but with, the place. Place changes over time just like people do and each affects the other. I don't sit in my garden I sit with it; I don't walk *in* the mountains; I walk *with* the mountains. My garden and the mountains are moving and transforming with me.[85] This perspective proposes a relationship with the

[84] It was a 30-minute film, which I called *'Oh Pendle Oh Pendle'* due to a participant mentioning an old song during their interview; I later found out from the singer of the version used in *[birdsong]* (as the walkers reached the summit) that it was called '*Old Pendle Old Pendle'*.
[85] Using the Aristotelian concept of time, we can see in this a *'dynamic process of ceaseless transformation'* that the landscape and other things join humans in their evolutionary journey through time (West-Pavlov, 2012: 13).

materiality of the people and place as one complex collective temporality, through which the community and the place became *[birdsong].*

Going off script: the march of the wellies

During the interview stage, many participants recollected a memory of lots of children in Wellington boots walking or running up and down Pendle Hill. During the editing process of the interview footage, I felt that their memories were somehow more meaningful than the act of recreating scenes from the original movie. Shifting the project aim to create a particular collective memory of the original movie seemed to refocus the camera lens onto the community and the landscape rather than the original movie and felt more in tune with the context of the place and my research. I remember talking with some of the participants about letting go of what the original movie was like, and we all agreed that it was a moment where we could allow their memories of the original movie to take centre stage. This going off-script, so to speak, aligns with a stage described previously in *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* (2016, p74) when we let go of conventional perceptions of the wardrobes as purely utilitarian and instead appreciate them as a source of creative potential.

Invitation

To initiate this second stage of *[birdsong],* I had put a call out on social media for people in wellies to be at the base of Pendle Hill at 08:00 on the 18th of Nov 2018. It was a cold morning with a forecast of gales and showers on the hill. Nevertheless, 27 people and a dog turned up. The weather, the people and the environment all played their part in creating some wonderful imagery as we set off in the sunshine, climbed through the mist, and pushed along to the trig point in strong gales and thick clouds. We captured on film everyone involved: walkers and camera crew, people chatting, giddy children skipping, people struggling with the steep ascent, sharing food and encouragement along the way. [86]

[86] For further details on the participants thoughts regarding the invitation to participate in [birdsong] please see Appendix G: *Feedback - The Invitation to Participate*.

Collective voice

One girl struggled to get to the top of the hill for the first time, and we learned from her mum that she '*didn't do exercise'*. In *[birdsong],* we hear the community encouraging her to keep going, chanting her name collectively in support of her struggle.

Fig. 45 Ascending Pendle Hill, film still ([birdsong], 2019: 11:42).

Moments

[birdsong] revealed something of the materiality of social art practice through the documentation and presentation of my relations with the people, place and environment. That materiality is presented as a series of moments on screen. Henri Lefebvre defines a moment and the state of things preceding and following it as *'… nothing more than raw materials, namely the succession of instants, gestures and behaviour, constant states which reappear after being interrupted or suspended, objects or works...'*[87] (Lefebvre, 2014: 638). This

[87] West-Pavlov quotes from Sanford Kwinter's book '*Architectures of Time'* (2003) regarding '*the emergence and evolution of form'* as a schema and helps to define Lefebvre's instant and/or Manning's minor gesture as a *'free difference or singularity, not yet combined with other differences into a complex or salient form'* (2013:32). Other theories of time include Henri Bergson for whom duration was the essence and Gaston Roupnel who believed the instant to be the essence of time. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to include a thorough description and analysis of their theories.

suggested to me that the material, through its coming together, cultivated the moment and that the materiality of my social art resided in the constant ebb and flow of everyday life. If that materiality was indeed an already present thing from which a moment might have emerged, then *[birdsong]* could be imagined as a moment emerged from the fleeting minor gestures or from the materiality of everyday life. It is in the realm of a morphogenetic approach that emergence has the freedom to operate, given that a hylomorphic system would be focused on creating the initial vision at the expense of restricting some of the divergent qualities of the potential of the material.[88]

Improvisation

For the emergence of such moments as *[birdsong],* I needed a very particular kind of approach where happenstance, coincidence, and evolution could occur: an open system of trust, fraternity and tolerance. The hylomorphic approach to making does include opportunities for divergence and emergence, often in isolation by the artist but it is due to the openness to transformation of the initial vision that the morphogenetic approach seems more suited to my social art practice.

I felt at times that the film editing process mirrored my social art process by improvising with the film footage: the colour of wellies, styles of clothing, the wind, the sniffing of runny noses, the occasional shaky camera etc. I needed to improvise during my encounters with participants and I had to deal with similar instances during the film editing process, albeit slower and with a more objective eye. The film editing process revealed to me some of the split-second decision-making (that occurred during the social encounters) by being able to stop or slow down time enough for me to analyse the dialogue, consequently enabling a narrative to emerge. This would usually take place in an instant during the process of social exchange, but the film editing process provided an opportunity for me to step back from the moment and offered more time for

[88] For further information regarding a sense of place and community in the words of the participants, please see Appendix G: *Feedback – On Place and Community*.

reflection and to revisit those encounters as an observer, scrutineer, and maker.

Happenstance and control

Grouping the voices in folders (during the editing process), I revealed a pre-existent collective narrative. Unlike directing a conventional movie with a script and well-rehearsed actors, this film was woven from a pre-existing, yet unseen meshwork of multiple narratives, simultaneously active in the place: the materiality provided the script by its presence and by the human participants being themselves in their place. My process revealed shared authorship as the community interactions affected the direction and, consequently, the artistic outcome of the film *[birdsong].* For example, my son (cameraman) missed filming a sequence where the walkers, in their wellies, splashed through a tiny stream. The camera was already rolling and when he pressed the start button, he had turned it off. Fortunately, I was also filming the same shot from the reverse angle so at least we got some footage of the scene.

Initially, I was disappointed that I didn't have the corresponding footage of the wellies in the stream. However, I soon realised that the moment of my disappointment revealed a significant part of the social art process: of improvisation, incidents requiring creative problem-solving on the fly. Perhaps more importantly, it flagged up the issue of authorship and was another moment in which I was not in complete control of the project. The development of *[birdsong]* relied heavily on the energy and enthusiasm of participants within a social process and questioned who was in control. It's virtually impossible to be in complete control of a social situation and I had to work through those moments and recognised them as opportunities for creativity and improvisation. The other materials and I formed a kind of meshwork as we developed a '*feel for each other'* through our materialities (Ingold, 2013: 4).

So subtle were the relational nuances that it was only through observation and reflection of the footage that I became aware of them, and audiences may need to watch *[birdsong]* more than once if they are to see all the chance relationships and serendipitous connections. This meshwork became apparent in the grid formation and, at times (albeit briefly), appeared to be a

carefully orchestrated set of relationships: the actors appeared to be responding to one another as if they could hear/see each other on the screen.

Another chance occurrence (which proved to be serendipitous) and something beyond my control was the weather and the terrain. It was during the editing process that I realised that the place and the participants were already in a relationship, which had inadvertently affected the project. A hylomorphic approach would be to push ahead with my vision of remaking the whole film. Instead, I relinquished some control over the material enabling the film to evolve into *[birdsong],* thus revealing what Kester might refer to as local truths: in this case, '*the social context from which others speak'* (Kester, 2004: 113-14). Things that were not scripted, happenstance such as *Frankie* the cat jumping onto Lorrette's lap just as she was describing the cat in the original movie, Claire's allotment trespass and shed break-in (echoing the original *Whistle Down the Wind* scenario) (50:56), Les singing a long forgotten folk song (Folk Song, 1940), Max's epiphany as we walked along the canal, Uncle Bernard and the life-saving properties of Pendle Hill, random dogs barking, birds singing, traffic noise, other people passing through the scene, and the weather.

Fig. 46 Lorette and Frankie, the cat (20:14), Les bursting into song (17:54), Max's epiphany (13:54), film stills (*[birdsong]*, 2019).

The emergence of a narrative

All these things contributed to the emergence of a single narrative, which represented a collective social context. Multiple realities coexist with an emerging and collective sense of place. Memories became fused with imaginaries to create and evolve into a sense of what it's like to live around a

particular hill in East Lancashire; thus *[birdsong]* revealed the *genius loci*: the spirit of the place.

Continuing the same editing process as the earlier interviews, I organised the footage of *The March of the Wellies* into sequences and dropped them into named folders, rather like creating pieces for a jigsaw, to be reassembled later. Additionally, I separated the audio from the visual footage, perceiving it as part of the collection of material: I began to recognise it as an independent actant.[89] However, whereas the first stage footage contained folders with titles linked to topics of conversation, these folders identified more of the terrain: *'farm track', 'steep steps', 'snack time', 'windy ridge', 'misty path', 'trig point'* etc. The materiality of the place was beginning to be revealed in the editing process and influenced the temporal reorganisation of the film.

Shortly after starting the editing process, I made the following note in my journal.

> JN. I love how the mist at the top of Pendle affected the colour in the film footage, the fog de-saturated all the colours to black and white, harking back to the original movie 'Whistle Down the Wind', almost like a visual reverse of 'The Wizard of Oz' (1939) where Dorothy and her dog Toto are transported to another world of glorious technicolour. Instead, we witness in [birdsong] a participant and his dog climbing upwards to a world of greyscale (Titley, 2019)

It felt like the environment (its materiality) was forcing itself upon the project, making itself heard/seen by providing a natural black-and-white filter to the footage, and referencing the original film.

[89] It was a moment where I had to let go of the concept of the recording as one audio-visual thing and allow the audio and visual to be free of each other in time (technically 'unlinking' them). Thus, allowing each one to be shifted without necessarily shifting the other, the audio and visual components of a singular piece of film footage were given independent agency.

It was during a recorded interview with Diane Poole (the actress who turned up in her wellies) that similarities were revealed between my approach and that of Bryan Forbes, the director of the original film (1961). She explained that there was '*no script'* for the kids, and '*they didn't know what the director was going to do'* next. There was '*no budget'*, and they used '*local non-actors'* who '*had to improvise';* it was playful, and they all had to trust and '*have faith in him'* (the director) (*[birdsong]*, 2019).

Whistle Down the Wind is generally underpinned by a hylomorphic approach (working towards the original novel and the director's vision). However, Diane's comments resonated with a morphogenetic approach, and her words were included as a voice-over in *[birdsong]*: which also had no budget, no pre-determined script, with local non-actors, with a playful approach, and we all had to trust in each other.

As the group descended the hill, dropping down out of the mist and into bright green fields we talked about the experience and about what might happen next. We discussed an idea about re-making a memorable scene from the original film and by the time we had reached the bottom of the hill we had decided that we would recreate the scene in the barn: where the children in the original film mistook the fugitive for Jesus. It was one of the most remembered parts of the film, together with a domestic scene where the youngest actor Charlie reveals that '*he's not Jesus, he's just a fella'* (Whistle Down the Wind, 1961). The phrase, made famous by the cheeky character Charlie, was often acted out by participants when they recalled their memory of it, impersonating Charlie's strong Lancastrian accent. It is a line I appropriated in *[birdsong]* at the request of one of the participants ([birdsong], 2019: 40:10) (p143).

Materiality

The project revealed a materiality that included the environment (and its meaning), current socio-politico issues, the voices of children/adults, a culture of walking, hidden heritage and ritual. It became an ongoing collage, with space enough to grow into, where futures were imagined and was fuelled by

dynamic energy created by relations with people, place and environment,[90] and revealed hard-hitting realities (the personal lives of participants and of the unknown participant who lived in the shed) and what Kester refers to as the '*here and now'*, the context from which the participants spoke (Kester, 2004: 113). *[birdsong]* emerged from that materiality, from those chance and serendipitous relations of participants, place and environment, and was folded back onto everyday life via the screenings and the ongoing life of the community.

Subjective/objective challenge

Michael Polanyi suggests that we can *'...lose sight of a pattern or physiognomy by examining its several parts under sufficient magnification*' (Polanyi, 2009: 22). Thinking critically about my practice during the interactions with people, place and environment was virtually impossible. It was only through observation and reflection, after the fact, that I was able to critically consider what had happened in each situation. Reviewing the recordings of the social relations allowed me to, in a way, affect the speed of time, slowing it down and providing a space for much closer inspection and analysis of each interaction. This method only became evident to me during the film-editing process (post-production). Incidents that occurred during my encounters with people and places went unnoticed to me because I was part of the materiality.

Finding a man in a shed

In the original movie *Whistle Down the Wind,* we know where all the children were going and who they were keen to meet; they assumed they were going to see Jesus in their friend's barn. However, in *[birdsong],* it was unclear where the participants were walking to, and while they ended up in a shed talking to

[90] *[birdsong]* began as the tiniest of energies (an idea) that grew larger as it moved through time at a variety of paces, attracting material along its path, not unlike the early formation of a celestial body in outer space: there was a natural creative force in play. As the momentum gathered pace (more people got involved, more relations), the larger it got and the more it attracted. Like a kind of social magnetism, a natural creative dynamic, driving forwards, backwards, upwards, downwards, sideways, spinning, hurtling towards an unknown destination, a different future to the one prior to the coming together of all the material.

the cameraman (the artist), it was the audience watching the film that they were addressing.

Fig. 47 Group walking (41:56), an individual walking (10:45), family in the shed (1:01:36), film stills (*[birdsong]*, 2019).

Serendipitous encounters

Diane was confident that she would have been able to gain access to the original barn for reshooting the scene. However, I recalled a moment from Claire's allotment where someone had been living in her shed over the Christmas period. It was a story which came to light serendipitously when Claire's interview date clashed with a telephone call she was expecting from the police about the trespassing incident. At the time, we carried on with her interview at her chosen place (the local park) and then relocated to her allotment, where the moment was captured on camera. Once at Claire's allotment, we talked about the unfortunate predicament of someone having to endure living in her shed when suddenly I mentioned the coincidence of needing a barn to remake the film and that we were standing in the location of a contemporary version of *Whistle Down the Wind*. Thus, it was decided that the materiality of Claire's situation would play a part in our film.

Invitation to speak

I invited (through social media) people to join me in the shed on Claire's allotment to execute a line from the film, offering them a month of dates to come to visit me. I explained that there would be lines for adults and lines for children and that the lines would be revealed on the day of their visit, keeping it in line with Diane's experience of the original film, where she didn't know what she would be doing or saying until she got on set.

Fig. 48 Diane in the shed, film still ([birdsong], 2019: 1:06:17).

I emailed little maps to participants so that they could navigate their way through the maze of allotments and find me in the shed. Many of the participants asked why we were in a shed before I got a chance to explain, and the conversations touched on government shortfalls in social care, the '*sad*' state of the UK at that time and how terrible it must have felt to be living in that shed over the Christmas period ([birdsong], 2019; 59:35).

Divergence

For a few participants, the conversation grew deeply personal very quickly. Personal recollections and survival stories of being homeless, bankrupt and of mental health issues, which they got through only with the help of close family and friends, highlighting the significance of having someone else available to talk to about their troubles. The rhetoric, while political, was not the result of an activist workshop or the result of having an initial political agenda. It was morphogenetic, allowing informal/casual conversation around the topics of the

project, which included the original film (Whistle Down the Wind, 1961), and developed through initial interviews in Stage One, through to the emergence of a story of a participant's allotment and their shed, which in turn raised questions about current society through notions of homelessness.

Iterative processes

As in the previous stages, the allotment/shed conversations were reassembled according to topics, which aided the revealing of a collective narrative across the film footage. While waiting for participants to arrive I sat in a foldable garden chair writing notes about the previous conversation. One family couldn't make their one-hour timeslot, so I decided to film the passing of time in the allotment space while I waited for the next participants to arrive. In keeping with the rest of the film (aiming to reveal the materiality of my social art practice), I included myself in the allotment scenes and created a keyhole shape (albeit on its side) to represent the intimacy of the conversations in the shed.[91]

I had played a pivotal role in the invitation for other 'material' to join me in the project space with a discerning eye focused tacitly somewhere in the future. My discerning eye was undoubtedly informed by a knowledge of and confidence in a particular way of making art. I orchestrated and controlled the development of the project, and that control was informed by my knowledge and understanding of my practice and the materiality of the other participants, the local environment, and the place: some of that control was shared with other agents and conditions.

Intimacy

Working on an intimate level of engagement allowed *[birdsong]* to develop with the materiality of the people, place and environment, and at a more responsive and bespoke pace (often much slower than mass-participatory processes

[91] I began with the circle merely to define the shed footage from the initial interviews (rectangular in grid formation). It was a practical choice which evolved into a keyhole by dropping the participant footage onto the screen purely by chance. Echoing the broken lock on the shed, it also felt like a balanced composition, so I left it as it fell, and it acted as both a visual separation and connection between the speakers in the shed and me in the chair making notes from memory about my encounters.

would allow).[92] This privileged position, with closer proximity to the lives of participants allowed for a genuine emergence of ideas and themes closely related to the lives and places meaningful to the participants and getting closer to revealing a more accurate reflection of the lives of participants, and their place.

Unseen materiality

There were other participant influences which may never be seen or felt in the work other than by the artist and participants. I spent time with the participants, many of whom I've known since childhood, I shared with them the trials and tribulations of life, and death (via the sharing of personal stories), and many participants openly talked about how they'd been affected by tragic circumstances not dissimilar to the unknown resident of Claire's shed. As an artist deeply connected to other people's lives, it was virtually impossible for me and the project to be unaffected by the everyday lives of participants. Coming together in dialogue at specific moments in our lives, we affected the encounter, and created situations embedded in both our lives, and in the moment of the project, the participants and I became trusted custodians of our intimate exchanges.

Each encounter grew intimate through conversation, sharing personal and often private stories. This could be assigned to the fact that I knew them on a personal level but at the same time, it's worth noting that even the participants that I didn't know that well also shared deeply personal information: from infidelity to bankruptcy, from family tragedies to personal depression. As the

[92] Social art commissions almost always include an aim of engaging with the largest number of participants possible, of a particular community group. Attracting such attention often involves working with economies of scale, with increasing pressure for huge public spectacles, or mass-participation events: where visitor/participant numbers equate to a successful project. This pressure for mass-participation was driven by funders and commissioners like ACE (Arts Council England) aiming to reach larger audiences i.e., a project reached 'X' number of people. ACE in turn is driven by requirements of government, which decides what its funding regime will be. Social art practice, in contrast to participatory economies of scale has the potential for intimate engagement with communities: one-to-one encounters with an emphasis on the quality of engagement rather than focusing on a product, or spectacle.

man in the shed, I was charged/trusted with hearing the lives of that time, of that intimate moment, I was part of that materiality.[93]

When I watched *[birdsong]*, the omitted intimacies were only remembered by me – the artist interviewer. I experienced great joy and/or deep sadness depending on who was speaking on the screen.[94] The secondary audience and other participants were not completely privy to my other encounters in the Stage One interviews, or the Stage Three shed conversations. There is shared authorship with participants in the three stages of producing *[birdsong]* however, the actors and the secondary audience (in this case the cinemagoers) only experience an edited version of my social encounters, despite the film being a representation of the materiality of those social relations.

Extending participation

During a visit to my local post office, I was asked by the postmaster (Andy) what I was up to, and I explained to him the *[birdsong]* project. He grew excited and told me about a project that he was running. It was a community cinema project, which involved screening old black and white movies for older members of the community. The pop-up cinema was based in part of a local church, further up the road from where he worked at the post office.[95] It was called *The Little Savoy* and he (and a small group of volunteers) had already shown some movies in the space, he believed that my project would appeal to his audience and suggested that I visit the space to scope out the possibility of using it for screening the premiere of *[birdsong].* I immediately recognised the make-shift cinema room as a place where I used to attend Boy's Brigade meetings (like boy scouts) as a child. It was a long rectangular room and he had already built a tuck shop counter at the back and installed a projector in

[93] A danger of being trusted with the personal stories of the participants is that some of them might be too personal to include in the artwork, and the artist has to deal with such material sincerely and ethically to protect the wellbeing of participants.
[94] There was present, among all the participants, a tacit understanding of place and community, and the dialogical processes involved in *[birdsong]* contributed to the continuation and growth of that tacit bond: an unspoken understanding of each other and a collective sense of the *genius loci* (Norberg-Schultz, 1998; Polanyi, 2009).
[95] Lots of stuff was already happening in the community (many timelines already active) and my way of working was part of that existing life/living: I was in the middle of something already active (Massumi, 2011).

the middle of the ceiling, with stacks of chairs around the room, and children's climbing toys scattered about the floor, it also doubled up as a childcare and nursery space during the working week.

Andy suggested a screening date to coincide with the date of the original premiere of *Whistle Down the Wind* (19 July 1961) and we scheduled 3-midweek previews of *[birdsong]* (16th, 17th, 19th) followed by a Saturday Matinee viewing of the original movie on 20th July 2019, with Diane Poole in attendance and available for photographs (and autographs) for any local fans of the film.

Fig. 49 The schedule board at *The Little Savoy* (Titley 2019).

The Little Savoy

Andy had attracted funding from the local *Co-op* to provide refreshments for the screening event, and the volunteers of *The Little Savoy* were dressed in vintage cinema usher costumes; the room itself was authentically furnished to resemble a vintage silver-screen cinema venue, with matching drapery covering the walls.

Fig. 50 The Little Savoy, Colne (Titley 2019).

Artwork as a place

During the first screening, I remember feeling as if *[birdsong]* had become the community and the place, the project had gone full circle, it had grown out of the materiality (of the people, place and environment) and the local screening threaded deep roots back into the locale, not unlike the pencil sketch of the *Ironing Board* photograph in Chapter Two (Fig 12). The following is a rough sketch of the *[birdsong]* project and its rootedness to the place it was made. It does not include an exhaustive list of materials and serves only for conceptual

purposes and is not to prioritise specific materialities but to indicate the symbiotic nature of the relations.

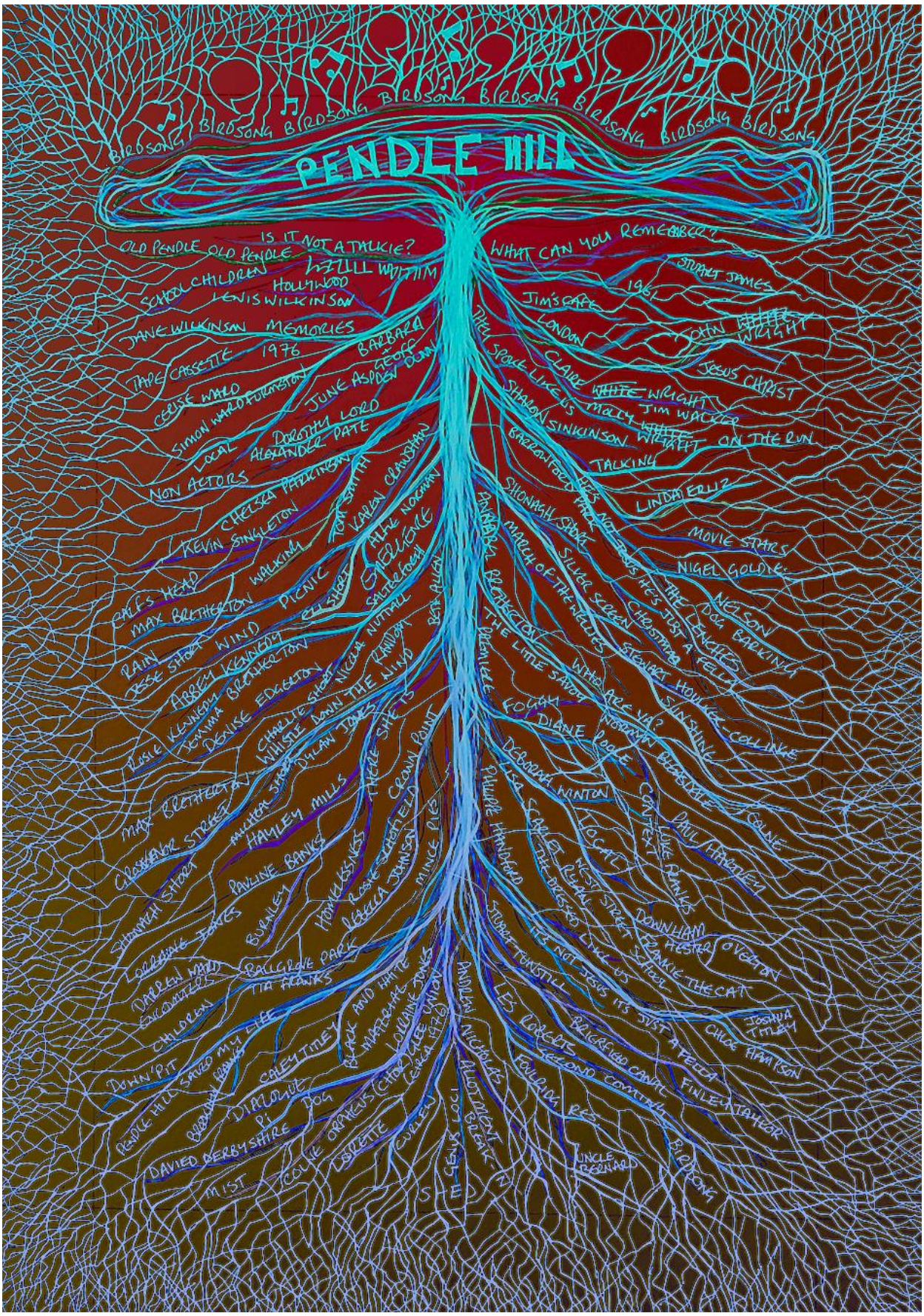

Fig. 51 Digitally enhanced root drawing of the *[birdsong]* project (Titley 2022).

The Little Savoy cinema project popped up just at the right time, and in the right place (a meaningful place to me, in the church that I went to as a child) and showed films related to the forgotten movie stars of the silver screen era. These coincidences resonated with the overall dynamic of the original movie *Whistle Down the Wind* and brought *[birdsong]* and *The Little Savoy* together, synchronising an evolution towards a bifurcation,[96] '*… in which the various factors at work in a dynamic process act upon each other in apparently only marginally varying ways, but with significantly divergent consequences'* (West-Pavlov, 2012: 2). That coming together of materialities rooted the project firmly in the rhythms of the everyday life of the place and cemented the *[birdsong]* project in what Kester refers to as *'the social context from which others speak, judge and act* (Kester, 2004: 113). The project was embedded in social politics, which were international and yet very much local, topics of homelessness and/or transient communities emerged from the active materiality of a people, place and environment.

Artwork as everyday life

The film screening, while a continuation of the project, relocated *[birdsong]* out of the project space and back into the everyday life of the area, framed by the specialness of cinema. However, it wasn't a full stop in the project timeline, instead, it was more of a comma. As a member of the community living in that place, steeped in local meaning, my artworks do not stop at the point generally conceived of as complete. Instead, they dwell in the place, with the people, and with me, slowly evolving into tomorrow, into life and no doubt influencing my future art projects, and indeed the life of the community in a perception of time where *'nothing ends, or dies, it simply changes'* [97] (West-Pavlov, 2012: 33).

[96] A term borrowed from Chaos Theory (West-Pavlov, 2012).
[97] Here Russell West-Pavlov is referring to an Aristotelian notion of time *'…as a dynamic process of ceaseless transformation'* (2004:32).

Fig. 52 Volunteers dressed for the occasion at The Little Savoy pose for a photo with actress Diane Poole. left to right: Darren Ward, Diane Poole, Paula Reed, Andy Reed (Titley 2019).

Secondary audience

The screening and gathering of audiences to watch *[birdsong]* was an extension of the relational process.[98] The Little Savoy Cinema volunteers were participants, as were the cinema audiences, and were presented with the same question '*what can you remember about the film Whistle Down the Wind?'* (*[birdsong]*, 2019). They were confronted with the issue of homelessness; they experienced a walk to the top of Pendle Hill (albeit on screen) and witnessed the deep-rooted meaning of Pendle Hill and the impact of its materiality on the other participants. The creation and staging of the community cinema, complete with vintage clothing, and the transformation of the room was a testament to the care and attention of the volunteers.

[98] Originally, 1:20:30 *[birdsong]* was tweaked, fine-tuned, and reduced according to audience feedback gathered from each screening at The Little Savoy.

[birdsong] was the culmination of intimate encounters in meaningful places and I was operating as part of that extended materiality. I engaged in a shared sense of memory, time, imagination, and place and with a deep-rooted tacit understanding of local myth, folklore and truth. The project created a space for exchange, for sharing and with that in mind *[birdsong]* was a gift from everyone involved. They had invested their time and resources to share something of themselves with other members of the community and the rest of the world, and a predominantly morphogenetic approach lent itself to facilitating that process with ethical respect for and aesthetic appreciation of the materiality of all involved. [99]

[birdsong] as an essay film

In hindsight, the failure of engaging with the camera club revealed two different possible ways of making a film not dissimilar to the hylomorphic and the morphogenetic. Their involvement would have affected the methodology significantly as they made requests for storyboards and scripts and completely relied on knowing a predetermined narrative. They needed to screen-test locations, and while this would no doubt have resulted in a technically high-quality film, it would not have captured my practice in a way reflective of my approach to my social art material. That way would deny me the freedom to follow the flow, or the grain of the wood, or to capture, and present as art, the random interjections offered up by the materiality of the place, the people and the environment. It is with hindsight that I also recognise the potential of *[birdsong]* as an essay film, striving to represent the truth by challenging grand narratives (contemporary art aesthetics), subjectively piecing together fragments of my interactions and an emerging narrative embodying the audience by addressing it directly with the question of '*Who are ya*' ([birdsong], 2019).

Those are just some of the traits assigned to essay films by Laura Rascaroli in her book '*The Personal Camera'* (2009). At *The Little Savoy,* the audience was taken on a journey of discovery with the director (artist), the authors and

[99] For further information regarding the memories of the participants in *[birdsong]*, in their own words, please see Appendix G: *Feedback - On Memory*.

the enunciators (artist and participants) as they explored personal memories and thoughts about their place and their culture. The very nature of how the film evolved from a collection of recordings reflects my social interactions and the essayistic genre of production by including in the film the *'… process of its own coming into being*' (Rascaroli and Press, 2009: 17). Onscreen, I included the negotiation of my interactions with and actions of the community. We saw how things said in the interviews affected the development of the film: people on Pendle Hill wearing wellington boots, the memories of an old film linking to a current situation of homelessness, guiding the community and the audience to an allotment shed and, all the while, not straying that far from the original movie (Whistle Down the Wind, 1961).

With virtually no script (apart from the '*Who are ya?*' and '*Jesus Christ!*' statements), both I and the participants were authors, and we were personified throughout the film by our very personal comments (*[birdsong]*, 2019). *[birdsong]* carried the trademarks of the essay film with an unorthodox technical approach: initial interviews, an emergent subject matter of identity, walking, homelessness, and its everyday aesthetics, preserving the minor gestures and developing a narrative from the footage without a predetermined script (Rascaroli and Press, 2009: 2). It was produced without any budget and premiered at a local community centre, outside of the context of the art world, but firmly rooted in the context of the production of the film itself.[100] While it could be seen as a documentary film form, it became more of an essay film through my social art approach, the documentation itself became a part of the social art materiality and not simply a reference to a past event.

Intuition and coincidence

I was aware that in almost all the outdoor scenes there was birdsong in the background, and only once was the presence of birds foregrounded by Kevin,

[100] Not unlike the 1971 film by Chris Marker 'The Train Rolls On'. A 30 min documentary about a train carriage converted to a mobile cinema in Russia. Spending a year documenting the process of transforming the carriage and interview footage of film-maker Aleksandr Medvedkin remembering the project and its profound impact on his career. The film reveals the context of the lives of participants and audiences and during the making of the film realized a shared authorship (*The train rolls on.*, 1971).

a keen birdwatcher, who pointed out during his conversation in the allotment shed '*hey look at 't' Song Thrush there, gorgeous aren't they Song Thrush… they're as rare as hen's teeth'* (*[birdsong]* 18:56). Being hearing impaired I sometimes watch television with the subtitles on and one day while watching an old movie there was an unseen bird singing as a person walked along a tree-lined street and the subtitles read [birdsong] and I remember thinking that if I was to put subtitles to my moving-image artwork then that description would be at the bottom of the screen for most of the time, thus I deemed it a worthy title. It is with hindsight that I recognize the intuitive title of *[birdsong]* as a foregrounding of the background material, and reflective of this research.

Coincidentally, '*Whistle Down the Wind'* means to cast off something to its fate. Taken from the practice of Falconry, it refers to the period when the bird handler releases the bird to do its own thing (cast off), as opposed to the bird going to hunt the prey for its handler (carrying out instructions). The meaning of the phrase[101] echoes the creative process of *[birdsong]*, we were '*whistling down the wind'* for much of the time and allowed to some extent the material to do its own thing, to be itself in the art object.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by proposing that something was missing from social art projects when exhibited in art galleries, namely the minor gestures and live social context of the participants. Then I aimed to show with the *[birdsong]* case study how I addressed this missing part by presenting my thoughts during the process of making the film, from initial interviews, through chance encounters and finally to the premiere screenings of completed artwork. I proposed that the final artwork *[birdsong]* revealed much of what can be described as serendipitous encounters with the materiality of social art. Things such as chance encounters, unpredictable weather, dogs barking, birds

[101] The *'down the wind'* part of the phrase has roots in the sport of falconry. When hawks are released to hunt, they are sent upwind to surprise their prey, and when turned loose for recreational purposes, they are sent downwind. Thus, to 'whistle someone or thing down the wind' means to cast it off to its own fate (Website, 2022).

singing, the actions of participants, the landscape, histories (individual and collective) and so on.

I ended the chapter by reflecting on the *[birdsong]* project and the processes involved in making the film and unpicking the nuances of my social art practice. The following chapter concludes my research.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The following aims, objectives and research questions underpinned my inquiry.

Aims

- To identify and explore the potential of materialities, often overlooked in social art practice.
- To explore the potential of ethical social aesthetics.
- To reveal and rethink binary approaches underpinning social art practice by examining my making process.

Objectives

- Compare two approaches to making social art
- Reveal my social art material and creative process through making new social artwork

Research questions

- Given that the components of Kester's aesthetic model acknowledge the existence of durational social encounters with not just people but also place and environment, what is the significance of these 'materials' for social art practice?
- How do these materials become part of what the social artist and participants do, and what is their impact?
- How might we recognize, record, and utilize this potentially significant material?
- How does this new model help to bridge Kester's (2004) dialogical model of aesthetics in the face of Claire Bishop's (2012) concerns regarding the impact of ethics upon creative freedom?

As revealed in the previous chapter, my work underwent several different shapes over the course of the research, with one of my contributions to knowledge being to give a fuller and less fixed account of this changing

relationship with the fundamentals of a wider social art practice and with the materiality of my practice. As I tried to work out the particular shape of *[birdsong],* I found that the materiality of the people, the place and the environment constantly altered it. The beginning of the *[birdsong]* project pointed within the community for inspiration, yet as I moved into post-production and edited the film footage, a new shape emerged – one looking outward instead of inward. As I worked on this project, I noticed that its form seemed to move and change beyond my control; it was influenced not only by me but also by the social forces surrounding it. Even with the round shape of the animation depicted in Chapter One (Fig. 1), I still felt like I could feel its edges blurring and extending outward in invisible tendrils, connecting the project to other elements in our world: people's lives, local resources, histories, landscapes and wildlife (see link to online animation, Fig.2).

I had initially started my thesis to explore my practice as an artist in the social context and how different moments in time and place influenced it. What I had discovered through my research was much more than I had expected — from the materiality of each moment that piqued my interest to my relationship with serendipity compared to a commissioned artist, as discussed in Chapter Four: for example, where the materiality of place impacts on the way I create (p151-52).

Though my practice is broadly defined within the nine variations of social art practice (Chapter One), I find myself in a grey area between deeply rooted place-making and using digital technology to capture the materiality of social encounters. For me, it is vital to have an ongoing relationship with the people and environment I am working with, which allows for issues and themes to develop organically as opposed to fixed projects outlined by a commissioner's short-term agenda. This approach presents an exciting challenge for me as an artist since I'm trying to balance the project's needs while allowing for emergence and freedom in my work. An example of this can be seen in *Gentlemen's Wardrobe*, where participants were invited to join in the installation of the sculpture when it was exhibited in a gallery.[102] I also shared

[102] The project was officially ended (through lack of funding) when a year later an opportunity arose to exhibit the sculpture (up to that point it had been stored in my garage).

exhibition fees with them to ensure everyone was acknowledged for their work (p84). My perspective on sharing the fee brings to light a potential conflict between the desire for collaborative and inclusive projects and the need for acknowledgement and compensation for all participants. Furthermore, the lack of attribution of participant names raises questions about ownership and authorship in such projects. Further exploration of these ideas could offer valuable insights to help create more fair and sustainable social practice initiatives.

This research unequivocally showcases the immense potential of often-overlooked materiality in social art practice and amplifies its transformational and productive potential by broadening the concept of 'material' to include the materiality of the social. An ethical sensitivity to non-human material is crucial to developing a social art project, and the proposed model of social-ethical aesthetics recognises this more expansive field of material available to social artists. This research enhances the approaches that often underlie social art practice by creating three new artworks that reveal the materiality of my practice (Gentlemen's Wardrobe p74, Time Machine p87, [birdsong], p138). The employed methodology facilitates reflective observational techniques, thereby making visible the materiality of social art using film and personal journal/field notes. By unveiling the often-unseen materiality of social art as the artwork itself and as representative of the material relations of a given project, the relations between all the material are a significant part of the artwork.

My practice is an essential part of the wider field of social art and aligns with the fundamental principles that connect various practices under the umbrella of socially engaged art. These principles include the belief that art can bring about positive change and the need for diverse modes of production to expand studio-based ones. Such modes include dialogue, community organising, placemaking, facilitation, public awareness campaigns, and policy development.

In the project, *[birdsong]* (2019, p138), I successfully explored the potential of frequently disregarded materiality and expanded the concept of Kester's

dialogical aesthetic model. By incorporating encounters with the environment and place, I created artworks that visibly showcased the symbiotic relationships between participants and a wide range of materialities, highlighting their potential effects. Through moving image/audio technology and reflective practice, I captured and utilised the potential of this often-overlooked materiality.

Through the research, I had the privilege to participate in two case studies that illuminated two binary approaches employed by internationally recognised social artists in their projects.[103] The hylomorphic approach, which entails creating a predetermined vision using a material, can cause artists to overlook its potential due to their singular focus on their vison. Conversely, the morphogenetic approach, which centres on an ethical engagement with the material, established a mutually beneficial relationship between the artist and the community but demands more time to evolve. These case studies underscored the significance of contemplating the ethical implications of social art projects and adopting an approach that prioritises the material's potential and impact.

I firmly believe that the most effective social art projects involve the community in every step, from conception to artwork production. This approach ensures that I create projects that are not only impactful but also meaningful and sustainable. I emphasise empathy and understanding, and I am firmly rooted in the place and the community. I believe that to engage with a community and address their needs, we must first take the time to listen and learn from them. We can create significant and resonant projects by building relationships and gaining a deep understanding of the materiality of a particular community.

Using photographs of chairs from the two case studies (see Fig. 30 on p99, Fig.31 on p100), I proposed that they each represented a different way of working with people and place: PRH, the morphogenetic and SOWSOH, the hylomorphic. I supported the proposition by drawing on recorded interviews, personal journal notes from my visits to PRH, and my participation as a

[103] Social Art Practice is a variation of several approaches, styles, and techniques. Please see Chapter One for an overview of social art practice.

member of the local community in SOWSOH from my perspective as a participant. Both approaches to working with people and places are internationally recognised as successful ways of making social art and revealed to me some of the materiality of social art. In both cases, I argued that the materiality influenced the respective chair's composition and the final artworks' presentation to differing degrees and that Lowe and Lacy had adopted (inadvertently or not) either an overall morphogenetic or hylomorphic approach to making.

The case studies[104] and the wider field of social art reveal that such projects emerge from the midst of life, growing in sync with the lives of participants, the place, and the environment. The documentation of a social art process falls short of encompassing the experience in which that live event is rooted, and secondary audiences (readers and gallery goers) are directed to experience the social art project as an immediate past or historical event, through photographs, films or literature and other artefacts; through objects left in the wake of the project, which offer a look back at what occurred according to the documenter. [105]

This research proposes that a predominantly morphogenetic model of making has the potential to contribute to the development of ethical art practices, albeit at the expense of reducing the individual creative freedom of the artist (highlighted by Claire Bishop, 2012 in Chapter One). The reduction of individual creative freedom and control is offset by the potential of developing a collective creative process involving more of the materiality of social art, thus expanding the scope of formal arrangements in a given project: embracing the influence of other seemingly insignificant material affects the development of an artwork. To stay in control of complete creative freedom, the artist relinquishes much of their ethical attachment to the surrounding material; in other words, there is a risk of the artist refusing responsibility for any negative

[104] *PRH* p100, *SOWSOH* p107, and especially *[birdsong]* p136.
[105] It's almost a nostalgic experiencing of a social art project and contradicts the nature of a social art that is underpinned by a belief in art as a verb, as a process. John Fox, a founder of *Welfare State*, is quoted in *'We are all in this Together'* warning us that nostalgia has the potential to dull reality (Matarasso, 2019). Welfare State International was a performing arts organisation that settled in Burnley, East Lancashire in the 1970's.

repercussions caused by their objectification of materiality and their focus on creating their vision. [106]

Materiality is a complex and multi-faceted concept that encompasses the interactions and relationships between materials and our world. It goes beyond the physical objects themselves and includes minor gestures, and non-extractive ways of working that highlight the importance of these connections. By paying close attention to the nuances and complexities of materiality, we can better understand the impact our decisions and actions have on the world around us. Social artists must continue to explore innovative ways of engaging with the materialities that comprise our world.

My research methodology was qualitative, sensitive and reflective of my intimate and participatory social art practice. It allowed me to examine the proximity of social artists to the potential of the material (people, place, environment and things) and to register its potential agency for affecting the form of the final artwork. The research differentiated PRH (p100) and SOWSOH (p107) and showed that PRH presented life as art, and to experience that art completely, one must visit the site and participate in the life of the community in that place (The Third Ward, Houston, Texas). The research showed that besides the social, SOWSOH aimed to make art for an exhibition away from the community and site in which it was made and revealed two parts to Lacy's art practice. One part worked *with* the materiality in the social process, and one part focused on the afterlife of the project as an art object to be sent out into the wider world and to be experienced (usually) in a gallery environment. Whilst the artist's (S. Lacy) discourse surrounding this process was to argue that the final work represented the community, some community members felt distinctly excluded and misrepresented[107] which was

[106] It is possible for the hylomorphic 'visionary' approach to produce ethical artworks by way of ethically sourced material and empathetic processes. However, in the context of social art practice a predominately hylomorphic approach holds potential to impact negatively on participants (see SOWSOH project in Chapter Three, p107).
[107] Not just the two people affected by the strict number of chairs, but also volunteers such as Kerry Morrison and myself who felt misrepresented during the project (Chapter Three, p107).

covered over in the presentation and reception of the work in the established art world context.[108]

The concepts of chance and serendipity played a significant role in my methodology as I explored the materiality of social art practice. By working within a specific place and allowing myself to be open to unexpected encounters, I was able to foster new ideas and relationships that I might not have otherwise experienced (*[birdsong],* p138). This approach allowed for emergence and freedom in my work, which was vital to balancing the project's needs with the organic development of issues and themes. Furthermore, the idea of chance and serendipity highlights the importance of ethical sensitivity to non-human material and the need to recognize the more expansive field of material available to social artists. By unveiling the often-unseen materiality of social art as the artwork itself and as representative of the material relations of a given project, the relations between all the material become the artwork. This approach allows for a more prosperous, more fulfilling participatory experience in social art projects, which can bring about positive change in the community.

The research has shown that non-human factors can have a profound impact on the shape of a social art object, surpassing the influence of human participants alone. This highlights the transitory nature of materiality in social art, encompassing elements such as conversations, encounters, sounds, feelings, atmosphere, and weather. The *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* (p.72) project offered a significant opportunity for participants to witness the potential of materiality. When the wardrobes' functional purpose was removed, the malleability of materiality and its capacity to transform into something else in harmony with the participants' experiences became apparent. The morphogenetic approach enabled the development of the social artwork through the participants' interactions with other materialities. The *Time Machine* (p85) project further demonstrated the potential of the morphogenetic

[108] The work *Circle and The Square* (TCATS) was shown at The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, November 2021-January 2023 as part of a Suzanne Lacey retrospective.

approach by fostering a process of memory sharing and the emergence of a collective consciousness.

The creation of *Gentlemen's Wardrobe*, *Time Machine* and *[birdsong]* played a crucial role in unveiling the potential of often-overlooked materiality in social art practice. This shift in the theoretical understanding of the materiality of social art, where the material becomes the artwork itself, reveals its capacity to impact the wider field of social art. This shift is instrumental in contemporary discussions surrounding sustainable and ethical social art practice and lays the foundation for an alternative model of social-ethical aesthetics.

The proposed model of social-ethical aesthetics builds upon Kester's dialogical model of aesthetics, with the aim of addressing Claire Bishop's concerns regarding the intersection of ethics and creative freedom. This new model recognizes the importance of durational social encounters with not only people but also with the materiality of place and environment and considers the ethical implications of social art projects. It emphasises ethical sensitivity towards human and non-human material in developing social art projects and promotes a predominantly morphogenetic approach that prioritizes the potential and impact of their materiality. This approach expands the scope of formal arrangements in a given project, embracing the influence of seemingly insignificant material, thus enabling the development of a collective creative process that involves more of the materiality of social art. The model encourages social artists to be aware of a wider field of materiality at their disposal, which empowers them to consider the potential of a given situation and all its participants, including people, the environment, and the place. By bridging the gap between Kester's dialogical model of aesthetics and Bishop's concerns regarding the impact of ethics on creative freedom, this model provides a framework for a more ethical and sustainable approach to social art practice.

In my research, I've taken a morphogenetic approach that engages with the physicality of each project. The three new works, *Gentlemen's Wardrobe* (p74), *Time Machine* (p87), and *[birdsong]* (p138), provide fresh perspectives on creative participatory approaches to social art. *[birdsong]* represents the

culmination of my experiences as a participant in projects led by Rick Lowe (2018, p102) and Suzanne Lacy (2016-17, p109). *[birdsong]* highlights the challenge of observing my subjective experiences while sharing my creative process. Through moving image technology, I captured my encounters and gained an objective view of my subjective social encounters and creative process. I immersed myself deeply in everyday life's existing physicality and gave shape to materiality in the process of becoming. I posed a simple question, *'What can you remember about the film Whistle Down the Wind?'* and joined an unfolding event. Together with other materialities, we influenced the evolution of a collective narrative. The resulting artwork demonstrates the potential of intimate relationships in their evolution and offers new insights into creative participatory approaches to social art's use of social materiality.

My approach to social art involved using the materiality of the social as a catalyst for change. Each social interaction presented an opportunity to influence the creative dynamic and shape the development of the project. This approach enabled me to direct speculative energy towards the unknown, allowing me to view art not only as a cognitive observation but also as a physical process. Social art served as both the medium and the message, encompassing the process, materiality, and resulting artwork. *[birdsong],* exemplified this approach. It relied on a timeline synchronized with participants' lives and emerged organically from chance and serendipitous social interactions without any rehearsals. It flowed in tandem with life, underscoring the importance of allowing things to evolve slowly in response to the context of the material. If I had adhered to my original vision of remaking the movie *Whistle Down the Wind* (1961), I would have missed the opportunity to walk up Pendle Hill with the community and engage in conversations about homelessness in the shed. By rigidly adhering to my vision, I would have left little room for digression and, consequently, little opportunity for the materiality to be manifested in the artwork.

End note

To end the thesis, I wish to refer to the incident with the chair in the SOWSOH project (Chapter Three, Part Two: p109), where formal aesthetics posed an

interesting question about ethics due to a local participant being omitted from the final performance because the arrangement of chairs needed to be just so. Dominic Wilson, from the official exhibition catalogue for a 2018 selection of works by Lacy, reiterates the artist's interest in the shape of things and frames Lacy's practice as '*Geometry in Motion' (*the title of Wilson's chapter in the catalogue) (Frieling et al., 2019: 34).

> *'… Lacy is collaborating not with physics but with disparate, wilful human beings. Her geometries contain an ungovernable element, an element of disobedience. She is the author of the aesthetic, but it admits the lived experiences and interpretations of others. She may direct participants to form a circle or a straight line, but if they do not quite do this, so be it. Le Witt imposed a stricter control over those who executed his geometries, and that was the point. In her recent work Across and in-Between (2018), children in kayaks, negotiating with one another, attempt to make a straight line that energises Lacy's aesthetics. Hers is a geometric abstraction that vibrates with contingency of the social'* (Frieling et al. 2019 p38).

Fig. 53 *Across and in-Between*: Lacy 2018 (Frieling et al., 2019 p39)

While reflecting on Lacy's substantial back catalogue Wilson points to specific works in the exhibition, '*The Circle and The Square'* (aka '*Shapes of Water – Sounds of Hope' SOWSOH:* 2017) and '*Across and in-Between'* (2018) (Frieling et al., 2019: 238, 39). It is evident from the aerial photograph and Wilson's description of the project '*Across and in-Between'* that there has been a significant shift in Lacy's approach towards perfecting geometric forms. Contrasting with the perfectly formed circle and square shapes in SOWSOH, we see a line of kayaks. As Wilson implies, we are being asked by that image to consider the aesthetic of the other forces at play, such as the individual participants and their level of ability to control the kayaks, the flow of the river, the weather, or the trees and foliage on the banks of the river.

Despite the artist's vision to form a line of bright yellow, we see the material in a state of becoming something other than a perfectly straight line. As we saw in *[birdsong]* (Chapter Four: p136), we see that more of the materiality is allowed to influence the final composition or form of the artwork, but more importantly, for social art practice, we see the artist relinquishing complete control of the material and unveiling a more ethical-social aesthetic, where the process is more visible as the artwork.

Like *[birdsong]*, it is an artwork highlighting other forces at play. We see the vibrant and very much alive social material in a state of becoming; we see the materiality '*whistling down the wind'* (Fig 54).

Fig. 54 Claire’s shed: serendipitous materialities. (Titley 2018)

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Appendices

Appendix A – List: of exhibitions, articles and talks created during the research period.

Exhibitions

2023

'Life-Art-Life', Root Drawing, The TEESHOW, Rogue Studios, Manchester.

'*Time Machine'*, 50-Year Anniversary of Wigan Casino. The Grand Arcade.

'*The Material of Social Art,'* Root Drawing 110x58cms, Process & Practice. 70 Oxford Road.

2019

'[birdsong]' The Little Savoy, Colne, Lancashire.

'[birdsong] 'The Garage, In-Situ, Brierfield, Lancashire.

'[birdsong]' That 01282 Place, Burnley Library, Lancashire.

'Gentlemen's Wardrobe', Greenfield Arts Centre, Newton Aycliffe, Durham.

2018

'Time Machine', Asia Triennial, HOME, Manchester.

'Gentlemen's Wardrobe', Harris Museum, Preston.

'Oh Pendle, Oh Pendle', ([birdsong]) Social Art Summit, Site Gallery, Sheffield.

2017

'Demolition Street', Colne Library, Lancashire.

'*Time Machine',* Colne Town Hall, Lancashire.

'*Time Machine', The Sound of Memory*, Goldsmiths University, London.

Articles

2022 '*In-Situ, In-Place'*, The Double Negative: Arts Criticism and Cultural Commentary.

2019 *'So Who Do We Think We Are?*', Cornerhouse Publications Ltd.

2017 '*Creative Relations*', Journal of Social Work Practice, Taylor & Francis

2016 '*Brief Encounters', PARtake:* The Journal of Performance as Research.

Talks

2023

Creative Thinkers Series at Studio Morland, Penrith, Cumbria.

2019

Art & Class: Is Everyone Welcome? '[birdsong]', Little Theatre, Preston.

2018

Who Do You Think You Are, '*Time Machine*' Asia Triennial, Whitworth Gallery, Manchester.

Knowing from the Inside, '*Gentlemen's Wardrobe*', University of Aberdeen.

2017

'Time Machine', Asia Triennial OpenLab, Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester.

Community Engagement, Summer School, Lancaster University.

2016

'The Art of Participation', University of Kent, Canterbury.

'Going With The Flow', (*Gentlemen's Wardrobe*)*,* Northwest Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership. Manchester Metropolitan University.

Appendix B – Published Article: *'In-Situ, In-Place' The Double Negative* 2022

http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk

Abstract: William Titley, co-founder of In-Situ discusses issues around social practice and particularly the embeddedness of In-Situ as it celebrates 10 years of being in Pendle.

Social art practice is often utilised to affect social change through activist and pedagogical processes and In-Situ is no exception in its reciprocal way of working and by being embedded in the life of the area.

With a mission statement for making art a part of everyday life, In-Situ applies a code of ethics comprising of a set of key principles and underpins its approach to working with people, place and environment. As an organisation it aims to bring people closer together through a process of social encounters and connections to the place and the community. The work aims to build on the local knowledge of participants. As co-participants everyone involved (including the artist) shares personal stories of contemporary living. From health and wellbeing, financial concerns, joyous tales and tragic circumstances, to exploring what it means to work together through dialogical encounters in meaningful places.

Many social artists who come from a background of formal arts education bring with them an appreciation of, and an alignment with what Japanese philosopher Yuriko Saito refers to as a Western Art Aesthetic. Consequently, these artists must navigate the need to produce some 'thing' for dissemination to secondary audiences while simultaneously adhering to processes that are underpinned by a predominantly ethical-social aesthetic.

This alliance with a formal aesthetic together with the durational processes of social art generally leads to an output of conventional looking art works, events and activities such as exhibitions of sculpture, painting,

performance, creative workshops etc. The artist or organisation achieves this while simultaneously (inadvertently or not) highlighting the presence of another aesthetic, one concerned with their relations with people, place and environment; an aesthetic, which registers actions and/or processes.

In the book *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* Tim Ingold explored the act of making in the context of the creation of objects and the use of the maker's materials. His descriptions of engaging with materials and the creative processes involved hold true when transferred to social art practice. Ingold defined two significant approaches to the creative process; morphogenetic**,** which places *'the maker from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials'*, and hylomorphic, when a practitioner imposes *'forms internal to the mind upon a material world …'* (Ingold 2013, p. 21).

The social artist who employs a predominantly morphogenetic approach operates in the moment, in the life of the community as it unfolds, and with material whose value emerges through a shared learning process. Whereas the hylomorphic artist applies value to the material beforehand and aims to seek out the resources for a preconceived vision. Both approaches are effective in producing internationally recognised forms of social art and most artists successfully employ a blend of the two.[109]

Grant Kester in his book *Conversation Pieces* contrasts a new model for a dialogical aesthetic against the conventional contemporary art aesthetic. He argues that the current contemporary art aesthetic portrays the modern artist as sole creative genius and his new model for a dialogical aesthetic, portrays *'… a very different image of the artist, one defined in terms of openness, of listening, and of a willingness to accept a position of dependence and intersubjective vulnerability relative to the viewer or collaborator'* (Kester 2004, p.110). Kester goes a long way in providing a framework for evaluating

[109] Rick Lowe used a predominantly morphogenetic approach during the early years of setting up Project Row Houses in Houston, Texas, and another US artist Suzanne Lacy manages her projects around two aesthetics, one for the social (predominantly morphogenetic) and one for the gallery (predominantly hylomorphic).

the work of social artists, demonstrating that among other things, time, ethics and listening to all forms of communication hold currency in the evaluation of such work.

It is this potentially compromising position of the social artist, somewhere between the two aesthetics of contemporary art and everyday life, which could lead to conflicting ideals around ethical encounters with people and place. For example, take the fine art graduate artist with a portfolio heavily influenced by Anglo-American aesthetics, which predominates UK art school curricula with a focus on the artist working with their chosen materials, be it clay, or paint etc. and usually in isolation. Graduates with such monocular perceptions of aesthetics tend to bring with them a solo creative practice. Couple this scenario with a growing demand (from funding agencies) for artists to connect directly with communities, and we can imagine a social turn of graduates as they prepare themselves to survive in the real world by tapping into such funding streams. These potential social fine artists can expect direct encounters with people in non-gallery locations, which in turn demands a new set of making skills, together with an ethical underpinning of their creative process, and an awareness of ethical-social aesthetics.

As participants in the social process, they must be ready to spend time getting to know the other material of social art, the other participants, the environment, and the place. As Michael Polanyi points out, *'It is not by looking at things but by dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning'*. The social artist must ultimately be able to empathise with the people, place and environment if they are ever to get close to understanding them, and seeing these things in their own context is part of that process of understanding (Polanyi, 2009 p.18).

It is not only In-Situ's position as a bricks-and-mortar venue in the heart of the community which qualifies it as being embedded. It is the fact that its' very existence owes itself to a dependence on the will of the people, on local cultures and a tacit understanding of the value of growing together with the community in that specific place. Listening to the context of place, together

with a process of indwelling helps to locate In-Situ's activity in the '*here and now, with local truths … recognising the social context from which others speak, judge and act'* (Kester, 2004 p.113).

Ingold also identifies with this symbiotic relationship as *'the artisan couples his own movements and gestures – indeed his very life – with the becoming of his materials, joining with and following the forces and flows that bring his work to fruition'*, being open enough *'to allow knowledge to grow from the inside of being in the unfolding of life'* (Ingold, 2013 p31.p8). In-Situ and the artists working with them are indeed tied together with the community, environment and the place in an unfolding of life.

Ingold, T2013) *Making: anthropology, archeology, art and architecture by Ingold, Tim.*, *Book*. Routledge.
Kester, G. H2004) *Conversation Pieces : Community and Communication in Modern Art.* Berkeley and Los Angeles London: University of California Press.
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<u>Appendix C</u> – Published Article '*Who Do you think you Are?*' Cornerhouse Publications. 2019

Asia Triennial Manchester. Cornerhouse Publications Ltd 2019 (p110-119).

Abstract: This article accompanies a performative lecture by the artist William Titley, which explores his Anglo-Asian identity through music and memory using The Time Machine sculpture.

'Who Do We Think We Are?'

It's been a long time since I went out and bought a vinyl record, although I have over the years, inadvertently expanded my own collection by inheriting other people's unwanted records. This means that I have an eclectic mix from different generations of music lovers: from my Nan's classical albums and my granddads 'World of Steam' to my mums 'Rugby Songs' and 'Big Western Movie Themes', and more recently my daughters' collection of 12" DJ club mix samplers.

I do occasionally play something at random to grease the wheels of my 1953 Dansette record player, but more often than not, I like to find new additions for my growing collection of vinyl from 1979.

I was 13 years old when I got my first vinyl record, a 7" piece of pop culture called 'Gangsters' by The Special A.K.A., which would eventually act as the catalyst for my recent interest in a more focused collection of vinyl from 1979. 1st, 2nd and 3rd issues, if it was released for sale in 79 then I'm interested in adding it to that collection of records.

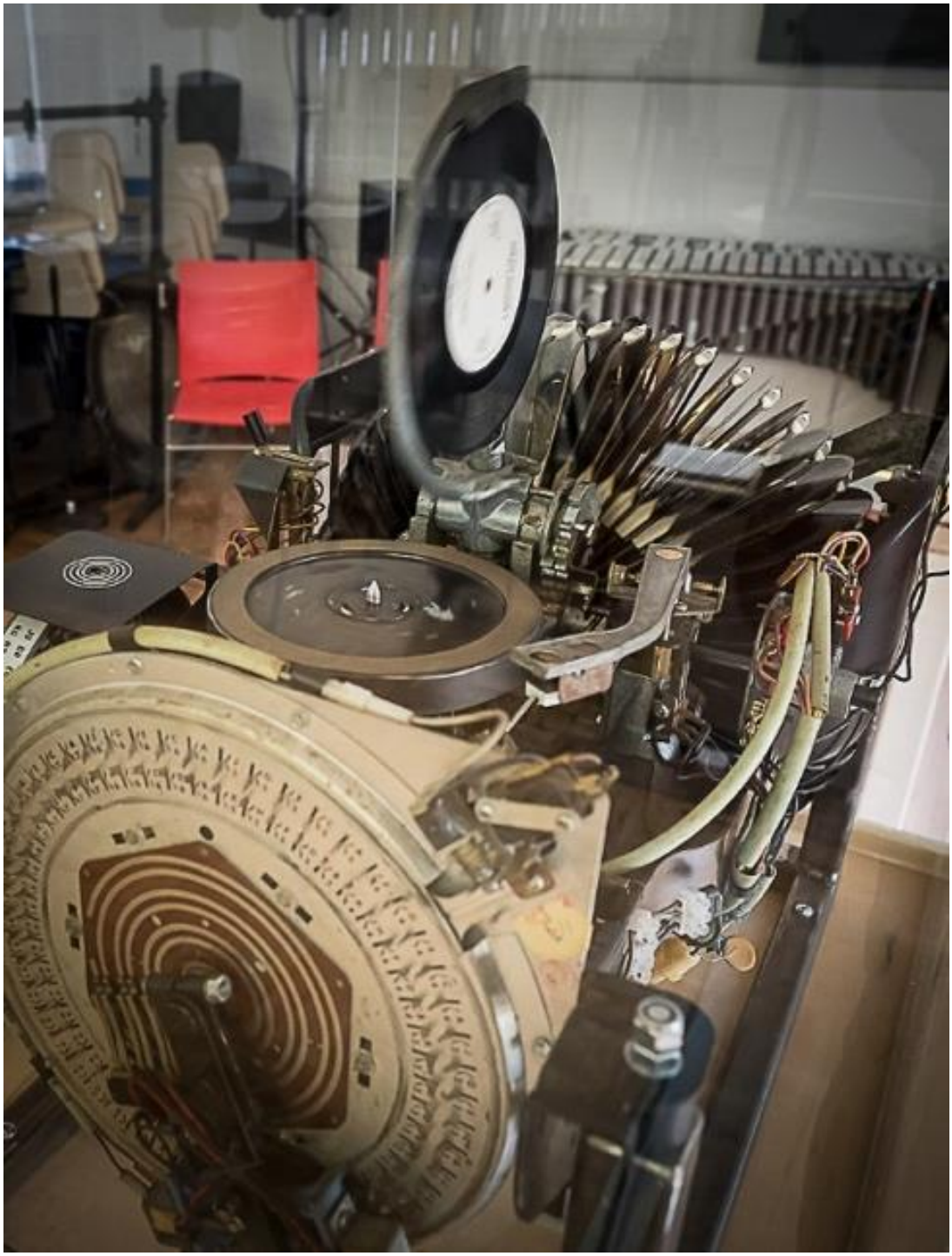
On one level, I wanted my record collection back, the one from 79 – 89 which had somehow been lost, broken, or sold at various junctions on the long path towards mid-life crisis. I had spent some years caring for other peoples' unwanted collections and now I wanted my own records back. I was longing to bask in the aesthetic of the picture sleeve, and to devour the back cover notes as I soaked-up the music. There seems more to it than pure nostalgia, something which is deeply connected not only to who I used to be, but also to the person I have grown into, and who I have yet to become.

As the collection began to take shape, I noticed that many of the 1979 records came with some baggage: memories of places, people, activities, feelings etc. all evoked by particular sounds/lyrics, or a visual familiarity with the picture sleeve.

I remember parties and youth club Discos, the DJ would do their best to play a small selection of records from every genre throughout the evening, being careful to include some 1950s Rock 'n' Roll (or was that just up north?). There were kids into Punk, Ska, Mod, Goth, Disco, New Wave, Heavy Metal and Pop, all waiting patiently (sometimes) to get up on the floor and demonstrate why their music and their identity was much cooler than the rest.

Something happened back then on the dance floors, in the church hall discos, in the bedrooms, and at those parties; the music as experience was

wrapped together with places, people, and situations etc. and stored deep in the archives of the mind, but not without displaying a ticket or label on the outside of the package. A label, ticket or tag, which can be illuminated at any time (and without warning) to reveal the contents of the package as it explodes into the current moment, permeating everyday life. The once dusty label suddenly reveals its contents, triggered by the first few beats of a tune or the sight of a record cover: fusing the current moment with forgotten emotions, people and places.



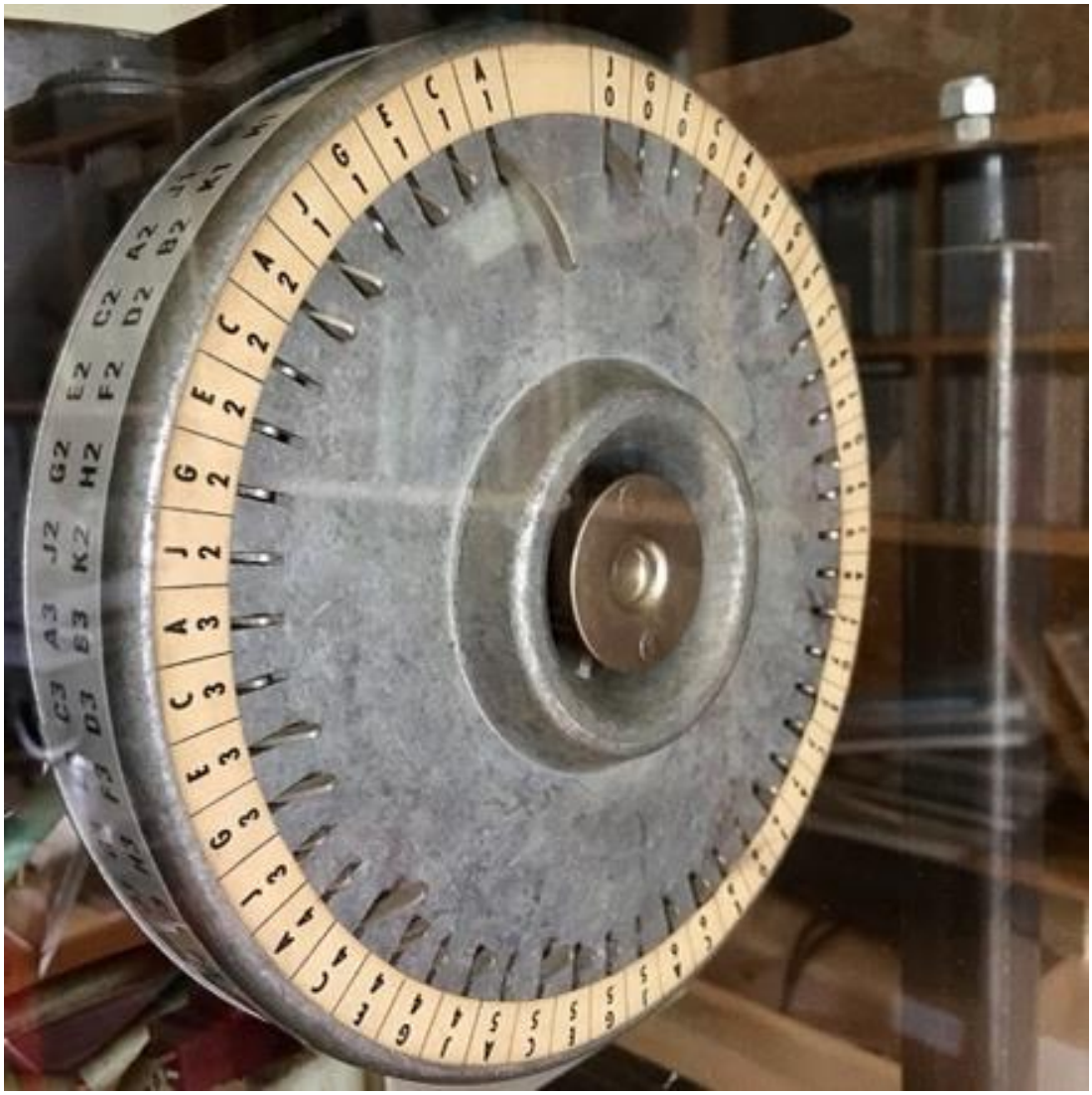
The Time Machine sculpture explores popular music as a memory storage system and reveals sound as a significant component in the development of cultural identity, and sense of place. The sculpture, made from a deconstructed jukebox, contains songs nominated by members of my community and is accompanied by an associated memory to each song. The memories are developed into song titles to fit into the record selection panel and the respective records loaded into the machine.

Each soundtrack takes the participant back to a moment when they were different people, in a different space and time. The audio enables a kind of leapfrogging over decades of everyday life experiences, to reveal how individual and cultural memory resonates in the shaping of social space, and the soundscape's deep connection to place. For ATM18, the majority of the gallery audience were not involved in populating the machine with memories (the records). Instead, they made selections based on their relationship to someone else's memory title: through playful inquiry to learn what soundtrack they would reveal.

The process of merging someone else's memory with our own experiences (past and present) creates new imaginings of time and space. A visitor described a memory of her and a friend walking up a hill in the countryside, singing 'Video Killed The Radio Star' by Buggles. She went on to tell me how - for many months - she 'didn't even know who the song was by', only that she 'enjoyed singing it with her friend when out walking', her face appeared to light up in the moment as she revisited that place and time.

Other members of the gallery audience describe forgotten places with old friends; driving their first car, local discos, favourite clothing, particular dance moves, and personal relationships; all the memories are somehow merged with the imagined places and people on the selection panel of the Time Machine. The work explores the relationships between everyday life, memory and place, revealing sound to be something that is rarely remembered as a singular entity, and can be experienced and remembered as social space, place and situation.

In a previous life, the Time Machine, which was once a pub jukebox, would be monitored by the supplier to see which records are being played the most, thus charting the most popular choices. Now monitoring the Time Machine, it reports on which of its stored memories relate best to the current audience of 2018.



The remaining text is from a presentation I delivered at the ‘Who Do You Think You?’ symposium at The Whitworth Museum and Art Gallery in Manchester and includes ten of the memories currently stored in the machine.

So, who do we think we are?

Well, there are no doubt, more pressing questions out there like who actually cares about who we are, or who anyone else is for that matter. Where I come from in ‘Far East Lancashire’, the enquiring face of 'Who do you think you are?' is usually met with ‘wot you f**kin lookin at?’ But let’s put that to one side for another day and let’s consider the idea that both the questioner and the responder are by parts the same. Because surely we are all connected on some level to everyone that we’ve ever me, living or dead, and that we are all

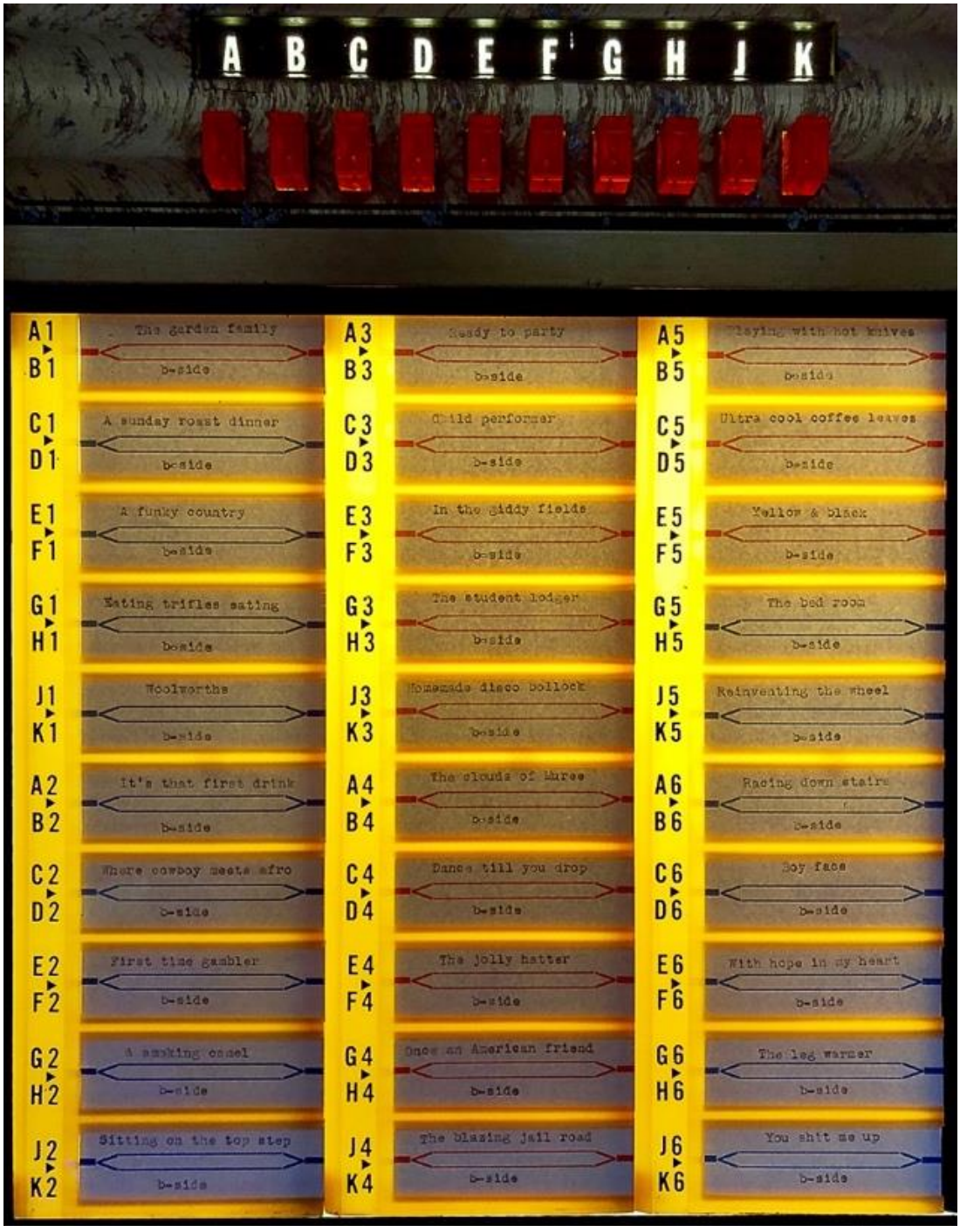
part of each other's lives as they unfold, bobbing and weaving, merging and colliding, or whatever.

Lots of you's and many me's coming together as 'we', to bob and to weave, or merge and collide… like we do. Our own unravelling's have brought us to this year's Asia Triennial, reminding us of fragmented heritage and stuttering identities, which have been informed by other people's histories, by those around us. We are all over the place, our identity is always illusive, a slippery kind of something. We today, them tomorrow, they are fickle friends of ours. We, as in me and I as in thy. It is a repetitive yet slightly out of earshot rhythm of becoming.

It's much easier to consider who we were yesterday than who we are today. You see, hear, yesterday the radio… it was always on. Coffee coloured people at home dancing with mirrors and melting pots, racing down the stairs for Two-Tone top of the pops. Music somehow captures that collective we, wrapping us together in the sounds of our times. The Time Machine sculpture, installed for this year's Asia Triennial plays with those audio triggers to capture

and share collective memories of space and time. Inside the machine are memories from families, friends and random encounters, and they were triggered by the sound of particular records. We filled the machine with the records and made labels for the memories.

The memory titles are displayed on the selection panel for us to interact with. We can choose a memory from the selection panel to hear its corresponding song, the song that triggered their flashback. But to hear the songs we first have to select a memory from the panel.



Memory One - ‘Boomtown Rats: I don’t like Mondays’
We are so glad it’s Tuesday.
We like playing records in my mum’s front room.
This is her record player, and we just keep playing the same record over and over again.
We want to buy this house, simply because of the memories from this front room, hanging out with Aspro, Tippy and Johnny, and the smell of Sunday Roast dinners.
Memory Two - ‘Madness: One step beyond’

This is one step too far.
We're drunk on grandmas elderflower wine in the morning.
Yep, daytime drinking.
She keeps it in old pop bottles, unlabelled in her wardrobe, it could be anything really.

Memory Three - 'Edwin Starr: Backstreet'
If there's ever an anthem for the club, this is it.
A true dance record all the way from the Motor City to this basement on a back street in Manchester.
These are the steps, and we need to queue up to get down.
The hairs on our arms are standing to attention.
We can hear the tune beating out from the basement and we can't wait to get in.
This tune is the place, it's these people, it's this wheel.

Memory Four - 'The Clash: London Calling'
London isn't really calling us, even though we're wearing striped pyjamas in public.
This is a lonely period in our life, and we've just received this in the post from a friend, it's a copy of it on tape, you know, a cassette, in a letter.

Memory Five - 'Detroit Spinners: Working my way back to you'
We can see the flashing lights, the wanna-be cool dudes standing up on the Speedway.
'Hold on tight here we go' and the smell of candy floss.
It's our first proper disco experience, and its tinged with the smell of oil on undulating wooden floors, dizzy walking and being out after dark.
'Scream if you wanna go faster!' and we do.

Memory Six - 'Abba: Chiquitita'
This is our first English cassette,
We're playing it and looking out the bedroom window onto a hot and empty Jail Road.
There is a glorious Amaltas tree full of blazing yellow flowers.
Just another hot summer day in Lahore, just us and our cassette player, it is symbolic of a new world, of freedom, independence, of the west.

Memory Seven - 'The Dickies: Banana Splits'
We're all in a car full of punk kids and luggage, tootling along. We're hanging out of the windows, counting yellow and black bananas.
We are elated, excited and slightly loopy.

Memory Eight - 'Crass: Reality Asylum'

We're living on our own now. You shit us up, we're too scared to go to bed at night, we daren't even go to the toilet. It made us believe more in a god or infinite being than disbelieve.

Memory Nine - 'Archie and The Drells: Tighten Up'
This morning on breakfast radio they announced the US military death toll for last week. We know a young man who's been killed. There's riots and fires in Pittsburgh, we can see the glow of the flames. We are definitely aware that there are frightening things going on in the world and at home. The singer is from our area, and his song is easy to dance to. We're going to a friend's basement on Friday night. We're taking our 45's and we'll dance and sing our hearts out. The adults won't bother us. It buffers us from the bad things happening in life.

Memory Ten - 'Penguin Cafe Orchestra: Air a danser'
There's not long now before the referendum, and today there is an air of hope that the 'Yes' campaign might just win and we can rid ourselves of a tory government for good, and ward off the threat of leaving the EU. It's a sunny day and the light is pouring in.
There is no one else in the house.
We're dancing round and round in a circle and feel pure unadulterated joy.
These days are few and far between.

<u>Appendix D</u> – Published Article '*Creative Relations'* Taylor & Francis 2017

Journal of Social Work Practice, Routledge.

Abstract: A reflection on diary extracts made while the experiences were still fresh in the mind, the article reveals the artist as vulnerable participant amongst other vulnerable participants working with a group of men who cared for a loved one at home (home carers). It documents a dialogical approach to engaging with the group whilst making an artwork; *Gentlemen's Wardrobe*.

Introduction

In '*MAKING: ANTHROPOLOGY, ARCHEOLOGY, ART AND ARCHITECTURE'*, Tim Ingold explores the act of making in the context of the creation of objects and the use of the maker's materials. His descriptions of engaging with materials and the creative processes involved also hold true when working with people and places in a socially engaged art context. Ingold defines two significant approaches to the creative process; morphogenesis**,** which places 'the maker from the outset as a participant in amongst a world of active materials', and hylomorphism, when a practitioner imposes 'forms internal to the mind upon a material world…' (Ingold 2013 p.21).

Grant Kester in his book '*CONVERSATION PIECES'* contrasts two kinds of aesthetic; one portraying the modern artist as a genius who produces objects that are experienced through an immediate aesthetic response to that object, and 'a dialogical aesthetic', which 'suggests a very different image of the artist, one defined in terms of openness, of listening, and of a willingness to accept a position of dependence and intersubjective vulnerability relative to the viewer or collaborator' (Kester 2004 p.110). His chapter on dialogical aesthetics goes a long way to providing a framework for evaluating the work of socially engaged artists, demonstrating that time, ethics, listening, exchange, openness, context, empathy, collectivity, legacy, acknowledging all forms of

communication and recognising the artist as participant all come in to play when discussing such work.

Most of Kester's components can also be found in Ingold's descriptions of engagement with materials, and both of them consider materials as having direct connections to the social world around them at the time at which they were made, viewed, found and used. I aim to apply their theories directly to the context of working with people in an attempt to shed light on particular moments in my creative process. I aim to do this by presenting them in the context of Ingold's morphogenetic and hylomorphic approaches, together with Kester's model for a dialogical aesthetic, which highlights critical aspects of socially engaged arts practice.

In this paper, therefore, I use auto-ethnographic methods to present information from my personal diaries as an artist who has lived in the community where the artwork took place all his life. In doing so, I attempt to reveal the importance of seemingly insignificant data by making diary entries after each event and then expanding/reflecting on them at a later date.

Through reporting about a project with male home carers, I'm going to present some of the interactions which took place between myself (as the artist) and the participants as we got to know each other and became part of each other's lives. The text takes the form of a series of extracts taken directly from my own personal journals followed by a commentary on each. These have been selected to highlight the similarities between Ingold's descriptions of creativity and Kester's model for a dialogical aesthetic, which highlights key points in the engagement processes of a socially engaged artist. These reflective notes, made while the experiences were still fresh in my mind, help to illustrate the impact not only on the participants but also upon the artist as a participant in the social process.

The project came about through collaboration between a local health care organisation, whose aims are to support and connect voluntary carers in Lancashire, and 'Superslowway', which is one of 21 projects in England called

Creative People and Places (CCP). The CCPs, funded by the Lottery and the Arts Council England aim to present opportunities to involve 'more people choosing, creating and taking part in brilliant art experiences in the places where they live' (CCP Website).

Originally titled '*Shed Life Ways'*, the proposal by the caring organisation identified a need to engage particularly with male home carers. The case was made that 45% of registered carers are male and that they especially feel isolated and find it difficult to open up to other people. It was proposed to create a shed or sheds for men to hang out in and engage in craft, with the ultimate goal for the group to grow in numbers, become independent and run their group themselves. In fact, the group that was formed shared a workshop and kitchen space with The Canal & Rivers Trust, and the participants became less interested in making a shed, feeling that they didn't need one, and more interested in a new title for their group 'Men Who Care'.

The names of participants have been changed for anonymity.

Diary extract no. 1 - First Impressions

It's always a little unsettling going to meet a new group of people and I guess that's just the nature of the unknown. With a decent supply of tea and nibbles, we each chatted about our interests, hobbies, careers and… space. A shed space (not 'shared space' but can be) now occupied by life essentials for absent companions. Absent and yet present, connected electronically and emotionally to the passengers on this journey via mobile technology, a super-fast superhighway on this very super-slow-way.

Football banter and the cost of playing these days soon led to the decoration of cakes in a time when life in miniature laid down well-trodden tracks, from sheds to houses and back again, to the sound of 10 years' worth of Scottish Highland Bagpipes.

Cutting across golden carpets flecked with fisherman blues we emerged from

deep within tunnels, into the rushes of forward motion, gently pressing ripples at a pace… of… approximately… 5… miles… per hour.

Where to next, I wondered?

End of diary extract no. 1

I wrote the above text after being introduced to a small of group of five men on a narrow-boat trip on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Every few months the local caring organization arranged activities and day-trips for home carers to find respite from their usual everyday duties. A couple of men on the trip had met before on other organized activities but most, like me had not been acquainted before. Three of the men agreed to meet up with me a month later and we shared some of our life stories. We lost one member to relocation and another to transport issues, leaving just one man and an artist. So, there we were… at some kind of beginning. The goal posts had changed, we didn't have a group to work with, we had to try and create one… or perhaps it could be a project about just one man and an artist?

I am the artist and Tony is a man responsible for the care and welfare of his wife, who suffers a variety of debilitating health conditions, often rendering her housebound for days at a time.

This is a story of men and although they are no longer in a boat, they are nonetheless travelling companions. The boat is a suitable metaphor for imagining a group of people moving together through time and space, and the narrow boat itself suggests a particular speed of travel; a pace that allows for reflection on our experiences, our resources and the surrounding terrain.

We rejoin the story many weeks after the boat trip where Tony and I are discussing how we could attract more men to join us. We conjured up images of a future in numbers but more realistically we considered the prospect of travelling alone, just the two of us on 'our' journey. We dreamed of a community space for men who care, and of taking such a space with us on

our travels, to engage with other people and to let them know that we exist, and that we care.

Occasionally, a new member John would join us for a brew, bringing with him a voracious appetite for conversation. He looks after his wife 24/7, who is in the latter stages of dementia, which impacts deeply on his own wellbeing through lack of both sleep and other human contact outside of his home. We reassured him that it's ok to drop in whenever it suits him, and that the group could develop according to all our interests. Just before leaving on his first visit, he made a point of expressing how much he had enjoyed spending time with us, and that he felt much calmer than when he arrived. This change in him was clearly visible, the more we talked about art and life over breakfast, the more relaxed and relieved he appeared to be. It was obvious to Tony who pointed out to me that John was actually in a seriously vulnerable state of mind.

We agreed to keep John's home situation in mind as the weeks went by, meeting over breakfast every Friday morning: talking, listening and listening some more, sharing our hopes for the group; maybe we could create some art, or share a new skill like cooking our favourite food. The conversation led to John inviting us to lunch at his house, and we accepted.

The more I thought about it, the more I started to worry about safeguarding and ethical issues. We were three blokes who didn't really know each other, and yet we had just agreed to meet at one of our houses for lunch. What if something unexpected occurred and everyone got stressed out?

Diary extract no. 2 - Chilli House Visit

I was a little anxious at the thought of meeting his partner, I've not experienced the company of someone with dementia before and didn't know what to expect. Would they freak out at having strangers in the house? I drove to John's house with Tony, who didn't seem phased at all and that helped to calm my nerves a little. Besides, as we were travelling over, John sent me a text to

say that it would be just us three. I was still nervous though, I guess I'm just not used to house visits. That reminds me, I saw my best mate last week and we haven't had a social for over 10 years, and I haven't seen my brothers and sisters for months.

John encouraged Tony to help with the cooking, they both like to cook, and I volunteered to photograph the whole process for the blog. John seemed tense but that was his usual starting position whenever we got together. In between the cooking stages, John showed us a photo album from the time he spent with his wife's family abroad. He met her in London, and they spent a lot of time travelling the world together before she suddenly became ill. He also showed us his military photos, a letter from the Queen, and his decorative cap badges, all proudly displayed on the walls. Once the pan was full of meat, veg and stock, the chilli was left to simmer while we enjoyed the garden, listening to music from the good old days and enjoying views of the local countryside. He is interested in photography and asks me questions about the subject, but I rarely get chance to reply before he is off on another inquiry. Back in the kitchen and it's time for a taste. It was way 'too salty' for Tony and I quickly interjected with how much 'I loved all the different textures of the meat and depth of flavour'. I think that was more of me avoiding conflict than a conscious facilitation of the situation.

End of Diary Extract no 2

It felt like a real privilege to be invited into John's house and for him to share with us his secret recipe of 'Five Meats Chilli'. He openly shared his life history by talking us through family albums and souvenir collections, all of which indicated a successful military background and a love for travelling on exotic holidays with his beloved family.

The visit to John's house was my first exposure to life as a carer. It was a glimpse into his physical and very personal world. Tony seemed to take it in his stride, while on the other hand; I became aware that I'd not actually been to someone's house (outside of my family circle) for quite some time.

Diary extract no. 3 – A walk in the hills

At our next meeting we went for a walk in the countryside, and I took along my 4-year-old grandson. He has met John before at a local art event and got on well with him. I thought it would be a good way to lighten the mood, which could get quite intense at times. This was also an opportunity for me to reciprocate the lunch at John's house by sharing an important and precious part of my life.

Tony and I were worried about the length of the walk and I slipped our concerns into the conversation but John didn't seem to notice. I was a little worried about Tony's breathing (him not being the fittest and also an asthmatic) as we headed up the incline on that very hot day. My grandson was happy holding Rovers' (John's dog) leash and then Tony used it to help pull him self up the hill. John guided us to a beautiful spot by the river, perfect for dropping heavy stones in the deepest parts, the challenge being to make the biggest splash, much to the giddy delight of my grandson and the much older lads too.

We strolled back down the hill to the café for a bacon sandwich. The conversation was allowed to develop according to John's financial insecurities and somehow ended up with him declaring that as an artist I have no idea what poverty is. I was actually offended by his remarks and was just about to tell him so, when Tony calmly diffused the situation by explaining that 'we've all experienced poverty in different ways at some point in our lives'. We all nodded in agreement, laughing at my grandson's face as he struggled with his fast-melting ice-lolly.

End of diary extract no. 3

A walk in the hills was a suggestion from John and not something that Tony would normally fit into his spare time. I could sense that he was worried about

the distance of the walk and the incline it involved but afterwards he was so proud that he had completed it given ‘how unfit’ he thought he was.

It was towards the end of the activity that it became clear that all members contribute to the facilitation process. Tony interjecting to diffuse a potential altercation between John and me is a good example of sharing the direction of the dialogue and a responsibility for the group.

Diary extract no. 4 - A reflection of the self

We had our usual breakfast meeting and talked for a few minutes about the wardrobes, which we had bought some weeks ago at a local antiques warehouse, not really sure what to use them for. Tony was in a bad mood due to lack of sleep and he seemed a bit cranky, and uninterested in the wardrobes. Instead, we made a list of words relating to caring; both negative and positive words, and he read the list out loud while I recorded it with the intention of playing it back inside the wardrobes as a mini art installation.

Negative words:
Sadness, resentment, guilt, helplessness, weak, detached, misinformed, scapegoated, invisible, soft, forsaken, downtrodden, misunderstood, forgotten, depressed, and unfocused.

Positive words:
Supportive, strong, caring, empathy, understanding, more rounded, mature, better informed, headstrong, focused, and happy.

End of diary extract no. 4

Part way through this very casual conversation, I became aware that we were painting a picture (in words) of Tony’s life, an unseen part of him made visible for all to see, and also for him to see. That moment in the kitchen, presented us both with what the artist Stephen Willats refers to as ‘the question’, which enables participants to step back far enough to see an image of themselves

and their own lives; a moment of detachment from the situation, and time enough to be critically objective

Diary extract no. 5 - A change

I was expecting Tony to be down after England's football performance but he got in the car with a big smile on his face and went on to tell me how great he was feeling after not having a cigarette since Sunday. He'd also cut down his calorie intake and has been walking for about 3 miles per day; changing his food choices to include a healthier diet, less meat, less fat, and less sugar. We both spoke about how proud we were of him to take such a drastic life-changing step towards a positive future. He said he feels much better and is sleeping soundly too.

End of diary extract no. 5

No one had encouraged Tony to make the life-changing decisions that he'd made but they were important enough for him to share his joy at implementing the goals into his daily routine. As humans we are influenced by the company we keep and both Tony and I have managed to affect each other's lives. The behaviour and beliefs of one person influencing the other, arguably impacts on the development of local customs and cultures. For instance, I am a member of the local athletics club and have shared stories of running around the local hills for pleasure, and Tony's love for the local football club has influenced my decision to buy a season ticket. Could it be that our dialogical exchanges have led both of us to re-evaluate our lives and to make changes accordingly?

In Kester's model for a dialogical aesthetic he argues for an alternative approach to the way that art is interpreted and identifies a need to shift our understanding of the work of art towards the 'process of communicative exchange rather than a physical object.' (Kester 2004, p.90). With this in mind the intersubjective social exchanges between Tony and me reveal themselves

as the work of art, which in turn locates itself deep in the everyday lives of participants.

Conclusion

‘It is not by looking at things but by dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning.’ (Polanyi & Sen 2009)

The activities that have occurred through Ingold’s morphogenetic approach have produced periods of ‘indwelling’, offering each other an opportunity to see the world from another perspective. As Polanyi and Sen point out, it isn’t enough to look at something in a bid to understand it, we must ultimately be able to empathize with the thing if we are ever to get close to understanding it, and seeing the thing in its own context is part of that process of understanding.

While Kester stipulates that ‘we can never claim to fully inhabit the other’s subject position’ he adds that ‘we can imagine, and this imagination, thus approximation, can radically alter our sense of who we are’ (Kester 2004 p.115).

Kester’s model for a dialogical aesthetic acknowledges the importance of listening and together with Polanyi and Sen’s process of indwelling helps to contextualize the Men Who Care project in the here and now, with local truths ‘…recognising the social context from which others speak, judge and act’ (Kester 2004 p.113).

Ingold also identifies with this deep level of engagement as ‘the artisan couples his own movements and gestures – indeed his very life – with the becoming of his materials, joining with and following the forces and flows that bring his work to fruition’ (Ingold 2013 p.31). He also recognizes the need for space ‘to allow knowledge to grow from the inside of being in the unfolding of life’ (Ingold 2013, p. 8). The longevity of dialogical art projects depends on the

sound foundations of sincere friendships and genuine interconnectedness, enhanced through the process of sharing real life experiences.

Bringing together the male carers on the canal barge at the beginning of the project presented the opportunity for tenuous links to grow into intimate bonds. None of us knew what would actually come out of that initial stranger-meets-stranger experience. No one foresaw the impact of the project on the health and well being of the participants. Tony commented in the first few weeks how important it was for him to be able to chat to someone who doesn't verbally abuse him, putting him down for being on social benefits or for being overweight. His low self-esteem is something that I have witnessed a definite improvement in during the time we have spent together. From being unable to sit in the window at a fast food restaurant for fear of what people would think of him, to losing over three stones in weight and taking up regular exercise including walking and weight training. He is now calorie conscious and makes every effort to stick to his positive life-style changes.

We met almost every week for at least 2 hours for several months and every session involved dialogue. Sometimes we met with the intention of developing ideas about how to attract new members or suggestions for day trips, only to sit down in the kitchen with a brew and a catch-up on how their week had unfolded.

In the back of my mind, the artwork seemed to be developing in connection with a couple of wardrobes we'd bought one day while browsing a local auction house. We thought they would come in handy for storing things. I saw them for their functionality and felt that they somehow represented a forgotten kind of man. They looked very different on the outside (in size and design) but inside they were ordered just the same, with shelves labelled for specific items of a gentlemen's attire; socks, ties, shirts, collars, cufflinks etc. For many weeks they acted as an oversized larder for tea and coffee supplies as we sat discussing strategies to attract more members or pitching ideas for a creative activity programme. Those regular conversations became opportunities for participants to express concerns about their individual personal situations;

each scenario quite different but connected deeply through the context of home caring, which is a subject I have no experience of. I listened as they shared their pain and frustration of being invisible, of not receiving the help they so desperately needed, of being trapped without proper social care and support.

I was gently moulded into the role of counsellor; the sessions becoming a sounding board for anything on their mind. I responded to the prodding and the shaping as I attempted to facilitate their frustrations caused by the lack of support from the government benefit system. I scoped out participant interests, trying to find common ground without getting into arguments, clashing of opinions or cultures. It would have been all too easy to hit a nerve or to say something offensive, given the low self-esteem of the group; due mainly to the lack of sleep on top of all the frustrations of being a carer in a world that appears not to care.

Hearing one participant telling another about how the regular meetings are a ‘lifesaver’ is a great indication of how feedback is shared within and beyond the group, and it’s not coerced from them, but instead they offer it, as a gift from the participants to the world around them. After a game of bowls with John and his friend, I overheard John telling his friend ‘I know we don’t do much at these Friday morning meetings but they are a real godsend and they keep me sane, I don’t know what I would do without them’.

I’ve also witnessed changes in the behaviour of individual participants. I would often be asked technical advice regarding digital cameras and upon offering my advice the participant would change the subject, or ask another question before I had chance to finish the answer. More recently, and after many months of asking, the participant actually took it on board and started to use his camera in the session. This was a small but significant step for the participant. On another occasion, a participant and his wife told me that they can see a real positive change in his self-esteem due to the benefits of attending the regular meetings, which have led to improvements to his personal health and well-being; he himself claims he has grown in confidence

enough to quit smoking, control a healthier diet, and to take up regular exercise.

As for the impact on the artist, I too had sleepless nights, often troubled by their harrowing stories, and sometimes just worrying about the sustainability of the group. My personal life was also affected in other ways due to the social proximity of participants. I live in the same borough and we know the same places, people, and shops and so on. We talked about old schools, local football clubs, favourite cafes and pubs, terrible transport networks, and old friends. The dialogical process produced moments of self-reflection, and in effect held up a mirror to all participants, including the artist. I've had my own moments of realization about my personal life during the project and I've made changes, which are no doubt the results of being a participant in this project, from reconnecting with old school pals to buying season tickets to the local football club with my brother.

It was the Chilli-making house visit where I realized I was lacking some social skills, in respect of being a houseguest. It got me thinking about the last time I actually visited a friend, it was then that I realized I had lost contact with my closest friends. We can see from that particular diary entry that I'd had my own transformative moment in the project timeline.

Socially engaged art projects are heavily dependent on time to allow for things to happen naturally, with the artist and participants relying on what Ingold refers to as 'intuition in action' (Ingold 2013, p.25) My projects do indeed evolve intuitively, they are live, emerging without rehearsal and no fixed design in mind, they work in and with the flow of life or as Ingold might say, with the grain of the wood (rather than against it). The artist's role as a facilitator of morphogenetic approaches brings with them a tacit understanding of the creative process and a confidence, which allows things to grow organically, in tune with the local environment, people and place.

Had I adopted a more hylomorphic method, with an end product in mind before I met the male carers group, then the social activities that we all took part in

would arguably not have occurred: Crown Green Bowling, visits to art galleries, browsing antique shops, cooking at John's house, and walking in the local hills were all activities that emerged from open dialogue sessions with group. With a more hylomorphic approach, I would have steered the group towards developing and producing my vision, with little time for digression, and consequently little room for collective emergence to occur.

The hylomorphic approach identifies participants as tools and/or labour in the production of the artists' vision, while the morphogenetic approach allows for a shared creative vision to emerge through the process of intersubjective exchange. This morphogenetic understanding of creativity places the maker/artist in a more humble position than the one portrayed by the hylomorphic model where the artist as the 'genius' has a fixed predetermined design already in mind. The morphogenetic artist is a participant in the collective creative endeavours of shared experiences and this approach to engagement can be applied to Ingold's earthly materials and Kester's communities in the form of listening, responding, etc. There are clear crossovers and similarities within the context of the creativity processes at work. Ingold's mode of communication in the context of the maker responding to particular qualities of a given material like stone, wood or clay, and the inter-subjective encounters, of which Grant Kester refers to, work in a similar way; the artist engages in a series of interactions with potential participants/or materials.

There was a natural tension generated by the encounters and the social proximity of participants in this project. This tension was not dissimilar to Ingold's basket weaving exercise where the maker bends the willow branches into shape in order to create a weave: 'The form was not imposed on the material from without, but rather generated in this force field, comprised by the relations between the weaver and the willow' (Ingold 2013 p.22). Similarly, it is the direct social connection between each other, which provides the necessary tension/friction between all the participants, holding the network together and attributing to its overall dynamic. The regular inter-subjective exchanges between participants are crucial properties of the network,

enabling it to develop, expanding or contracting, and ultimately contributing to the potential of an emerging collective future. Tension often revealed itself in communications, whether engaging in small talk, planning a shared experience or non-participation in group activities. It all depended how life was treating each participant at that particular moment in time.

In the same way that exploring the physical qualities of a certain material strengthens the relationship between the material and the maker, leading to unexpected forms, conversations can often lead into unknown territories and it takes a lot of trust and confidence on both sides to allow that to happen in a way that produces positive results. Grant Kester refers to a 'discursive space' (p.122), where artists and participants are not bound by a fixed topical agenda but allowed to digress in conversation, ultimately progressing through dialogue towards some kind of personal transformation in the form of new perspectives and insights.

Even though the commission has ended I'm still 'in residence' in another way. I can't simply walk away, I'm already deeply rooted in the area, having been born and bred there, the project has been started but an end has not yet been designated.

As Tim Ingold points out, making is very much a social activity between the maker and the materials, a communication of tension between both forces. When the artist is a participant among participants in the creative process, embedded socially engaged art practice is located at the morphogenetic end of the spectrum. In the context of the male carers group, the inter-subjective exchanges between all the participants (including the artist) occur on a deeply intimate and personal level. It is a level where at times the blurring of everyday life and art go unnoticed and sometimes the art of participation is stretched to the point of breaking down but always… things happen and shared meanings emerge.

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Appendix E – *Demolition Street* Exhibition Book 2017

Abstract: This book presents text and images related to the Demolition Street project, where the artist documented the lives of the few remaining residents on a street designated for demolition; collecting video interviews, photographs and objects left behind by displaced residents.

Demolition St. William Titley including text by Julian Manley

In 2005 I began working with the residents of Bright Street in Colne, Lancashire to document the effects of a local government regeneration strategy (Housing Market Renewal Initiative) to demolish their homes and make way for gardens for the remaining residents. The people affected by HMRI were our family and our friends, and the histories being erased were our histories.

As the street adjusted itself to a predetermined future, I spoke with the remaining residents, who openly shared their experiences with me.

In other parts of the street, I meandered through deserted hallways, uninvited to a world without hosts, without service, a distinct feeling of being, and yet with increased isolation from a world external. Crouching in shadows, sifting through interrupted correspondences and dragging forgotten objects out of a particular darkness and into a different light, through time and space to the present.

Ten years later and the site of Demolition Street bears two grassy rectangular scars on the north facing slope of the town, still undeveloped but not forgotten. The highly congested North Valley Road is the perfect viewing platform for pondering this short but steep road to nowhere complete with its original gas lamps.

Looking through the collection of Bright Street artifacts, I travel back to a time before the Housing Market Renewal Initiative: a time of long forgotten friends,

families and social events and ultimately to times where other versions of myself reside.

William Titley

Inside, outside: an existence laid bare

‘I'm on the outside looking in. An' I wanna be, an' I wanna be back on the inside with you’

Little Anthony and the Imperials (1964)

‘There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet…’ Walter Benjamin (1940)

Feelings in William Titley’s Demolition Street run somewhere in between the lover’s sigh at being left on the outside by his girlfriend - ‘dumped’ rather than demolished – and the piles of rubble left behind as the Angel of History and time hurtle on, leaving it all behind, remorselessly. Demolition Street draws together the intimate and personal with the larger questions of how we live, organise ourselves, relate to each other, our sense of value and our ability to care, to empathise, the friendships, communities and bonds that we build over time… and quickly destroy. People swept aside for ‘their own good’. Houses demolished to make way for green spaces that may never materialise. A home becomes an ‘empty property’ and is ‘acquired’ by an unknown person acting in the name of a legal entity, for the common good. From Bright Street to Demolition Street: ‘Good riddance’ in a bittersweet sort of way.

Some may resist and others might go quietly, but the tumult leaves nobody unaffected. Something is found in whatever is lost, the garish colours of an ashtray, door handles to nowhere, light switches connected to nothing except memory lane, demolition lane. Spying through a peep hole with your little eye, a crazy-cobbled painted depiction of a disabled user’s car space. The spy in you is that ghostly user for a second.

Some may resist: Demolition Street as a socially engaged artwork is relational but antagonistic in Claire Bishop's use of the word (1). We are challenged not to love Bright Street but to resist demolition or what demolition represents for the people in their homes, the displaced, the occupiers, ourselves in our homes, homes past but most of all present, that present that includes the past, what went on behind closed doors. But in the resistance itself resides a beauty, an aesthetic consideration. Despite destruction, the flashing colours of the ashtray resist oblivion; the car door in the cellar brings back memories of our dad's first car, some sweetness from the past. Our relationship to the image morphs into our own family relationships in the way that memory becomes a certain kind of history. In this way the artwork thinks 'the aesthetic and the social/political together, rather than subsuming both within the ethical' (2).

In Demolition Street memory is a multi-layered archaeology in a Foucauldian sense, where past generations have left their imprint on a present that is about to be demolished, is demolished. The secret ghost of the viewer's eye becomes voyeuristic. And in that personal dialogue with the street as it was, internal memories rise up, phoenix-like from the rubble. They come alive in a present that belongs to each of us individually and collectively. A found object becomes my object. The nail on the wall is my nail on the wall. The ironing board is my mother's, and yours too.

So, the street is down, like a memory of the Blitz. But memories can live on beyond demolition, they can resist, they can be transferred from generation to generation epigenetically. Scientists have shown how mice can pass on a sense of smell from parent to sibling, how information can be inherited (3). Maybe the smell of a Wimpy burger or baked beans on toast still lingers in Bright Street like a Proustian madeleine: ' But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection' (4).

Maybe Demolition Street ends up haunting our social imagination, when ‘home becomes unfamiliar, when your bearings on the world lose direction, when the over-and-done-with comes alive, when what’s been in your blind spot comes into view’ (5). According to Avery, haunting is not like trauma. Demolition Street as a historical process and artwork did not and does not traumatise its protagonists or the audience of the artwork. But its images and something invisible stay with us after the demolition; and the feeling that there is ‘something–to-be-done’ (6). Despite promises of a Bright-er future for the residents of demolition, a doubt or at least a question seems to hang in the ether.

There are at least three stages to demolition: the outside, the inside-out, and the nothing. On the eve of demolition, the brick walls, the roofs, the windows and doors of houses that were homes, their secrets within. Then, the process of demolition reveals those secrets, the insides of the houses are revealed to the outside world, that wallpaper someone agonized over, a choice of colours, someone’s insides all revealed to anyone and everyone. I’m on the outside, looking in. And finally nothing –except the haunting of an existence laid to rest.

Julian Manley

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MONDAY
BLACKBURN
BLACKBURN


31

‘We have a lot of friends and will probably lose a few if we have to move’.

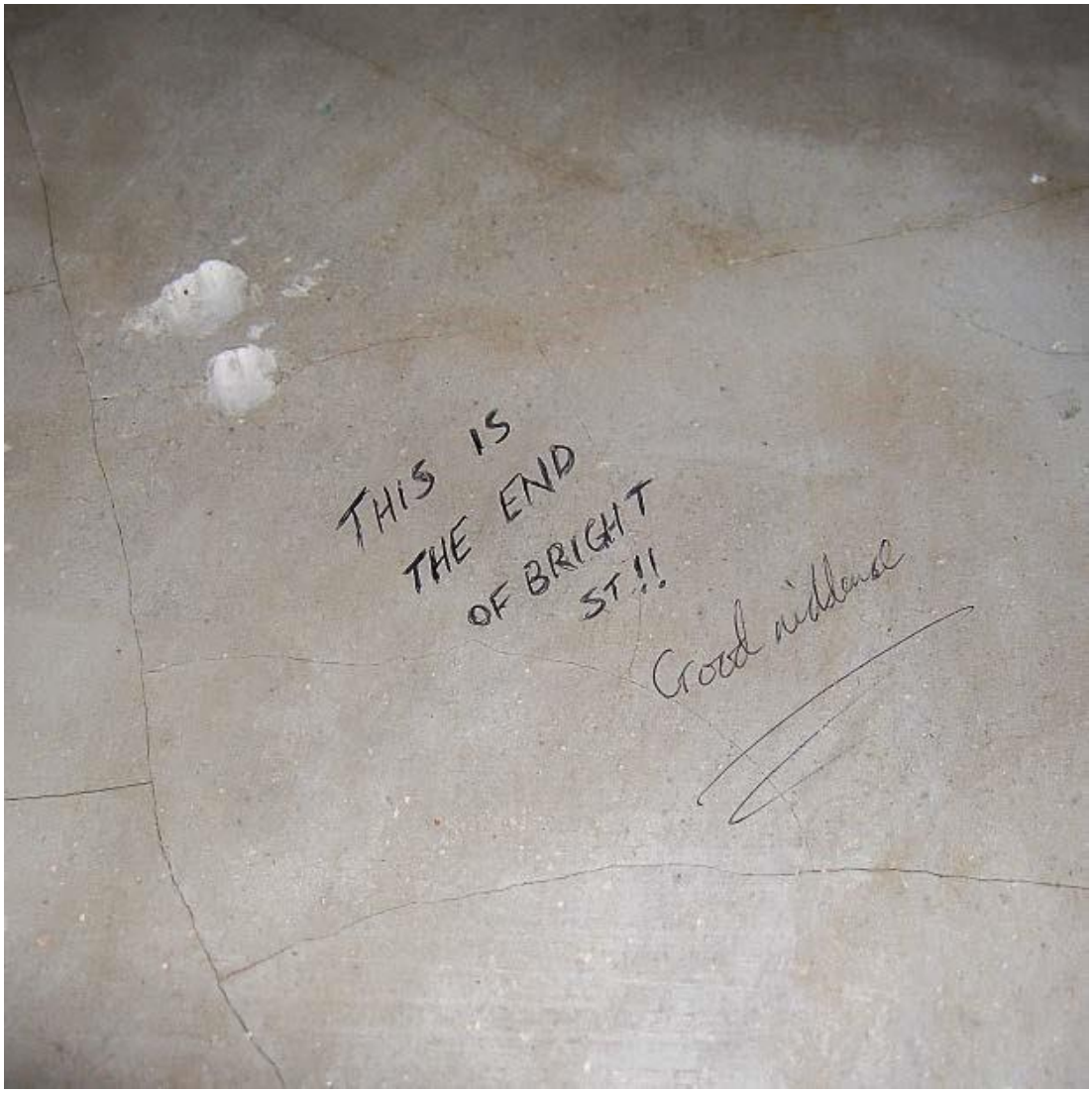
I got up, made myself a brew and the Colne Times came through the door. So I sat down in the chair and the front page hit me... Pendle Borough Council prepares to pull down properties on Bright St. Mason St. and Varley St.


THIS EMPTY PROPERTY
HAS BEEN ACQUIRED BY
PENDLE BOROUGH COUNCIL.
ALL ENQUIRIES
01282 661468


18

‘It’s a bit sad really, you look at all the empty houses... it’s a bit sad’.

‘This is my favourite room, I can play my music or watch TV’.


THIS IS
THE END
OF BRIGHT
ST!!


NOLLY
VOLVO

Dedicated to Tony & Lesley Brown, John Barker, and Alan & Donna Titley for their patience, understanding and time spent sharing their experiences.

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<u>Appendix F</u> – Published Article, '*Brief Encounters'* Journal of Performance as Research 2016

PARtake: The Journal of Performance as Research, Vol. 1, Issue 22016, 22-29).

Abstract: A reflection on chance encounters as social art material, informed by a performative workshop; a walk around Canterbury, with some out-of-date polaroid film.

***Brief Encounters: A Walk Around Canterbury with an Old Polaroid Camera and Some Out-of-Date Film*.**

William Titley

In this paper, I attempt to reveal the potential of the seemingly insignificant encounters that could hold the ingredients for transformative moments in participatory art projects.

My art practice evolves around engagement with people and place and relies on reflective personal journal entries to help evaluate situations and interactions. Consequently, my process is heavily dependent on chance encounters with other people; encounters which ultimately affect the creative materials of everyday life, such as dialogue, a sense of the other, and situations.

In *The Critique of Everyday Life* (Vol. II) Henri Lefebvre distinguishes moments from the everyday and suggests that the precursors to such moments "are there in embryonic form, but it is difficult to make them out with any clarity."[7] Lefebvre's "moments" hold value and spring forth from everyday life only to fail, ultimately fading away and returning us back to everyday-ness. It is the embryos of those moments that I am interested in revealing for this short paper. Using an extract from my personal journal, made while the experience was still fresh in my mind, and together with samples of instant photographs,

I will attempt to pin down some of the “partial moments” I encountered during a walk around Canterbury in Kent.

Having used an old instant camera and some out-of-date film, the photographs exaggerate the impossibility of capturing the ephemeral quality of a moment. The dried-up chemical compound resists the camera rollers as it is pressed across the picture plane of the Polaroid object. The photo object (as opposed to the photo digital) is precious; each release of the camera shutter begins the demise of another chemically distorted image--first appearing before our very eyes, then slowly fading away, unnoticed. And just like my social practice, there is an element of chance regarding whether it will lead to anything at all.

Diary Extract – Brief Encounters

Canterbury is a tourist trap, with gorgeous architecture and sites of historical significance around every corner. The city attracts visitors from around the world, and I found myself faced with a language barrier at the first hurdle. My French is far from useful and after a couple of attempts to make conversation with tourists it became clear that we couldn’t understand each other, and that we were all transitory in the space.

I grew less likely to engage with the tourists after assuming (rightly or wrongly) that they would be just as lost I was. Instead, I chose professionals, who were easier to locate. Some people were on their way to/from work (wearing branded aprons, for example) and others interacted with me as a customer. I went to a café for a cup of tea. Upon asking the waitress about her favourite place in the city, she made an assumption about me, too; she went on to describe in great detail “where to get the best picture of the Cathedral.” I went with her assumption that I was a tourist, and I adopted the same opening question when approaching tourists: developing rapport, albeit in an embryonic state (assuming the people I’m engaging with also want to photograph the Cathedral).

Polaroid 1: Busy street.

Polaroid 2: A glimpse of the Cathedral.

My chance to use this new opening line came and went before I could deploy it. I was enjoying a view of the river near The Friends House when a man who was trimming the grass on the riverbank emerged onto the bridge. He initiated a conversation about the battery life of his power trimmer.

Polaroid 3: The riverbank.

He simply looked at me and said, “It’s gone again and doesn’t last very long at all, which is probably a good thing as there is a nest just there,” and he pointed to the spot where his trimmers had clearly not touched the long grass. When I asked whether it was bees or wasps in there, he explained, “ducks, with eggs inside.”

Polaroid 4: The Friends House.

I asked if he was responsible for the adjacent Friends House Garden, commenting how gorgeous it was with immaculately trimmed trees and hedges. He started to walk away with the dead trimmer in hand, and without looking back, said, “well... it’s not just me.” He never did turn back, just kept walking away towards the garage on the far side of the Friends House. I felt a little rejected, convincing myself that maybe he had other things to do. I wonder what happened? Had I said something to offend him? Did he have somewhere to go? Did he not want to talk about “the others” who tended the garden, and if so, why not? Maybe he was deaf, and that once he had turned away, he couldn’t hear a thing. After all, it was he who had started the conversation in the first place, and then casually walked away. I never got to ask him about the best place to photograph the Cathedral.

Just then, a middle-aged couple arrived to see what I was looking at. “What a wonderful view,” the lady smiled. “Yes, it’s lovely,” I replied. As she leant her elbows on the wall of the bridge, I shuffled along so she and her companion could see what I had been admiring: the reflection of an old building and a weeping willow tree, with sunbathers further up the distant banks of the river.

Polaroid 5: View from a bridge.

As the couple settled on the bridge, I immediately stepped back and slowly walked away to give them space to enjoy the view in their own space--their own moment.

End of Diary Extract.

In socially engaged art projects “moments” are considered as situations of personal change, transformative in some way. A participant, (the artist or a member of the community) can have a transformative moment where their perspective on life changes; often making changes to their everyday routine as a result of socially engaged art processes (educationally, politically, health, wellbeing, etc.). The relationship between artist and participant is crucial, and one that demands that the artist becomes a member (often temporarily) of the community.

“It is not by looking at things but by dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning” [8] Michael Polanyi points out--it isn’t enough, he suggests, to look at something in a bid to understand it, we must ultimately be able to empathize with the thing; seeing it in its own context is part of that process of understanding. Grant Kester, in his model of a dialogical aesthetic, acknowledges the importance of listening; together with Polanyi’s theory of indwelling he helps to contextualize my interactions in the here and now, with local truths and “recognising the social context from which others speak, judge and act.”[9]

The instant photographs are abstract representations of my experiences (the first stages of a potential project) and while they fail to capture my social interactions, on a visual level they represent a series of potential moments which could lead, through further engagement, to enhanced states of “indwelling.” Henri Lefebvre’s moment is also heavily dependent on the materials of everyday life, as it “weaves itself into the fabric of the everyday, and transforms it,” drawing on local resources/materials such as “something happening close by, something contingent and accidental.”[10]

Tim Ingold, when talking about the creative process of making, also identifies with this deep level of engagement with the everyday as “the artisan couples his own movements and gestures – indeed his very life – with the becoming of his materials, joining with and following the forces and flows that bring his work to fruition.”[11] My walk around Canterbury barely skimmed the surface of everyday life, but highlighted a straightforward strategy for mapping the interests of the artist as they attempt (often intuitively) to locate the elusive

embryonic moments. The Polaroid photographs attempt to capture the partial totalities, half- baked moments, and imagined potentialities--just like the “moment,” the fugitive medium is destined to fail and fade away from the time/space in which it was created.

Arguably, the socially engaged artist is out to stop the moment from simply slipping back into everyday-ness without a trace--instead aiming to gather resources for a special moment that may change the everyday for the better (somehow benefiting the social / political / educational, health and wellbeing of participants). As it turned out, Canterbury tales were left untold, and we are now presented with a mere surface pattern of the place.

In the context of socially engaged art practice, each encounter plays its part in the formation of dialogical precursors to transformative moments, even though those special moments may be a long time from occurring, or indeed they may never happen at all. The failing photograph, in its attempt to be an actual moment, becomes a prompt for further creative inquiry, which is informed by personal and intuitive responses in time and space.

Socially engaged art projects are heavily dependent on the slow passing of time: allowing for things to happen naturally, with the artist and participants relying on what Ingold refers to as “intuition in action.”[12] My projects evolve intuitively, they are live, emerging without rehearsal and no fixed design in mind. They work in and with the flow of life or, as Ingold might say, *with* the grain of the wood rather than against it. The artist’s role as a facilitator of morphogenetic and dialogical approaches brings with it a tacit understanding of the creative process. It also brings a confidence that allows the art work to grow organically-- in tune with the local environment and its people.

Tim Ingold suggests that the creative process is very much a social interchange between maker and materials, a communication of tension between both forces. The inter- subjective exchanges between all the participants (including the artist) can occur on deeply intimate levels when given time to develop naturally; they are the building blocks of socially engaged practice, interweaving creative endeavour between art and life. It is

at such profound levels where, at times, the blurring of everyday life and art go unnoticed. Sometimes the art of participation is stretched to the point of breaking down, but always something happens, and shared meanings emerge.

1. [1] Henri Lefebvre, *Critique Of Everyday Life* Vol 1Paris: Verso, 2014), 638.
2. [2] Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009) 68.
3. [3] Grant H Kester, *Conversation Pieces : Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles London: University of California Press, 2004), 113.
4. [4] Lefebvre, 630.
5. [5] Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013), 31.
6. [6] Ibid., 25.

<u>Appendix G</u> – *[birdsong]* Participant / Audience Feedback

Abstract: I present here the written feedback from participants in the *[birdsong]* project, which includes actors in the film and members of the audience. The feedback was collected at The Little Savoy cinema after each screening of the film.

General feedback

RJ - I was interested in the project because I find the idea of real memories and those 'reimagined' intriguing, as a parent I spend time trying to make sure I create wonderful memories for my children but how much they will actually remember is an unknown and sometimes a strange Sunday morning trip to a shed on an allotment somewhere near Pendle hill is as significant as the trip to Paris, Florence or a festival! The actual experience was simple and straightforward, and we felt that we had done something good and worthwhile with our time, we discussed the issue of homelessness all the way home and it has become a recurring topic often with 'remember the man in the shed' (not sure if she means William or the fact a homeless man stayed there!) For me this is often the role art takes in life, sometimes you visit an exhibition or event and in the moment, it smacks you in the face, however as this has, it simply becomes part of our lives, we mention it in the same way as a trip out or going for a walk.

DW -I saw so many similarities. Working with William we came to understand how the community project came together and I was excited we would be showing it on several evenings. Putting together this opportunity meant organisation and extra work but once the first night was screened of *[birdsong],* I realised how not only had we been amazingly given the opportunity but also we could give something back too. The film gave an opportunity for locals to discover not only where the picture house was, but it also catapulted us into the public eye, [birdsong], has given the local area an insight to our Free Picture House and what we are trying to achieve.

Reflection of themselves - I feel it's been a great experience, and hearing all the comments and feedback not only of the documentary but from our point of view, what our project is aiming to achieve too. The Picture house saw new levels of attendance and it was good to see it full all through the week. On the Saturday as on the first night we were happy to meet Diane Holgate who was a child star in the original film. We all put so much into delivering the weeks screenings but even though we were tired we felt a renewed energy. I know the week has brought a new beginning to the Picture House and I am sure now our work is out there and this can only grow and build from strength to strength. We are hoping to see the future of the community picture house concrete its footings for many years to come serving the people of Colne. It was so nice we could tie in William's work and it has been the talking point of The Little Savoy. All those who came have nothing but praise for the documentary. I hope we can work with William Titley again.

KC - My nephew was buzzing to know that his words would be recorded and cannot wait for it to be available on YouTube! Finding the shed was interesting and led me to bumping into two other people [on the allotment] who I have not seen in a long time. We found the story of the shed intriguing. He has a very inquisitive mind, so the concept of it being someone's home, particularly at Xmas made him feel very sad. Once he had been recorded, he wanted to know when he would be famous and when his name would be on the credits (bless him). For myself, being interviewed felt strange as it isn't the norm for me! I felt privileged to be asked and apprehensive when being filmed. Unfortunately, we were unable to make the screening due to it being on at the end of term and having lots of other commitments that week.

CWa- William filmed me and my husband in an allotment shed in which we were asked to respond to what was in the shed. It transpired that someone had broken in and used the shed as accommodation over the Christmas period. A packet of empty mince pies was evident and various food wrappers. It led to a conversation about our society at this moment in time and how we treat homeless people. Simon and I discussed how we had given a homeless person sitting outside our local supermarket food, hot coffee and an umbrella

and how guilty we felt at not doing more to help him. We discussed that as a society we were not doing enough to help people and that everyone was entitled to have a roof over their head. It seemed to relate to the man in the barn in Whistle Down the Wind how he relied on the kindness of the children and how he ended up being betrayed by the adults. Simon and I went to see the premier of William's film [birdsong], at The Little Cinema in Colne. I thought the choice of cinema was perfect for the screening, keeping it within our local community and open to the public. I was quite nervous about others seeing me on the screen and not sure what to expect. I actually enjoyed watching it particularly the synchronicity of dialogue and remembrance. I thought it was cleverly edited and the scenes shot on Pendle Hill were beautiful capturing its moodiness and mystique.
Although I hadn't met other members of the film, what came across in the screening for me was an overwhelming endearing quality and that we all seemed to share the same concerns and values.

AN - It's hard not to pick up on the film's theme of faith – should that be 'blind faith'? And perhaps wonder if there is a point in our lives where we start questioning what we are told. My mum was brought up a devout catholic and at points, due to her low self-esteem, struggled with how she would be judged being a divorcee. She felt this shadow all her life. It's a bit melodramatic I guess but she feared reaching the end of her life and being found out. As a worthless sinner. For anyone not from that background it's hard to explain the fire and brimstone-esque attitude of the church back then. Maybe that's why there's a certain awe on the children faces but also a real fear? This man in the barn who was the image of Jesus. Does he want me as a disciple? Does he remember all the hateful things I've done? Does he hold these against me?
It's funny but I don't know how the film would play to children today. Are they less naïve? With their new technology there'd be some photo on social media within seconds. "*Is man in barn the second coming?*" Hashtag #believer, hashtag #isawhimfirst. And then some backlash. 'MAN IN BARN REFUSED TO DO MIRACLES' splashed on the front page of morning papers. Who keep secrets nowadays? I think what the film taps into is a human desire to believe

in something or someone. And the inquisitiveness of youth. Who are you? Why are you here? Is it also about humanity's capacity to care? We would be fine helping if we knew it was someone of status. But where we see those signs of transient life, drug paraphernalia and discarded clothing we are somewhat reticent. More judgemental. They had the same chances I did. The chance to save themselves. Why should I help?
It was lovely to see the families climbing Pendle in their wellies. It seemed to tie in with the desire to celebrate our local landscape and showed a real sense of togetherness. I loved the sense of play. I also loved how the wind played a huge part as both a hypnotic presence. Quite dichotic; both threatening and soothing at the same time. It felt like a pilgrimage as though they were stepping in the footsteps of those who made the trek on Good Friday in the past. Or maybe re-playing the parts of the children in the film. The fading into monochrome seemed to hark back to the film itself and with the fog made it quite an eerie sight. Who was that ghostly figure at the back? Was it the spirit of our Jesus character who had come back to find shelter?
I am like my mum in many ways but we differ hugely in others. My mum did all she could to run away from social activities. You wouldn't so much find her in the kitchen at parties more hiding in the pantry. I'm not as bad as that but I do need to force myself to get involved sometimes. Is what I say valid? - I've learned not to worry about it so much over the years. The pleasure of taking part far outweighs the thought of not having anything to say. Becoming tongue-tied. Or the fear of being found out as fraud – that's utter rubbish mate. It was funny when watching [Birdsong] that everyone could remember the film's memorable line as though it has been etched onto our souls. Become part of our collective heritage. When I think more deeply it's surprising that with such a rich history that very few films have been set here. And they wonder why we feel like outsiders?

Claire W - We all really enjoyed it and I was glad I wasn't too embarrassing on screen (ha ha). The last part of the filming in the shed again makes you talk about how you feel in general about homelessness and today's society. I feel my feelings were slightly different to others as my concerns were more the dirty needles sharps rather than the concerns that someone had broken it

to my shed. Overall a good comparison to the differences from when the film was made in 60s and today. The changes in society and the values people have. I have enjoyed very much doing this project and being involved in it from start to finish.

LJ - The making process made me feel warmer towards the area. I was surprised Whistle Down The Wind was filmed in this area.
However, in contrast the content / discussion brought out in me anger through raising current issues within society: homelessness, poverty, people fighting their own corner and becoming territorial rather than helping and supporting each other. The impact of governmental decisions on us all. It made me recognise / confirm what I knew of myself - community and people driven. Whilst also question a selfishness within me / all people due to survival instinct. It also made me want to make more films / act again. I feel / felt really good to be part of the film. Good to be asked and enjoyed the praise received. My self-esteem increased. Overall, a beautiful project, fun to be part of it, enjoyed the process. Looking forward to seeing final product (I think). Ha.

CF – My children gladly took part and felt very proud of themselves when they accomplished the huge climb up the (in Tia's words) "massive mountain". I could say the whole experience of the children walking up the hill in the cold, windy, foggy weather conditions certainly built some bits of character. They survived the cold and were very proud of themselves, especially Brooklyn who didn't wrap up properly and took a while to thaw out. Sitting in the shed at the allotment certainly made me feel very lucky and appreciative of the life I have, knowing someone spent Christmas in there alone certainly tugged on my heart strings and I couldn't help but wonder about the circumstances that led to the homeless person having to resort to breaking into the shed for shelter...
It played on my mind for a while. It was interesting to see my child's innocent opinion of the situation too. We had a detailed chat about homelessness in the car on the way home, so it was educational for her also.

BA - So...when it comes to missing the film... though I regret letting you down...I was otherwise engaged... I actually think I am still freaked by the film. Well not freaked but uncomfortable definitely. I recognised the scenery as home but...too close to home. It's been a great experience and the film was excellent. Look forward to seeing the next artwork that you produce.

On The Invitation to Participate

RJ - I was asked to participate in the piece following a chance encounter with the artist after several years of not seeing one another, well I say I was – I think he was more interested in my child being part of it but we came as a package!

DW - William discussed the possibility of premiering his film [birdsong], which featured local people and their take on Whistle down the Wind. [birdsong], was also a Community project. That really interested me as I feel very committed to working within the community. I have worked in Colne for 34 years and have long experience of engaging with local organisations and projects and you get to really know people.
KC - As for the project, being invited to take part in something that will make history is quite exciting (even if it is on a local level, rather than a huge scale)!

CW - I was asked by William to take part in his PHD research based on the film 'Whistle Down the Wind.' He asked where I would like to be interviewed and I suggested the village of Downham, which is only a few miles from my home. I have always been aware that Downham was the backdrop for the film, something I was quite proud of growing up and I felt it was appropriate to discuss the film there.

AN - I am like my mum in many ways but we differ hugely in others. My mum did all she could to run away from social activities. You wouldn't so much find her in the kitchen at parties more hiding in the pantry. I'm not as bad as that but I do need to force myself to get involved sometimes. Is what I say valid? - I've learned not to worry about it so much over the years.

Claire W - I was really excited to be in the film when first asked, but at the same time was a little scarred and embarrassed about being in a film. Not something that I had ever done before. On the day of the first filming I was very preoccupied as a couple of days before we had found our allotment had been broken into. People had been using it as a shelter but more alarming was that it had been used for substance misuse with dirty needles and syringes lying about on a table. I was waiting for a phone call from the police and environmental services during the filming. By coincidence this would turn out to be the theme running through the film.

CF – Expectations - When we were invited to be a part of this project we felt very privileged. the children were very excited even though they didn't fully understand why they were being asked to walk up Pendle Hill in their Welly Bob's.

BA - Initially you reminded me of a film I had quarter watched about 5/6 times as a child and each time had been too disturbed by something to ever finish it. You made me think again about why Beth the child had struggled. Something about manipulation and telling lies....something about a vulnerable adult...and something about a naive child...packs of kids....all things that bothered me...oh and the dark corners! I was happy to help but actually wasn't sure if I wanted to see the film through?
BD - Thank you so much for inviting us to take part in "[birdsong], ".

LJ – family - Good to be part of something with my son - project supported all types of relationships.

On Expectations

RJ - The sense of the unknown added to the experience, as I had no idea what we were doing other than participating in an art piece, and as I still haven’t seen it when I write this I still don’t really know how the whole fits

together which in many ways is similar to the memory of the film and the black and white days it represents.

DW - I felt honoured to be chosen and beamed at the thought of a chance to all work together. It is what community partnerships are all about and seeing we were also a Community project it seemed fitting that we could come together. I liked the mechanics of the project and how local people were involved. In the film whistle down the wind, local extras were used with no acting experience and again here it mirrored how local extras would centre the project and take a leading part in the documentary.
Claire W - I didn't expect to be in the whole film as I thought it would be a one off interview! I felt however it was very good and interesting how by chance this was very in keeping with the film. It shows how in today's modern society this would be their chosen place to live/hide out in comparison with the films generation.

On Memory

RJ - When we met we discussed his work and it awakened several things for me regarding the film and how I say I like it but have only a hazy memory of it. As a child it was my older sisters favourite film but for me it was always slightly mysterious, I was always told that I would understand it better when I was older but of course in days prior to on demand media I don't think I ever saw it again until I was in my 20s and that is still not a clear memory.

CWa – I didn't watch the film prior to the interview as William said it wasn't important as the interview was more about my memory of it. I was surprised, however, as we walked and talked how rusty my recollections were. As we discussed the film with the backdrop of Pendle hill walking through the village of Downham, I realised how pertinent it was to my own childhood having grown up in the sixties. That I could relate to the children in it, their naivety, their freedom of movement, the way they related to adults and even the way they dressed.

CWa - I realised after seeing myself in William's film that the lines I remembered were not correct but the split screen with all the participants filmed showed that I wasn't the only one that had rusty memories. The way in which William edited and framed the film allowed for a continuity of collective memory which I thought was quite endearing in that we all remembered in different ways and were able to connect the film intimately to our own lives and experiences.

AN -The day before the premier of [Birdsong] I watched 'Dark City'. You would think that they would be a million miles apart but they both got me thinking of community. In 'Dark City' an alien race observes how we react in different situation and then switches our roles at midnight. They are dying out because they only have one memory, a hive mind, and cannot evolve. They want to find out what makes us individuals. I don't trust my memories sometimes. My childhood is so blurred and as I get older the people who were around me fade and die. There'll soon be no-one left to fill in the gaps. I'm left with images of ginnels and bonfires. Street corners and the ecstasy of Acid. But these are always enough to re-tell my story. Maybe not the truth but my truth. A reimaging which helps me make sense of things.
The premier itself got me nostalgic. Not for childish things but, with the posters of the Savoy Theatres wall, for the impossible glamour of the Hollywood heyday. Of vivid technicolour. Of the fashion and the sense of optimism. Again perhaps that's an unrealistic portrayal of how things really were but there is a real warmth there. It's a place I would love to venture back to watch the films of yesteryear. There is a certain comfort there. I'm still not sure how I feel about hearing myself speak and I'm certainly no Bogart. I am comfortable sounding and feeling northern I just wish I wasn't so monotone. But I was glad I played a part. Gave my thoughts on how we've become more unsettled as the opportunities grow. On how people fall through the cracks. Or that for some, like my mum, feeling lost is the only way they can survive.

Claire W - At the time I couldn't remember a lot about the film only specific scenes and also that I remember it being dark and creepy. The first time I saw the film I wouldn't be very old just a small child. I remember watching it at

my Grandmas on the television but I remember more about the stories she told us about the film and that it had been filmed in and around Pendle Hill and Downham. I have spent a lot of time in both of these places over the years, which bring back fond memories of family and friends. As children we would spend many a day in Barley and then on to Pendle Hill which I enjoyed very much.

On Place and Community

DW - The Little Savoy in Colne - had been opened little under a year when I was contacted by William Titley who I had talked previously about a project I had started along with Andy Reed called the Little Savoy Picture House. This Picture House is a free community venture that shows free films to both children and adults. The Saturday afternoon Movies concentrate on films from the Silver Screen. We also do Friday evening family showings. I personally love how in the Pendle area there is a real pull for local community things. I met up with William and talked about how we at the picture house could showcase the documentary, and then to screen the film, *Whistle Down the Wind*.

CWa - It brought back many memories for me of how special the countryside was to me as a child growing up, in that we spent much of our time playing outdoors in our wellies and hand me down coats. Getting dirty didn't matter as the clothes we wore weren't 'precious' or 'designer brands.' Our connection to the land was visceral, swimming in streams, climbing hills and trees, playing in the fields alongside the animals, mud and cowpats, making dens. I think the original film captured the essence of a child's experience. The dialect the children spoke in the film was a revelation to me at the time as most people on the 'tele' spoke what was considered posh accents. We as children were often corrected and asked to speak clearly. There was a stigma attached to an accent so it was rare to hear local dialect spoken in a film. As a child I was intrigued to hear the Yorkshire accents on film as we spoke with a Lancashire twang. When I met my husband he was from East Lancashire

and had a Yorkshire slant, I used to get him to speak lines from Whistle Down the Wind just to hear the accent reiterated.

AN - I have a confession. Mea Culpa. I have only seen ‘Whistle Down The Wind’ twice. A battered VHS copy that my girlfriend lent me years ago. It was one of her favourite films. In turn I tried her with Japanese zombie comedy musical ‘Happiness of the Katakuris’. Our love cooled soon after. I’m not sure what I took from the film if I’m honest. To me home meant the water fountains of Nelson centre and not some calm in the shadow of Pendle. It wasn’t just the black and white of the film that made it alien. It was the rural setting. I’d heard of the Pendle Witches but was I also of this idyll? It made more sense when I saw it a couple of years ago on some or another vintage channel. I’d had a whole lifetime that I could reflect back on it by then.

Claire W - I felt the next part was brilliant when we were filmed walking up Pendle Hill. From the first part of filming it was interesting how every body’s memories were about Pendle Hill and the experiences they had of it. We had to get up early that day as I recall because I can remember my daughter not being happy about it! The other part is that she hates walking up Pendle Hill or any walking for that matter. Walking is a swear word in our house! However, I do believe she enjoyed it over all, especially the cookies on the top of the hill where we were gathered around the back of a wall due to the strong winds. The hot coffee, or should I say the ‘Hot Toddy’ was also good at the top! Generously handed about by a fellow walker which woke us up at such an early hour. There is a section where my daughter is looking through a stile which again looks like a clip from the original film. The camera men have done a great job of capturing the mood of the hill on the day with the wind it gives an eerie feel to it.

LJ - I’ve moved around so never truly felt settled in one place, the project made me recognise what a unique place in which I now live (well, currently) ha.
CF - The Little Savoy - We enjoyed watching the premiere [[birdsong],]
The surroundings of the Savoy added nostalgia to the movie.

KS – The project hasn't affected me as I've always been aware of the natural environment, sounds of rivers, wind in the trees and most of bird song, it's easy to moan about local weather but it's what's crafted our landscape over millions of years, if we wanted anything different then we would move, even looking out of a local window, you never see the same clouds twice, it's not wall to wall sunshine but atmospheric, clouds changing, wind howling one day then two days later still as night. Lancashire… it's the best kept world secret, it's been a pleasure being a participant, wishing you every success.

LW - It seems to reinforce how proud we are of our rural areas and our local history with people coming together to be part of a community project that may inspire others memories and get them nattering too.

LJ – I felt closer to the community.

CF - It was good to hear how the film had stuck with people of that generation and how it had affected them. It seems Whistle Down the Wind will always be an old time favourite that brings comfort to many people of that era and surrounding local areas.

LR - Still buzzing from [birdsong], great catch up with you and family. Did anyone mention a record contract when you were live on the radio by chance. Haha, only joking Dave, I'm working at the weekend but I'll try and catch the film on Saturday.

LW - I think it showed how Lancashire folk like to get together to reminisce, natter and get involved/help out with things in our community & surroundings.

BD - We felt nostalgia. Taking part built and furthered friendships. It was also great fun and a pleasure to take part. Thank you for the opportunity. X

Appendix H - Social Relations/Participant data

The following data shattered my assumption of me working with mainly family and friends.

Family members: 12 = 20%

20% of participants were related to the artist:

Finley Taylor 2013
Tia Franks 2013
Rosie Schofield 2010
Brooklyn Franks 2009
Chloe Hampson 2008
Luke Franks 2006
Joshua Titley 1991
Caley Franks 1987
Abbie Kennedy 1986
Stuart James [Octet Singer] 1984
Denise Edgerton 1966
Andrew Titley 1966
Bernard Goff 1966

New encounters: 20 = 33.3%

Participants who had not met the artist before.

Tom Bissett 2019
Annabel Bretherton 2019
Jemima Bretherton 2019
Dylan Jones 2019
Andrew Nicholas 2019
Alfie Norman 2019
Alexander Pate 2019
Hester Overton 2019
Diane Poole [Narrator] 2018
Chelsea Parkinson 2018

Michael Short 2018

Eli Short 2018

Jesse Short 2018

Charlie Short 2018

Tom Smith 2018

June Aspden 2018

Jane Wilkinson 2018

Lewis Wilkinson 2018

John Wright 2018

Mollie Wright 2018

Encounters between 2011 – 2016: 12 = 20%

Shonagh Short 2016

Stewart Houlker-Collinge [Photographer] 2015

Max Bretherton 2015

Lorraine Jones 2014

Finley Taylor 2013 family – great niece

Tia Franks 2013 family – great niece

Simon Furmston 2013

Lisa Scarlet Ryan 2012

Beth Allen 2012

Nicola Nuttall 2012

Sharon Sinkinson 2011

Philippe Handford 2011

Encounters between 2000 – 2010: 10 = 16.6%

4 family members

1 met at exercise class

2 students + 1 dog

2 through community art project

Rosie Schofield 2010 family – great niece

Claire Wright 2010

Brooklyn Franks 2009 family – great niece

Chloe Hampson 2008 family – daughter in-law

Davied Darbyshire 2008

Pi [The Dog] 2008

Nigel Goldie 2008

Rebecca Johnson 2007

Paul Hartley 2007

Luke Franks 2006 family - nephew (in-law)

Encounters between 1990 – 1999: 2 = 3.3%

1 family member

1 teacher at Nelson and Colne College

Cerise Ward 1992

Joshua Titley 1991 family - son

Encounters between 1980 – 1989: 12 = 20%

3 were family members (1 is an in-law and 2 were born in the 80s).

3 were met at the Youth Club,

1 playing football for Intake FC,

1 working at RollsRoyce (RR)

1 a local cafe owner,

3 through working at The North Valley Pub (NVP)

Norman Bleasdale 1989 work colleague (RR)

Caley Franks 1987 family – Niece

Kevin Singleton 1986

Abbie Kennedy 1986 family - Niece

Barbara Dunn 1984 work colleague (NVP)

Geoff Dunn 1984 work colleague (NVP)

Dorothy Lord 1984 work colleague (NVP)

Stuart James [Octet Singer] 1984 family - Uncle in Law

Jim Walker 1983 local café owner

Debra Winton 1982 youth club

Leslie Roberts [The Solo Singer] 1980 family friend

Linda Erliz 1981

Encounters between 1970 – 1979: 4 = 6.6%

2 from primary school

2 from high secondary school

Karen Crawshaw 1978

Stuart Tunstill 1978

Pauline Banks 1975

Lorette White 1972

Encounters at birth 1966 4 = 6.6%

1 Sister, 1 Brother and 1 Uncle.

Denise Edgerton 1966 family -sister

Andrew Titley 1966 family - brother

Bernard Goff 1966 family - uncle

The cinema audience data.

Participants at the screening at The Little Savoy community cinema. Total audience 170 people

23 film participants couldn't make the screenings.

There were three screenings over 3 days, with an audience made up of 37 (21.7%) film participants plus 133 (78.3%) new participants.

There were 7 additional family members at the cinema screenings = 4.1%

Raymond Goff - Uncle

Marlene Goff - Auntie

Joanne Crawford - Cousin

Charles Crawford – Cousin in-law

Ben Crawford – second cousin

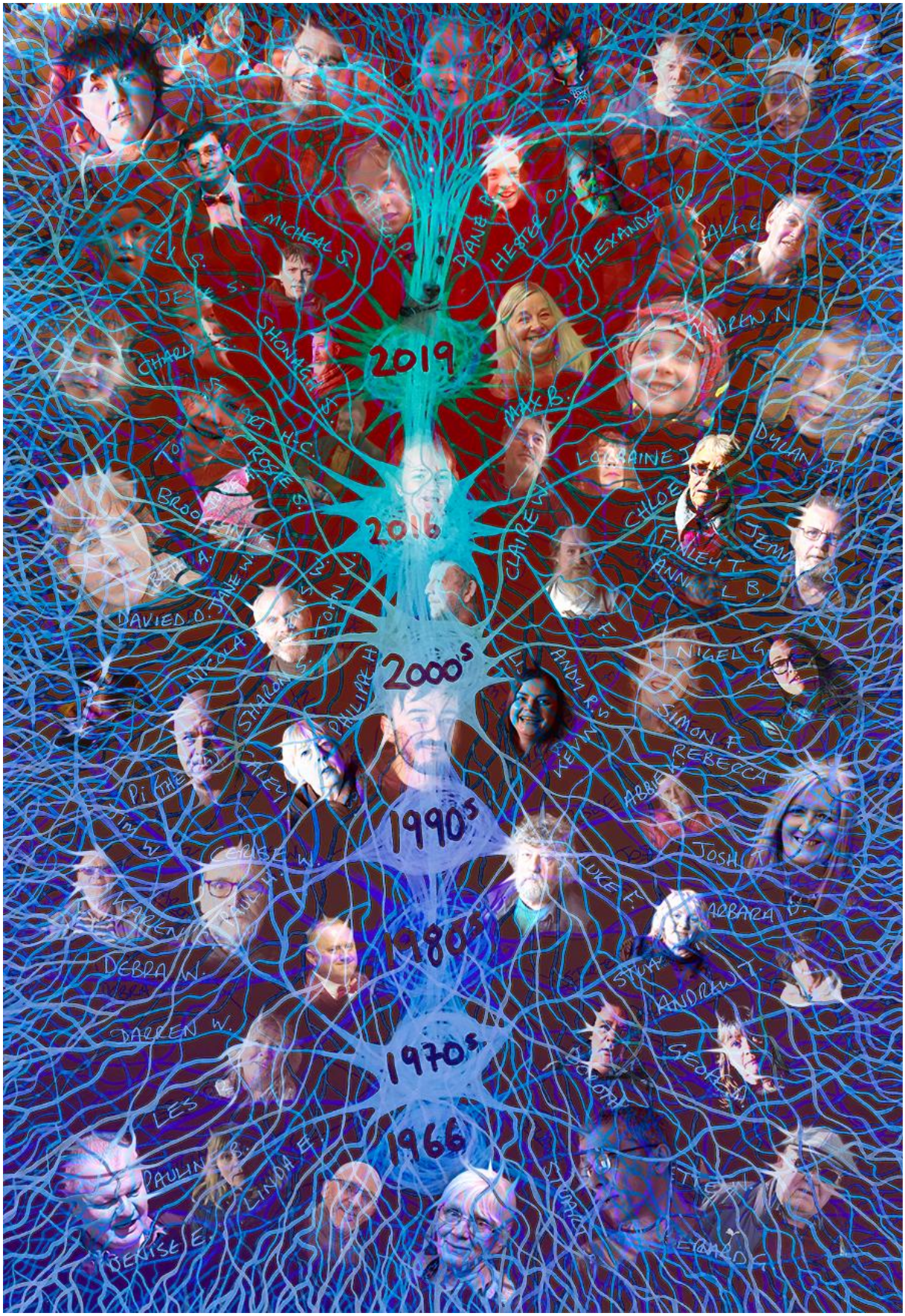
Susan Titley - sister

Barbara Rayson - mother

1975 – Darren Ward – since primary school (cinema volunteer)

2018 Andrew (cinema director)

The following image presents a visual interpretation of data relating to the length of time that I had known each participant in the *[birdsong]* project (2019). Given that the material of social art is already in a state of becoming or unravelling then this drawing points to a durational evolution of affects (here represented by people) over a long period of time, where over 50 years of minor gestures led to the creation of a film called *[birdsong].*



Relations and time. Digitally enhanced sketch (Titley 2022)