



INSTALLATION AND THEATRICALITY

Thinking through Objects

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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF MY GRANDMOTHER

EMMA D'ESSARTS CARRICONDE

INTRODUCTION

The last four years have been intense. The discoveries in the studio, the struggles with my readings and writings, having my work discussed and criticized, the close contact with other artists, scholars, curators and museums, combined with my travels abroad and the experience of living in a metropolis like London, enlightened my practice, enabling me to see from where my work came and find some of the questions it poses.

Researching art history proved to be helpful in establishing the context where Installation Art emerged and developed. Claire Bishop's critical writings provided me with the theory to understand the installation approach to the viewer, and Michael Fried's criticism of ephemeral works of art and his claims for the autonomy of the art object, established the starting point of my research.

My explorations into sculpture brought studio-life at the centre of my creative process and allowed me to look at installation with fresh eyes, reaffirming its importance within my practice and giving me the objectivity necessary to be critical as well. Thinking in terms of 'making' increased my awareness of the connections of my work and material culture and brought to the surface the role that audience and objects play in my work.

The variety of media I explored and my interest in addressing art institutions and art history made it clear that I am not interested in formal experiments but in working from within the system of values, ideas and practices that form the whole of our culture, visually and theoretically, high and low.

This report is organized in seven sections plus references and three appendices. The first section is a brief account of my educational and creative background followed by a shortened version of the proposal I submitted at the end of the first year. The next four sections constitute the main part of my investigation, reflecting the development of theory and practice during the doctorate. The last section is a general conclusion about the whole process.

The style of writing reflects the subjective process of describing and analyzing my path throughout the art doctorate. The text is a collage of data, personal thoughts, quotes, aphorisms, diagrams, remarks, doubts and opinions; a bricolage that mirrored my creative process.

I owe a lot to my doctorate colleagues and tutors, who helped to push my art further and strengthen me as an artist. I am especially grateful to Alison Winkle, Eemyun Kang, Geoffrey Brunell, Hideyuki Sawayanagi, Karen Raney, Mark Sowden, Sharone Lifschitz, Tim Weston and Tetriana Ahmed Fauzi.

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of the Brazilian Central Bank museum of money which made my study possible.

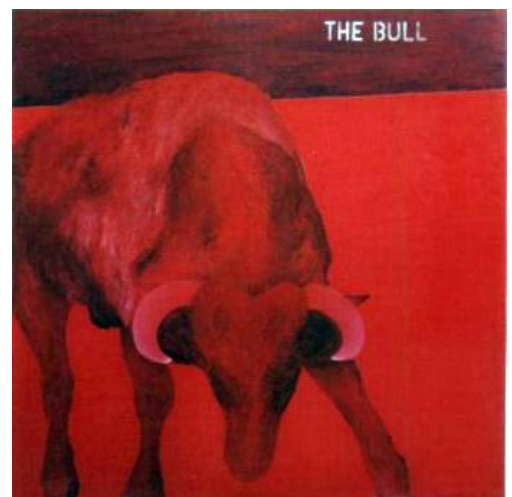
PREVIOUS EDUCATION AND CREATIVE PROCESS

1997-1998	Certificate in Art History University of Sussex, England
1995-1997	Master in Fine Arts (commendation) University of Brighton, England
1988-1992	<i>Licenciatura</i> in Fine Art University of Brasília, Brazil
1978-1984	BA in Statistics and <i>Licenciatura</i> in Mathematics University of Brasília, Brazil

I went to art school in Brazil in my late twenties, after a short career as a mathematics teacher. Although some features of my work have their roots in my years as an art student, it was during my MA that my work started to develop more coherently.

MA IN FINE ART (1995-1997)

Two years after finishing my art degree in Brazil I moved to England where I started an MA in painting, at Brighton University. My research on kitsch and mass culture, brought together in my MA dissertation, pushed me to explore new materials, new subject matter and new ways of working. The paintings I made for my final exhibition were painted on a glossy PVC fabric and combined images with words (figure 1). Painting from photographs, I explored traditional themes in art history such as animals, portraiture and landscape.

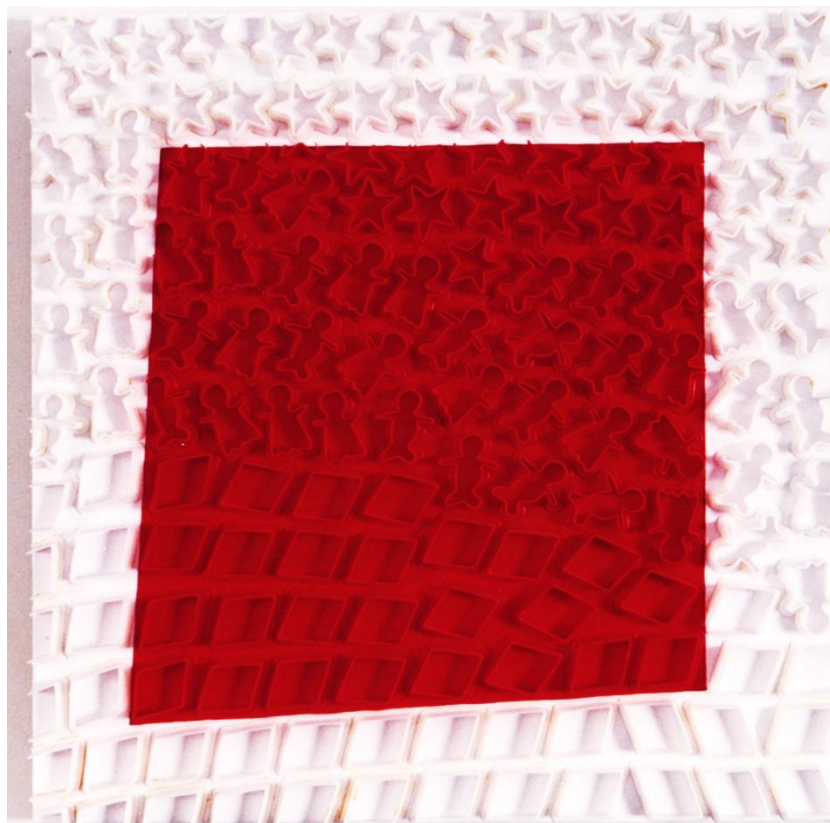


1. Untitled, 1997, Acrylic paint on PVC
1,52 x 1,52 cm

CERTIFICATE IN MODERN ART HISTORY (1997- 1998)

After finishing the MA I realized how much I liked art history and how little I knew about it, so I decided to take a course on modern art at Sussex University. Although during the master I had already worked with borrowed imagery it was during this course that my work took a definite turn toward appropriation. Stimulated by my readings, I started borrowing not only imagery, but styles and content from art history.

The most important work I made during this period was the *Malevich's Series*. From a copy of Malevich's notebook I found at the library, I reproduced the mathematical steps of the making of three of the paintings he exhibited at the *0.10* exhibition, in 1915, using plastic pastry cutters, instead of oil painting (figure 2).



2. Kazimir Malevich *Painterly Realism of a Peasant Women in 2 Dimension*, 1915, 1999
Acrylic paint and pastry cutters on PVC, 53.34 x 53.34 x 7 cm

This series embodied many of the features of my future work: art history references, dialogue with design, crafts and decoration, use of mass produced objects, repetition, and childish elements, all combined to bring opposites together: cheap and expensive, perspective and flatness, authentic and imitation, abstraction and figuration.

RELEVANT PRACTICE SINCE 1999

Returning to Brazil, I started working in a museum, a part-time job as an exhibition designer. Occasionally, I would also work with scenery design for theatre and contemporary dance. These work experiences were a turning point in my awareness of space.

In 2003, I created my first installation. Since the completion of my MA my paintings had become increasingly three-dimensional (Appendix 1, image I), but my references were still rooted in the realm of painting and all the work was conceived to be hung on the wall. In this context, installation appeared as a background to my work, an attempt to create a gallery environment to my spot-paintings (Appendix 1, image II).

I dedicated the year of 2004 to creating and co-directing a contemporary ballet. The script brought together a psychoanalytic reading of Hans Christian Anderson's fairy tale *The Little Mermaid* and Jung's theory of the unconscious. An experimental electronic version of Debussy's symphonic poem *La Mer* was composed especially for it. The ballet reaffirmed my interest in exploring space and taught me about scale and proportion across people, objects and architecture. I brought to the stage the same materials that I was using in the studio: plastics, vinyl cutting letterings and children's toys (figure 3).

In my second installation, *The Supranatural Art of Gardens* (Appendix 1, image III), space was the leading concept behind the project. Mirroring the square in front of the gallery, I transformed the gallery into a stylized art nouveau setting, mimicking the natural environment outside. Using photography for the first time, I exhibited fifteen fictional self-portraits commenting on the nature of being both a female artist and a painter (Appendix 1, image IV).



3. *La Mer*, 2004, Contemporary Dance, Sala Martins Pena, Teatro Nacional. Brasília, partial view

At the opening of *The Supranatural Art of Gardens* I directed a performance, and during the period of the exhibition I organized a series of talks about the relationship of nature to art. At this point, the intensity of installation, and its rhythmic similarity to my experiences in the museum and theatre, made me realize that it was my medium.

In 2007, I was invited by the curator of the ‘Museu da República’, in Brasília, to create an installation to dialogue with the museum. It resulted in an urban intervention where I introduced four neo-classical statues outside the museum (figure 4), addressing the modernist architecture of Oscar Niemeyer and the bronze statues of ‘*The 4 Evangelists*’ in front of the cathedral’s square nearby.

Also, inside the museum I ‘christened’ the four lifts with plaques engraved with my name and of three other female artists, in the way that churches and museums honor their patrons (Appendix 1, image V).



4. *The 4 Evangelists*, 2007, Urban Intervention, Museu da Republica, Brasília, partial view

My first experience of curatorship outside the walls of the museum where I work happened in 2008, at the museum Murillo La Greca (Recife, Brazil). In collaboration with two artists, objects from the museum's collection were displayed alongside objects temporarily donated by people living in a slum that neighbours the museum (Appendix 1, image VI). We created an installation which explored the relationship between objects and memory and the museum as a place of shared community experiences.

The last work I did in Brazil before moving to England, in November 2008, was an installation which transformed the gallery space into a fictitious archeological museum. Working with an invited artist and a philosopher, I displayed paintings, sculptures and objects in an environment which was both a museum exhibition and an art installation. The remains of a 'plastic civilization' were exhibited alongside texts and labels in the style adopted by museums:

The Archaeology of Plastic

The civilization of the Age of Plastic, known as the Polimeric period, ended many centuries ago. Little has survived from the culture except a few texts and some peculiarly textured materials, on the borderline between what the hand touches and what the hand is about to touch. This exhibition brings some of the few small fragments that archaeologists have discovered of his amazing and still very mysterious era. The only thing we know for sure is that the populations of the Polimeric tried to plasticize everything they touched.

Woman with a Trunk (figure 5)

In the late polimeric (XXV-XXX century), physical barriers were broken. One could find genetically modified beings, where the limit between man and animal could no longer be distinguished. Here we have one of the famous Trunkoticas, women worshiped for their classical beauty.

The experience of these last two installations called my attention, for the first time, to the power of art galleries and museums as communication tools, opening up a new path for my work with installation, which I would go on to explore in the doctorate.



5. *The Archaeology of Plastic*, 2008, Espaço Piloto, Galeria Subsolo, Brasília, partial view

PROPOSAL

Having identified installation as a fundamental element of my work, I started by researching the work of as many installation artists as possible, both from the past and contemporary. This general survey enabled me to identify three artists whose works had significant similarities to mine: Barbara Bloom, Goshka Macuga and John Armleder. Considering them more closely helped me to demarcate the boundaries of my proposal.

Barbara Bloom is part of a generation of American artists who have been associated with Institutional Critique, a practice intending to draw attention to the ideologies underneath modern visual culture. She is a photographer, designer, and installation artist. Her work brings out the role played by museums and galleries in the construction of meaning. It comments on the act of producing, consuming and collecting objects. Being a collector herself, her work conveys her own contradictory feelings about the possession of objects.

The Reign of Narcissism (figure 6), originally conceived for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, was an installation in the form of a 19th century imaginary museum dedicated to Barbara Bloom herself. The installation included marble busts portraying her, a volume set of



6. *The Reign of Narcissism*, 1988/1989, MOCA, partial view

'The Complete Works of Barbara Bloom', watermarked porcelain tea cups with her image on them, commemorative stamps showing the hospital where the artist was born, period chairs with a cloth pattern of the artist's dental x-rays, a tombstone with a portrait of the artist and the epitaph: 'She travelled the world to seek beauty' and many more artefacts testifying to the life of a famous person.

Another work, *The Collections of Barbara Bloom* (figure 7) was inspired by the auction catalogue for the estate of Jacqueline Onassis. Bloom decided to create a similar book about objects, images and stories that were important to her. Ten years later she gave it the form of an installation, at the International Centre of Photography in New York, where she displayed sculptures, books, assemblage, collage, photography and design. All the objects were objects she had collected, borrowed, photographed or recreated.



7. *The Collections of Barbara Bloom*, 2008, ICP, NY

Barbara Bloom was particularly significant to my research. It was through her work that I discovered that contemporary artists had been taking museums as a subject. Contextualizing the work I had been doing lately was decisive to the path I followed in my proposal.

From the artists I chose, it is with Barbara Bloom that I feel I have more things in common. Her playful imitation and appropriation of art related subjects (and objects), as well as the way she conceives of narrative in the installations she builds, are very similar to the way my mind works. We are both artists that think through ‘objects’ and use objects to tell the history of the ideas behind them. She seems to care more about the material nature of objects (maybe because she is a collector), while I feel a strong urge to transform them. But both our works present challenges as to how we make sense of the objects around us.

Goshka Macuga is a polish artists living in London whose work is associated with curatorship. In her installations she brings together other artists' works, selections from archives, and readymade objects such as books, artefacts, etc. She then re-contextualizes these appropriated materials in a non-hierarchical way, using styles common to traditional models of display such as the cabinet of curiosities, library, museum and gallery.

It is an indirect and poetic device that loosens categories and pauses, seeking or fixing meaning... It follows a certain personal logic that is interested in the content, the form, and the meaning of an item, rather than its value. It does not matter if I find the objects to be assembled in a museum, in an antique store, a botanical or zoological collection, in the studio of artist friends, a library or the British Museum. (Macuga, 2007, cited in Tant)



8. *Objects in Relation*, 2007, Tate Britain, partial view

For the installation *Objects in Relation* (figure 8), at Tate Britain, in 2007, Macuga spent five months searching through the Tate archives, particularly the personal correspondence of the British landscape artist Paul Nash and the modernist group Unit One, which he founded. She then went away to explore forests, searching for natural forms to display with artworks and other found materials.

The work she creates comes from the temporary relationships she establishes between people and objects, contexts and eras. It explores new ways in which the work of other artists (and so her own work) can be displayed. For instance, in 2003 she recreated a section of the John Sloane museum, known as the 'Picture Room', with works she borrowed from contemporary artists. In 2005, she remade a work by R.B. Kitaj - a portfolio of prints reproducing covers of his favourite books - by replacing the covers with her own choices (in her appropriations, she has no interest in claiming her authorship in place of the original artist).

What first called my attention to Macuga was the fact that she works in collaboration with museums and that her installations confuse the boundaries between collector, curator and artist. Having worked in a museum for many years I tried very hard to establish my practice outside of its sphere. I welcomed museum practices into my work but was unaware of the possibility of working with museums themselves.

Objectively, I found inspiring the freedom with which Macuga takes every cultural production as a readymade: artworks, ideas, objects and ways of displaying. Subjectively, I found inspiration in her claim to use art history as a personal inquiry.

John Armleder was a founder member of the Groupe Ecart (Geneva, 1969). He was also involved with Fluxus during the 1960s and 70s. His work has varied in form over the years, and from the beginning, used chance as a method of production.

Since the 1990s, he has been moving between art, design and decor. He creates installations, paintings, wall paintings and what he calls 'furniture-sculptures'. Armleder treats mass-produced objects, styles, works of art, furniture as equals and says that the distinction between high and low culture is meaningless. For him, paintings and chairs -- and lamps, mirrors, and wallpaper -- are all equally part of visual culture.



9. *About Nothing. Works on Paper 1962-2007*, 2007 Installation, South London Gallery, UK

His installation *About Nothing, Works on Paper 1962-2007* (figure 9), at the South London Gallery, contained around 500 drawings produced between 1962 and 2007, geometric abstractions borrowed from 20th century movements like De Stijl, Suprematism, Minimalist, Op Art. The exhibition played with the idea of a museum retrospective. The gallery walls were literally filled with works, like a 19th

century art-saloon. There was a piece made when he was 14 years old and the final drawing in the exhibition was made in the gallery.

In another project, Armleder delegated production entirely to a famous French interior decorator, Jacques Garcia, who created for the artist an authentic neo-bourgeois apartment (figure 10). The flat was



10. *John Armleder: Jacques Garcia*, 2008. Installation, partial view Centre Culturel Suisse

decorated with Chinoiserie and artworks, including John Armleder's. The artist brought to life an idea he had nurtured for a long time, '[to] question the notions of interior design and appropriation using ornamentation as a conceptual medium, a ready-made'. (*John Armleder: Jacques Garcia*, 2008)

The way Armleder embraces different styles or formal approaches is well illustrated in an installation he made in cooperation with the artist Gerold Miller, in 2008, where visual concepts from Op Art were used in interior-decoration (Appendix 1, image VII).

John Armleder's use of everything as an available model to produce art, allied to the sensory overload of his installations, were the main affinities I found between my work and his. Unlike Barbara Bloom or Goshka Macuga, museums are not central to his practice but being interested in playing with context and meaning and in working on the frontier between art and decorative design, his work confronts the traditional historical models presented by art institutions. Also, Armleder's work has an eclecticism and an exuberance that I don't find in Bloom or Macuga. Their works are serious when compared with his. Perhaps, it is the collector in Bloom and the historian in Macuga that prevents them from making art that celebrates our time.

Having established that the works of Barbara Bloom, Goshka Macuga and John Armleder were mainly associated with Institutional Critique, Art Intervention in Museums, and Appropriation, respectively, I focused my theoretical reading on the historical background of these artistic practices followed by a deeper investigation into installation art. The following is a summary of the historical data I collected:

Institutional Critique was a practice adopted by artists to question art institutions. Historically, it resonated with the Dadaist challenges to museums. As in Installation Art, it appeared in the late 1960s and early 70s, with artists such like Marcel Broodthaers. He developed critical works within the museum to reveal the ways it addressed its audience, and to make visible the ideology behind a specific display of objects. In the 1980s, a second group of artists (including Barbara Bloom) expanded the Institutional Critique framework to include the artist's role as itself institutionalized, as well as the investigation of other institutional spaces. Institutional Critique has emerged from Minimalism and its concerns with the subjective experience of the viewer. Today Institutional Critique is part of the post-conceptual art practice and is associated with Structuralism and Post-structuralism.

Art Intervention in Museums refers to the current practice of using contemporary artists to intervene in the collections of a museum. Art intervention can take many forms: interactions with the collection itself, its history, the displays, the audience, the staff, or the building. Because of the differences between art and artefact, a museum can employ contemporary art as a means of interpreting its collection at the same time as it can provide a context that adds to the understanding of the artwork. The changes in

artists' relationship to museums during the 20th century have shifted from critical (as seen in Institutional Critique) to collaborative.

Those artists who enter museums to work are not iconoclasts like the early modernists with their call to burn down the museums... They are bricoleurs, curious about the place of the museum in contemporary life and the possibilities of disturbing the settled perceptions and set categories of formal knowledge. (Malbert, 1995, cited in Cohen, no date, p. 14)

Museums have changed and artists were instrumental in this change. The idea that any type of display can be objective and neutral is now discredited. Objects signify one thing when they are seen alone, but they have a different meaning when viewed in combination with others. Today's museums tend to ask the viewer to construct their own narratives; they acknowledge the fluidity of meanings of objects and ideas.

Appropriation literally means the act of taking possession of properties or ideas; in art it means using images and forms from others in the creation of a new work. Duchamp's ready-mades were the historical precedent of contemporary appropriation; the *Fountain* was the negation of individual creation. With it, Duchamp stated that the act of choosing was enough to establish the artistic process.

Dadaists and Surrealists continued the use of ready-made in their practice. In the 1950s and 60s artists started incorporating objects and images from popular culture into their works, a practice continued by Fluxus and Pop artists into the 1970s. The term Appropriation is particular associated with the 'Pictures' generation, a group of New York artists from the 1980s, who addressed the act of appropriating itself as a theme in art, challenging ideas of originality, ownership, gender, consumerism and power:

A painting's meaning lies not in its origin, but in its destination. The birth of the viewer must be at the cost of the painter. (Levine, 1982, p. 81)

Since the early nineties, an ever increasing number of artworks have been created on the basis of pre-existing elements (both art and non-art). Many contemporary artists interpret, reproduce, re-exhibit and use work made by others and other available cultural products.

Appropriation has been associated with post-modernism and criticized as an expression of contemporary eclecticism. The anti-eclectic discourse is linked to the modernist

discourse, which sees the history of art as a linear narrative with modern art being a period of purification, when painting and sculpture were finally reduced to their formal qualities.

To French philosopher Nicholas Bourriaud (2002), artists who insert their own work into that of others contribute to the eradication of the traditional distinction between production and consumption. Not to start at zero is the historical task of the early twenty-first century artists.

To create is to insert an object into a new scenario... It is the use of the world that allows one to create new narratives, (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 25 and 46)

The museum itself constitutes a catalogue of forms, postures, and images for artists, collective material that everyone is in a position to use, not in order to be subjected to their authority but as tools to examine the world.

Installation Art relates to the way works are displayed in a particular space, where the experience of this space, as a whole, is more important than the objects individually. The work normally exists for the duration of the exhibition.

Surrealist exhibitions were the precursor of Installation Art. In 1938, Duchamp hung coal sacks from the ceiling of the gallery, and in 1942 he installed a web of string tied across the gallery space which prevented visitors from entering. Experiences with the gallery progressed through the 1950s and 60s with Happenings and Minimalism, with its emphasis on the engagement of the art object with the spectator and space.

Installation Art came to prominence during the 1970s and 80s, when artists started using it as a strategy to boycott the art market, creating works that could not be sold and collected by museums and galleries.

Claire Bishop's critical writing on Installation Art (2005) brought to my attention an installation-specific approach to the viewer, addressing her as a literal presence in the space. Bishop establishes four main types of experience installation can provide and analyzes them from the point of view of a psychoanalytical or philosophical theory:

- The Dream-like experience, where the installation provokes unconscious associations to emerge within the viewer.

- The Bodily experience of the work, where the viewer is made conscious of his body in the space.
- Mimetic Engulfment, as the opposite of the bodily experience: the viewer becomes lost in the space.
- The Activated Viewer: works which demand viewers' participation in order to happen.

Bishop also develops two key concepts of Installation: 'Activation' is related to the fact that in an installation the viewer has to move around and through the work; there is an emphasis on physical participation. 'Decentring' describes the capacity of the installation to disrupt traditional perspective; there is no right way of looking as there is no privileged viewpoint. As a whole, installation is presented as an emancipatory practice by post-structuralist theories due to the multiplicity of perspectives, the fact that the viewer actively engages in the work, and the non-commercial nature of the art object.

The strongest critique of Installation Art comes from formalist theories. As cited by Bishop (2005), art historian Michael Fried's criticism of Minimalism in the essay 'Art and Objecthood' (1967), can be extended to Installation: art that acknowledges the viewer questions the autonomy of the art object. Whenever a consciousness of viewing exists, 'theatricality' results and the viewer is left in his ordinary, non-transcendent world.

Institutional Critique, Museum Intervention, Appropriation and Installation were, in different ways, artists' responses to the role played by 20th Century art institutions. The artists did so by questioning the 'autonomy of the object of art'. Formalist criticism of Installation Art thus can be extended to the other three subjects of my research:

- Institutional Critique is often antithetical to the aesthetic autonomy or neutrality of painting and sculpture and seeks to make visible the historically and socially constructed boundaries present in the appreciation of art.
- Museum Interventions are site-specific installations which intend to disturb the hierarchy of values presented by the museum.

- Appropriation negates the originality of the art object.

Therefore, Michael Fried's critique of Minimalism (1967) gave me the insight to establish some important connections between Installation, Appropriation, Institutional Critique and Art Intervention, and directed my attention to two words: 'theatricality' and 'objecthood'. The former triggered association with curatorship, kitsch, opera, exhibition, scenery; the latter with collection, museum and consumerism.

I concluded that the theoretical basis for the doctorate would require a deeper investigation into the history of Installation; also the term 'theatricality' and issues related to the 'autonomy of the art object', the role of museums and the 'spectacle'.

THEORY

The term theatre has the same etymology as the term theory, from the Greek word Thea, designating a place from which to observe or to see. (Weber, 2004, p.3)

In 'Art and Objecthood' (1967), Michael Fried used the term 'theatricality of objecthood' to define a condition of non-art. Fried was concerned with the growth of a theatrical sensibility in the arts, which emphasized the circumstances in which the viewer encountered the work to the detriment of the autonomy of the art object. He suggested that it was to the three-dimensional, where sculpture is, and where everything material that is not art also is, that we should look in order to understand this condition.

My research has taken these two opposed ideas 'theatricality' and the 'autonomy of the art object' as guides for my investigation into installation. The material I collect in this section makes no claim to completeness; it represents a personal tour through the texts I have encountered and which helped to inform my practice. I hope if there can be an answer to the long-standing conflict between immanence and transcendence, it will find its way through art.

In order to get an overall view, I organized the material I read into nine topics under two headings. Although some of the topics are intertwined, I listed them under the theme that makes more sense in terms of the structure of my research:

Theatricality

The Negative Heritage of Theatricality
Museums and the Culture of Spectacle
Exhibitions and Curatorship
The Modern Space
Installation and *Gesamtkunstwerk*

vs.

The Autonomy of the Art Object

20th Century Sculpture
Objects and Material Culture
Object vs. Subject in Heidegger
Object Oriented Ontology

INVESTIGATING THEATRICALITY

The Negative Heritage of Theatricality. Although the term theatricality derives its meaning from the world of theatre, it can be abstracted from the theatre itself and applied to all aspects of human life. Some of the earliest uses in English of the word theatrical and theatricality set them in opposition to the concepts of the natural.

The distinction between nature and artifice has a long history in aesthetics. Plato characterized theatre as deceptive, exaggerated and artificial. Mimesis attempted to evoke the real world but could not capture it because the real is not located in the visual and tangible conditions of the material world.

In Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave', Socrates describes a group of people who have lived within a cave for their whole lives. As they have their legs and necks chained, they can't turn their heads. The only things they see are the shadows projected on the wall before them, produced by things passing in front of a fire behind. What they take to be the reality is in fact an illusion. What is interesting about Plato's allegory is that 1) the protagonists are unaware of their imprisonment and 2) the protagonists are seduced by what they see (Plato compares the shadows to a marionette theatre).

Plato contrasts this theatre and its shadows with the liberating ascent into the natural light of the sun. No shadows, no projections or simulacra in the 'open air', in the world of ideas and of truth there is no 'locality'.

When an event or series of events takes place without reducing the place it 'takes' to a purely neutral site, then that place reveals itself to be a 'stage', and those events become theatrical happenings. (Weber, 2004, p. 7)

To Weber (2004), it is the desire to occupy a place that renders the theatre and theatricality so terribly suspect. For in the theatrical space, as in the cavern, to 'reside' in it is to be distant from reality.

Theatre is thus, from the very beginnings ... a place not just of dissimulation and delusion but, worse, self-dissimulation and self-delusion. It is a place of fixity and un-freedom, but also of fascination and desire. (Weber, 2004, p.8)

In *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Guy Debord places 'spectacle' at the centre of a critique of capitalist society. Spectacle is condemned as pure appearance, a negation of real life. Debord's criticism of 'spectacle' is the same as Plato's of theatre: it is dangerous because it seduces, it is dangerous because in it enslavement appears to be freedom.

Museums and the Culture of Spectacles. Throughout history, owning objects was a sign of power. In antiquity, kings and emperors were the first to hold collections. (the Library of Alexandria was founded by the Egyptian royal family). During the middle age, the places where the Catholic Church's relics were stored prefigured the first museums, which appeared in the Renaissance.

The early museums began as private collections of wealthy individuals from the aristocracy or the newly emergent bourgeoisie, of the 16th and 17th century. The microcosm of the Cabinet of Curiosities, an encyclopaedic collection of objects of all sorts (natural and man-made), conveyed the power of its patron.

After the French Revolution, many museums were opened to the public, as part of the 'Enlightenment' project. Reflecting this new way of thinking, museums started to classify and catalogue their objects, trying to establish identities and differences. Order occupies the place of interpretation and knowing becomes the ability of distinguishing.

Influenced by Romanticism, the knowledge of the past through objects became the main aim of museums in the 19th century. Recipients of colonial spoils, museums started being used by governments as part of a strategy to disseminate ideas of nationality and reinforce the sense of citizenship.

In the 20th century, museums have undergone many changes. The modern art museum created its own purist white display aesthetic, by neutralizing its interior. The 'autonomy of the art object' resulted in removing art from social context and proclaiming its institutionalization. Criticized as places of authoritarian character, during the 1960s revolution there was a general feeling that the museum of the future would have to be radical or it would disappear. Thirty years later, museums not only didn't die but proliferated and acquired an important status in contemporary life. Borrowing from the culture of 'spectacles', classic they are now dedicated to mega

exhibitions which attract millions of people; museums became the places where contemporary myths and rites are produced.

Exhibition and Curatorship. From the mid-19th century, exhibitions became the medium through which most art came to be known. In the late 1940s, William Sandberg, director of the Stedelijk Museum, turned the notion of the permanent exhibition upside-down by deciding that artworks should be warehoused and brought out for specific exhibitions, a work of art should be seen in any number of different appearances. As a result, museums started to change the conventions of how viewers should experience art and the concept of museums as places to venerate art was abandoned. Since then, museums developed multiple roles, and in turn became increasingly ambiguous.

In the sixties, Harald Szeemann, the curator of the Kunsthalle Bern, invented the concept of the ‘great exhibition’, in which the artworks were tied to a central concept and were assembled into new interrelationships. In his life, he organized more than 200 exhibitions, always using as reference three concepts: ‘subversiveness’, alternative lifestyles and Wagner’s *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art).

It was not perhaps by chance that Szeemann had first started working as an actor and stage designer. I imagine it was this experience that he transferred to his work at the museum. The rise of the curator as creator changed our perceptions not only of exhibitions but of art, as well. Szeemann transformed the exhibition into a medium in itself.

Szeemann often said he preferred the simple title of *Ausstellungsmacher* (exhibition-maker), but he acknowledged at the same time how many different functions this one job comprised: “administrator, amateur, author of introductions, librarian, manager and accountant, animator, conservator, financier, and diplomat (Strauss, 2006)

The word curator comes from the Latin ‘curare’ and means ‘care’. Traditionally, curators used to be specialists in art history and would use their skills to put together what they consider the best work of art from an historical period. In contemporary art, the curator is concerned with the whole physical and intellectual experience of an exhibition.

The history of curatorship in the 20th century, with its challenges to museum conventions and to the notion of the permanent exhibition, seems to be connected with the history of installation, not only chronologically but in the kind of changes they brought to art institutions.

The Modern Space. In the 1800s galleries and museums displayed different periods and styles together, mixing them up from floor to ceiling, without gaps to separate and demarcate them. The easel picture, frames, and classical perspective helped to suggest that the space within a picture stopped at its edges.

But the Romantic landscape painting's edge-to-edge horizon started to put pressure on the frame. With the advent of photography, which stressed that a picture was an extract from a subject's surroundings, and Impressionism, with its development of a flat space, the frame became more fragile. Cubist collage marked the passage of the picture plane into the world; the modern space was born (very theatrically I would say).

Gradually, the space of the gallery started to be seen as part of the picture:

As modernism gets older, context becomes content. In a peculiar reverse, the object introduced into the gallery frames the gallery and its laws. (O'Doherty, 1999, p.15)

The development of the modern art museum and gallery itself enabled the transformations that led to Installation Art.

Installation and *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In the early 1960s, the word installation referred to nothing more than how an exhibition had been hung. The terms assemblage and environment were commonly employed to describe art which rejected concentration on one object in favour of a consideration of the relationship between a number of elements or of the interaction between things and their contexts.

But the concerns now are for more control... of the entire situation. Control is necessary if the object, light, space, body are to function. The object has not become less important. It has merely become less self-important. (Morris, no date, cited in Fried, 1967, p. 154)

Departing from traditional painting or sculpture, which places its focus on form, for example, installation/environmental art privileged 'the intention of the artist'. It neglected any ideal form in favour of optimizing sensory experience. The stress on the viewer's point of view pointed toward a disregard for (modernist) art, which aspired to Platonic transcendence. In fact, the early installation artists were interested in the fusion of art and life.

If we bypass 'art' and take nature itself as a model or point of departure, we may be able to devise a different kind of art... out of the sensory stuff of ordinary life. (Kaprow, no date, cited in Wikipedia)

In the 1980s and 90s, installation became more and more complex. Apart from an extensive use of everyday objects, it started involving architectural settings, videos and interactive multimedia environments. The conscious address to all senses in art can be compared with Richard Wagner's concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art. Talking about 'theatricality' in the context of installation, De Oliveira, Oxley and Petry (1994) made the following comment:

The word [Gesamtkunstwerk] is not ideal since [Theatricality] refers not to the domain of drama proper, but to a consciousness of the process of life and of one's part in them. An alternative would be to borrow from.... Mikhail Bakhtin the term 'carnival, which, in an essay about Bakhtin Julia Kristeva defines thus: It is spectacle, but without stage; a game, but also a daily undertaking; a signifier, but also a signified.... The scene of the carnival, where there is no stage, no 'theatre', is thus both stage and life, game and dream, discourse and spectacle (De Oliveira, Oxley and Petry, 1994, p.14)

Graham Coulter-Smith's criticism (2006) of Claire Bishop's claim that installations are a liberating medium (2005) is based on his argument that much installation art provides simulacra and theatricality, not reality but fictions and art games. He points out that installation is dependent on art institutions and as such does not allow it to be true to life.

Its gallery/museum-bound character highlights the institutionalization of transgression. And this is why I am suspicious of attempts by Bourriaud and Bishop to convince us that [installation] is an art form that is revolutionary, that involves the viewer and enters into everyday life. (Coulter-Smith, 2006)

INVESTIGATING THE AUTONOMY OF THE ART OBJECT

Sculpture in the 20th century. Impressionism marked the beginning of a process that concluded with the elimination of the represented object. Led by Picasso's experiments with collage and constructions, in the early 20th century, painting abandoned the surface in order to occupy space, approaching sculpture. Sculpture, in its turn, abandoned the figure, the base and the mass and no longer resembled what was traditionally described as sculpture.

For centuries sculpture has been understood as a monument, normally figurative and on a pedestal. With modernism, the monument became abstract and the base became absorbed into the work. Duchamp's ready-mades, Surrealist objects, Minimalist sculptures, all contributed to a heterogeneous scenario. By the 1970s, the term sculpture had been so stretched that almost anything could be labelled as sculpture.

In 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field' (1979), Rosalind Krauss asserted that within post-modernism, sculpture (or painting) could not be defined anymore in relation to a given medium 'but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium - photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself-might be used.', (Krauss, 1979, p.42). The terms Architecture (artificial) and Landscape (natural) would now define what a sculpture was: Sculpture is what is not Landscape and what is not Architecture! Of all the possible relations to be established around the pair Architecture/Landscape, sculpture would define just one of them (certain Land Art, for instance, would stand for a landscape that was also architecture).

The eclecticism of media allied to a proximity to ordinary objects and spectator participation defied the Modernist ethos of specialization and purity of the medium. For opponents of post-modernism, there remained a longing for an art that stays as independent as possible from the world of appearances.

Soon that obscurity so characteristic of the thing would snatch the artwork back into the world of common things. In this approach the artists found themselves defeated by the objects. (Gullar, 1959, p. 144)

Objects and Material Culture. We live surrounded by objects. Our civilization is witnessing a proliferation of objects, increased by our multiplied needs and by a system of production that accelerates the life-cycle of these objects. With globalization, access to acquire consumer goods came to full fruition, and there is a general sense of fear that humankind and individuality is losing its battle with modern consumerism.

Until the 13th century *things* were seen as symbols of the divine. In the Modern Age, our culture began to see ourselves as subjects separated from our environment, and things become dependent on a subject's appreciation. Thus the idea of taste was born and objects become central to the definition of our subjectivity.

With the industrial revolution there was a growing aspiration within the middle class, for things consumed by the upper classes that were considered good taste. The rise of cheaper mass produced objects that could be available to everyone marked the arrival of consumer society.

The film *Citizen Kane* represents the myth of materialism, which implies that in the modern world we have become so oriented to developing our relationship to objects that we have lost our ability to forge our relationship with people. The anthropologist David Miller has explored the role of objects in our relationships, both to each other and to ourselves, and has shown that 'the people who successfully forge meaningful relationship to things are often the same as those who forge meaningful relationship with people.' (2008, p. 105) In short, material culture matters because objects create subjects rather than the other way around.

Material culture is a field of social sciences which studies our relationship to artefacts through history. There is a growing sense of the importance of our material heritage, a discourse that has its roots in museums. However, from the museums and theoreticians, there has been a change in the focus of interest from traditional cultural properties to consumable goods.

From 1974, until his death, in 1987, Andy Warhol became a collector of everything connected to his life. Every month he packed all sorts of ordinary objects that passed across his desk and sent them to a storage-room. The 'Time Capsule', now forms the basis of the Andy Warhol Museum's archive, in Pittsburgh.

Everything in your closet should have an expiration date in the way milk and bread and magazines and newspapers do. (Warhol, 1975, cited in Merewether, 2006, p. 31)

Historically, the artist's impulse to accumulate objects is linked to creative process. At the beginning of the XX century, artists started using the things they collected as part of their work. In 1917, through the principle of the ready-made, Marcel Duchamp introduced mass-produced objects into the art world as way of challenging the aura of the art object.

As an antidote to 'retinal art' [Duchamp] began creating readymades at a time when the term was commonly used in the US to describe manufactured items to distinguish them from handmade goods. ('Readymades of Marcel Duchamp', no date)

Since the 1960s, with the post-war affluence of consumer goods, the 'objet trouvé' became an established practice. Flea-markets, rubbish and the streets provided material for many artists. With the movement of material objects and consumer goods into the world of art, the boundaries between objects and 'art object' have blurred. One of the criticisms of art that dialogues with consumer society is that it often glorifies materialism.

I am trying to capture the individual's desire in the object, and to fix his or her aspirations in the surface, in a condition of immortality (Koons, 1992, p. 34)

Object vs. Subject in Heidegger's Aesthetics. The subjective view of the world presupposes the division object/subject: an object is something that stands opposite to a human subject. Subjectivism was inaugurated by Descartes during the XVII century and marks the beginning of the Modern era, a period marked by human mastery over the world.

The same division subject/object was responsible for the process by which we came to understand art in an 'aesthetic' way. The term 'aesthetics', created by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgartner, in the 1750s, was formed from the Greek word for sensation or feeling, *aisthêsis*. Aesthetics seeks to understand our relation to the beautiful by studying the kind of sensation or feeling an art object provokes in the experiencing subject.

Heidegger believed that the ‘aestheticization’ of art revealed our movement towards controlling all aspects of reality, treating nature as a separated object. The aesthetic approach obscured the revolutionary role of the work of art, which has served humankind both as ‘models of’ and as ‘models for’ reality.’ (Heidegger, 1937, cited in Thomson, 2011). The encounter with the true work of art should return us to an original level of existence in which subject and object had not yet been differentiated. Meaning would therefore arise in the interaction between us and the art object.

Object Oriented Ontology. In 1999, the philosopher Graham Harman borrowed the conception of Object Oriented programming from computer science in order to rethink the relationship object/subject. Different from the conventional model in which a computer program is seen as a list of tasks to perform, an Object Oriented program (OOP) is structured as a collection of interacting objects. Each ‘object’ has distinct responsibilities and the actions it performs are closely associated with the characteristics of the object itself.

Object Oriented ontology (OOO), is a metaphysical movement linked to post-humanism as it attempts to move away from a world view centred in the subject to a world view based in the relationships established between objects as equals. In this view, there is no subject, as everything/everybody (natural or artificial, human or non-human) is seen as an object.

Black Box, a term Harman adopted from anthropologist Bruno Latour, stands for the way objects should be considered. A black box is anything whose interior (and qualities) we can take for granted. Cornelia Parker’s installation *The Maybe* provides a good example of what Harman is trying to convey with the idea of the black box: in 1995, Parker put the actress Tilda Swinton to sleep inside a glass cabinet for seven consecutive days at the Serpentine Gallery. This installation highlights the fact that the sole condition for being an object is being treated like one. ‘A black box allows us to forget the massive network of alliances of which [something] is composed, as long as it functions smoothly’ (*Object-Oriented Philosophy: A Graham Harman Dictionary of Concepts*, no date). Therefore, anything can be considered ‘curation-dependent’, as its use is what determines what it is.

ARTISTS

I've always seen art as a conversation between artists ... It's kind of like a cocktail party full of artists, but they're not talking; they're making art. (Baldessari, no date)

In the years following my proposal, I had the opportunity of seeing (for the first time) works by Barbara Bloom, Goshka Macuga and John Armleder. This gave me the chance to refine my ideas on their work and to rethink my affinity with them. As well as these artists, during 2009/2012 I researched the work of Susan Hiller and Lucio Pozzi.

Identifying which artists were significant for my research was important for my development. It forced me to consider which/how/why I make the decisions I make in the context of the studio.

As in the theory section, I created some topics to help me structure the research I undertook. The first thing I realized was that the work of almost all the artist I selected had a strong dialogue with art history. Sometimes, this dialogue was established through the museum, at other times by stressing the material nature of art objects. Looking at each artist's process, it became flagrant that all of them work with appropriation. It was by researching the artists I have selected that I discovered that my work is more sensual and philosophical than political.

Dialogue with Art History

Museums

Barbara Bloom
Goshka Macuga
Susan Hiller

Material Culture

John Armleder
Barbara Bloom

Appropriation

John Armleder
Barbara Bloom
Goshka Macuga
Susan Hiller
Lucio Pozzi

Goshka Macuga. In 2009, Macuga was commissioned by Whitechapel Gallery to create an installation to celebrate its reopening after refurbishment. *The Nature of the Beast* (figure 11), inspired by her research at the gallery's archives, was a mix of a meeting room and an archival display.



11. *The Nature of the Beast*, 2009, Installation, Whitechapel Gallery

The installation was comprised of a tapestry reproduction of *Guernica*, some documentary material relating to the Whitechapel's history, a round-table, a commissioned rug featuring a design of Iraq invaded by occupying forces, a bust of Colin Powell, a film programme based on the Iraq conflict and a reprint of a 1939 newspaper article on Picasso (the *Guernica* painting was first exhibited in England at Whitechapel, in 1939), as well as Colin Powell's text: 'Weapons of Mass Destruction'. The gallery visitors were invited to book the space for meetings.

Visiting this exhibition, I came to realize that we use art history in different ways. To me, art history is a point of departure to comment on art history itself. To Macuga, art history is a point of departure to consider serious political themes. Using archival material and artefacts she creates stories that test the veracity of the information we receive.

Plus Ultra (figure 12), an installation at Venice Biennale, in 2009, consisted of a huge banner, wrapped around two pillars in the Arsenale, embroidered with the Latin expression 'Plus Ultra' and depicting the G20 leaders smiling.

From the catalogue: 'This piece is an adaptation of the Spanish coat of arms, which is based on the mythological pillars of Hercules, supposedly located in the Straits of Gibraltar, at the edge of the known world, and declaring *Nec Plus Ultra*: nothing further beyond' (*Making Sense of Making Worlds*, 2009).



12. *Plus Ultra*, 2009, Venice Biennale

Macuga's political awareness allied to her use of factual information locates her installations in a different place than mine. I tend to create objects from imagination, with some fragments of reality, contextualized in imagined spaces, which resemble existing spaces. She works the other way around. I consider that both our works blur the boundaries between the curator and the artist, but I think her way of thinking is closer to that of a curator than mine. Macuga is more sensitive to information; I consider I am more sensitive to materials.

Susan Hiller. I first came across Susan Hiller's work in the year that I wrote my proposal, while researching contemporary artists working with installation. At that time, I left Hiller out of the list of artists I intended to research because I found her strong

interest in the supernatural and in the unconscious very alien to my work. After seeing Hiller's retrospective at Tate Britain I took the opportunity to revise my opinion.

Hiller began to work as an artist after practicing anthropology and archaeology. Using the techniques of collecting and cataloguing, presentation and display, she transforms everyday phenomena and cultural artefacts into art. I have selected three relatively recent installations to illustrate her work:

In the early 1990s she was commissioned to create a work for the Freud Museum, in London, in response to Freud's collection of art and antiquities. *From the Freud Museum* (figure 13), was a cabinet located in Freud's bedroom where she exhibited a collection of 50 archaeological cardboard boxes filled with mementoes, personal relics and talismans, all items found, made or assembled by the artist.



13. *From the Freud Museum*, 1991-1997, installation, partial view

My own interest in Freud is probably complicated. I think we all live inside the Freud Museum. The Freud Museum is a cultural concept we can't really escape. I was interested in a lot of aspects of Freud, for example his art collection which my installation invokes. Most of the objects in the work of mine you mentioned are personal, but they took on a special aura through being shown first in the actual Freud Museum in Hampstead. (Hiller, 2005)

Ceramic Works (figure 14) belongs to a series of ten other related works consisting of vases, marked either 'made in GDR' or 'made in West Germany', placed on a variety of supports, like tables and shelves. All the works use texts formed from bronze letters recycled from Berlin tombstones (Example: 'A Longing to Be Modern', figure 14). In this work, as much as in the Freud installation, objects, repetition and displays all bring to mind museum's collections. Hiller never makes singularities, all her work comes in series. She uses it as a strategy to avoid hierarchical organization in the work.



14. *Ceramic Works*, 2001-2002

Homage to Marcel Duchamp: Aura is a collection of 25 photographic portraits based on images of the artist's archive. The auras are created by liquid crystal triggered by electrical frequencies and translated into colour equivalents by a computer (figure 15)

These photographs are the most recent manifestation of a desire to experience, record, and classify spectral phenomena, a desire that coincides with the history of science as well as the history of art, and has complicated connections to both. (Hiller, 2008)



15. *Homage to Marcel Duchamp, Auras*, 2008

All three works are fine examples of what I found inspiring in Susan Hiller's sensibility: the precision of her 'curation'. She manages to extract the extraordinary out of apparently ordinary objects with an economy of gestures and intuition. She seems to be in no doubt that objects and images having meaning.

Another important facet of her practice is the use of language, which is an intrinsic part of the work. Be it a title, a text or an audio, her use of words highlight perception rather than undermines it.

Her work exposes the precarious nature of aesthetic values in a balanced way, between criticality and celebration. She does not apply systems of judgment such as 'true' or 'false', 'fact' or 'fiction'. What I learnt from Susan Hiller's work is that transcendence can be experienced through the mundane objects of the everyday world.

Barbara Bloom. *Glasstress* is an event running alongside to Venice Biennale, which focuses on contemporary glass interpreted by internationally famous artists. In the last Biennale, in 2011, Barbara Bloom exhibited an installation called *To Allan McCollum, from Each and Every One of Us (Together in Harmony)* (figure 16):



16. *To Allan McCollum, from Each and Every One of Us (Together in Harmony)*
Venice Biennale, 2011

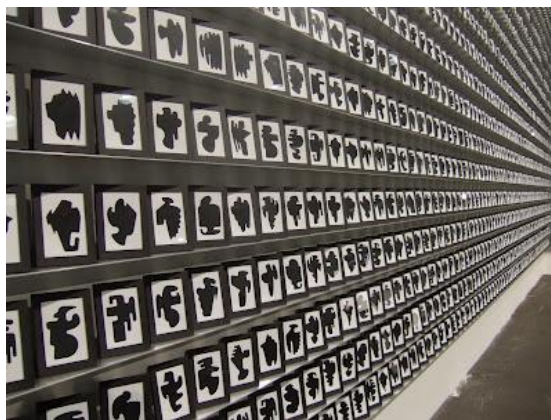
The installation was composed of a wood table and 38 glasses with built-in sensors and speakers, which responded to the movement of our hands to produce different sound pitches. I was surprised to discover it was a Barbara Bloom's work. Everything I knew of her work seemed to be very elaborate.

This work was simple, easy to engage with, except for the title. Not knowing at that time Allan McCollum was, I wondered if the work was a private joke between her and her friends, which, as viewers, we were denied access to.

On researching the installation, I discovered it was originally part of a solo exhibition in New York, *Present* (2010). Every piece in that exhibition was conceived as an imagined gift-exchange between mainly famous people: 'from Marilyn Monroe to Arthur Miller', 'from Simon de Beauvoir to Sartre', 'from Barbara Bloom to Bruce Nauman', etc. The work I saw in Venice was a gift 'from each and every one of us to Allan McCollum'.

Allan McCollum is an American artist who became known for using methods of mass production in his work, often creating thousands of objects that, while produced in large quantity, are each unique. An example is *The Shapes Project*, where he used a combinatorial system to produce thousands of shapes without repeating any (figure 17).

Working over the past few years, I've designed a new system to produce unique two-dimensional 'shapes.' This system allows me to make enough unique shapes for every person on the planet to have one of their own. It also allows me to keep track of the shapes, so as to ensure that no two will ever be alike. (McCollum, 2009)



17. *The Shapes Project*, 2006, Friedrich Petzel Gallery
One painting for each person on earth

Allan McCollum's work gave a new insight into Barbara Bloom's installation. She managed to produce a piece that not only appropriated another artist's way of thinking but returned it back to him as a gift. The work wasn't just a clever art-history bound piece, it was a generous piece that made me reflect on the nature of art itself, which could be equated to a ritual of gift-exchanging between artist and public, and vice-versa.

Reviewing the installation *Present*, Andrew Russeth recalled Michael Fried:

Attacking Minimalism, art historian Michael Fried wrote of that moment: 'Presentness is grace' In the best of Bloom's new work, she shows that state, however fleeting, can be achieved through open and unashamed generosity. (Russeth, 2010)

Reconsidering Barbara Bloom was refreshing. When I first discovered her I was too focused in her connections with Institutional Critique. I found an interview where Bloom describes the main reason she adopted a museum style in her installations was because, by adopting a style, she would not need to think about it anymore:

I'm not interested in the nineteenth century. I chose that setting because I wanted invisibility, a given, like the set of a museum. (Bloom, no date, in 'Interview with Dena Shottenkirk')

This was more than a revelation; it helped to enlighten my creative practice. Rather than drawing attention to a specific object, adopting a given style draws attention to the way people interact with objects, space or other people in that particular situation. It is about creating settings that stimulate people to reconstruct the 'social history' behind it.

John Armleder. I went to Paris especially to see John Armleder's installation *All of the above* (figure 18), at the Palais de Tokyo. All that I knew about it was that the installation was a curatorial project and that he would be exhibiting works by other artists.

Palais de Tokyo was a disappointment. It felt like a semi-abandoned 1980s shopping centre. Ironically, this kind of architecture and scale in art spaces is related to the advent of installation art... In a single room (the only one open in the gallery) I counted 33 works crammed on a 6 x 8 m white platform: paintings, videos, drawings, collages, sculptures. And whatever the nature of the work, it was subject to a frontal viewpoint.

I spent an hour looking at the installation. The mixture of genres made it impossible to see the works properly which was extremely frustrating. Although, the general effect was somehow seductive, it oscillated between chaos and a great radicalism.



18. All of the Above, 2011, Palais de Tokyo

Researching Palais de Tokyo's site, I discovered that John Armleder was the last of several artists selected to fill the auditorium, the only space left open while Palais de Tokyo was undergoing refurbishment that year. This project, called *Carte Blanche*, allowed artists to do whatever they imagined within the space. *All of the Above* was conceived as the reverse of an earlier curatorship, at the Swiss Institute in New York, in 2004: *None Of The Above*, where Armleder showed works distinguished by small size or almost immaterial conceptual objects. From one curatorship to another, he went therefore from invisibility to theatricality (literally, in that in *All of the Above* the artworks were displayed as if on a stage).

Offering carte blanche to an artist provides the opportunity to approach the creative process from a novel angle. I was pleased with *All of the above*. It was one of the few exhibitions I have seen where curatorship is explored as a medium. John Armleder's 'stage-like' display called attention to the very act of exhibiting, as his installation worked as an anti-exhibition. We could move our eyes but we could not move our bodies around the work.

Lucio Pozzi. Identifying himself primarily as a painter, he has worked with a broad range of media, genres, and what the artist calls 'formats.' The Italian-born American artist (1935) has made paintings, sculptures, videos, and performance works, as well as geometric abstractions, figurative allegories, mythical landscapes, and photo-collage. I

met Lucio Pozzi in New York, in 2000, as part of a series of visits to artists' studios. He had an unusual studio, completely neat and organized. Thousands of boxes, containing all sorts of materials, were kept on classified shelves, as in a library.

Throughout the doctorate I had been considering researching Lucio Pozzi, but being focused on artists dialoguing with museums, I couldn't determine how to fit him in. I knew my affinity with his work had to do with process, rather than content. More recently, though, through my readings on Object Oriented, I realized the important role process plays in my practice and felt justified including Lucio Pozzi in my research.



19. *I Like Painting and Painting Likes Me*, 2010, Academia di Belli Arti, Florence

The image above (figure 19) documents Pozzi in a three-week long performance, in 2010. During this period he worked under the loggia of the Academia di Belli Art, in Florence, painting a canvas 3 x 20 meters large. His days were strictly regulated by a schedule (from 9 to 6h30 pm), and the size and quantity of brushes and paint was previously stipulated: two small brushes and some black paint. Lucio Pozzi's methodology (which he applies to anything he makes, from painting to video) is the result of a distinctive approach to art, in which he understands it as the result of a combination of ingredients. He uses the term 'translation mechanisms' to refer to all the different ways one can put these ingredients together:

I imagine the translation mechanisms to be similar to a net thrown in the sea of practice to catch complex narratives, meditative or agitated emotions, grandiose or menial dimensions. They help me to discard any consideration for matters such as originality, novelty, or formal consistency, which I feel reduce the creative flow. (Pozzi, 2000, p. 37)

In Pozzi's art, there is no subject matter. Everything is an ingredient (or an object, as in the Object Oriented ontology): materials, processes, concepts, are not expected to be put at the service of goals that are outside themselves.

I always felt attracted to systems, rational attempts to order things that exist, originally, in a chaotic, organic or formless space; my mathematics degree and my work in a museum corroborates this inclination. Lucio Pozzi provided me with a model to look at my own creative process. I have discovered that I make things in a similar way to how I cook:

- What excites me is the challenge of making food out of ordinary ingredients
- I use a combination of ready-meals, raw ingredients and delicatessen products
- Sometimes, it is about the combination of dishes rather than making a new dish
- I don't like complex food making
- I prefer amateurism to professionalism in the kitchen
- I like the challenge of creating a dish from what is available
- I create my own version of the things I like. I have no respect for recipes

To me, how things are made is as symbolic as the resulting image
(Pozzi, 2000, p. 26)

CREATIVE PRACTICE

It's not the attempt to project my identity as much as to find my identity in the process of creating an artwork ... I'm just creating my own histories, based on objects and artworks and certain experience. (Macuga, no date, cited in Breakell, 2007)

There are two intertwined elements in my practice, 'objects' and 'installations.' The first is the result of manipulation of materials and implies a kind of unit, be it a video, a painting, a photograph, a ready-made, an image or a sculpture. The second relates to the many ways I set up the objects in relation to each other and to space.

During the last four years, I made 10 installations and was involved in three curatorial projects. I have listed the works under these two groups in chronological order.

INSTALLATIONS

Aphrodite (Feb. 2009)



20. *Aphrodite*, 2009, installation, APT Gallery, London

Aphrodite was exhibited at the APT Gallery, as part of the AVA doctorate group exhibition. It was a floor installation composed of a photograph mounted in a backlit gilded frame and a pile of ornamental, architectural off-cuts (figure 20).

The image of *Aphrodite* came from a series of photographs taken in 2007 to document the vandalism to one of the statues of *The 4 Evangelists* (figure 4). I bought the backlight in a Muslim shop in Croydon and originally it held the image of a mosque. I hadn't been in a Muslim shop before, and I was surprised by how 'pop' they looked. In substituting the images, I felt as if I was exchanging their cultural meanings.

Positioning the work on the floor, made me realize that there was a whole new universe to explore in terms of ways of displaying objects. The incorporation of fragments in the installation (both in the plaster cornices and in the image of the broken statue) was to evolve and become an important feature of my future work.

In retrospect, I realized that this work foreshadowed many of my struggles and discoveries on the doctorate: material culture, theatricality, display, object, fragments and museums, as well.

Play Back (June 2009)

Play Back (figure 21) was presented at the doctoral showcase exhibition and was more complex than the previous installation. It was composed of photographs, computer generated images, texts, and a wall installation made with poker chips. (Appendix 1, images VIII and IX)

Having recently discovered poker I decided to use the poker chips in an installation as a metaphor for art. The space I created was intended conceptually as 'an exhibition of archive material' and visually as endless repetitions of the poker chip's form. Circles in vinyl cutting had been the material of my first installation, back in 2003, (Appendix 1, image II), and playing with poker chips brought back my love of patterns and repetition.

There was a presentation at the entrance of the installation which was an adaptation of a text I took from the Rodchenko's exhibition, at Tate Modern (2009):

‘Gisel Carriconde Azevedo’s studies for a construction in space outlined her move from the two-dimensional plane of her earlier works into the three dimensions of her theatre work and installations. Her investigations using everyday materials signified the abandonment of painting for the move toward real space.



21. *Play Back*, 2009, AVA, UEL, partial view

Her trip to Granada in January 2009 seemed to have been a direct inspiration for her *Poker Chips Constructions*, in which regular components were assembled in various ways to create a series of geometric patterns. These geometric forms provided a three-dimensional equivalent to her experiments with computers, as well.

“*Play Back*” took place at the end of her first year as a doctorate student at the University of East London. The installation was a reference to both the concept of a retrospective and the documentation of a work in progress. It was directly related to a previous exhibition the same year (*Thinking Hands*, APT Gallery 2009), where, for various reasons, she was unable to show her first *Poker Chips Constructions* installation. She decided to re-create it in “*Play Back*” incorporating the studies, sketches and materials left unused from that previous failed project. But, in fact, it was later discovered, she actually used the sketches to generate new works.

The term “*Play Back*”, refers to both the idea of repetition (as in “replaying a recording”) and the moment in poker when the player begins raising aggressively after another player has been leading the action.’

Many people didn’t understand the ideas of the installation, as a whole. Initially, I assumed the text was too long and blamed people for being unwilling to engage. Only a year later did I realize that my failing could be highlighting a crucial issue of installation art. Although installation provides an appropriate medium for nonlinear narrative (we present the viewer with fragments she/he is invited to recombine), its success will depend on taking the viewer into consideration, if there is no clear notion of what the purpose of the work is it becomes merely a stimulating game for the artist to play. My text was not clear. Fiction and reality were blurred in a way that rendered the work opaque.

British Museum, the Parthenon Galleries (Feb. 2010)

At the beginning of my second year, I decided to follow a more experimental path. Inspired by my contact with museums, I decided to work in the studio with painting and a range of sculptural materials.

From photographs that I took in the Parthenon Gallery, in the British Museum, I made a series of small paintings (Appendix 1, image X), using a very basic palette composed of the three primary colours, white, viridian green and ultramarine blue. I put the pictures inside frame-boxes giving them an object-like quality, mimicking the sculpted marble panels the paintings were based on.

For the installation, I showed the framed pictures on thick white shelves, from IKEA (figure 22). It was intended as a dialogue with Minimalism, Michael Fried and consumer culture; a homage to both museums and shops.



22. *British Museum, The Parthenon Galleries – Painting Lessons*, 2010, AVA, UEL

Baroque Feast (Feb 2010)

Inspired by my experiments with sculptural materials and by a course I took on Baroque interiors at the V&A museum, I developed a series of small sculptures (figure 23). They were cast in Jesmonite and used broken fragments of objects; the moulds came from disposable food packaging I have started collecting.



23. *Plate and Spoon*, 2010, Jesmonite and ceramic object



24. *Baroque Feast*, 2010, installation, AVA, UEL

The sculptures were displayed on three plinths I designed with rolls of bubble-wrap and IKEA mirrors (figure 24), in the fashion of round tables. In both installations, *Parthenon Galleries* and *Baroque Feast*, I realized I was dealing with works that seemed to exist as art only in group or in a given context. Having to deal with work in a small scale made me more aware of the ‘conversations’ between objects and between objects and space. Also, it highlighted the importance of the display, which I discovered is never neutral.

Working with painting and sculpture returned my practice to the studio. My work with installation had taken me away from it, much of the work happening in the computer (planning) and in the gallery. The meditative nature of ‘making’ things gave me the space I needed to rethink my work.

In Pieces (June 2010)

I experimented with sculpture for the whole of 2010. Some of the pieces were a continuation of the previous work, involving casting with Jesmonite, but some were just ‘collages’ of diverse fragments of objects reassembled into new pieces and painted (figure 25). Many people thought these pieces were traditional crafts, made in clay or porcelain. I borrowed the term ‘Translation’ from Lucio Pozzi to name the process of rendering things from one medium to another, from one style to another, from one material to another, from one context to another, and so on. Translation normally relates to ideas of second hand experience. And yet, I find ‘Translations’ can achieve a genuine worth.

The process of buying cheap objects in order to smash them to pieces pointed to new directions in my approach to sculpture. It was through the radical action of hammering objects that I realized the close relationship between the process of making sculptures and ‘actions’ (to hammer, to cut, to glue, etc.).



25. *Frog*, 2010, broken objects and paint

The installation I set up with this new series of objects, used red IKEA shelves and vinyl self-adhesive lettering (figure 26). The main criticism I received was related to the shelves. They were too high, they were too red, they were too cheap.



26. *In Pieces*, 2010, AVA, UEL, partial view

All the work I made in 2009/2010 reinforced my relationship to museums. The paintings from *The Parthenon Galleries*, the sculptures from *Baroque Feast* and *In Pieces*, all echoed things I had seen at the British Museum and at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Also, understanding the curatorial aspect of my work made me realize that each work I make is not necessarily fixed to a particular installation or series. They are like actors, who play different roles in different plays: piece X, originally conceived as part of series A, can become part of series B, or series C, in accordance with the ‘curatorship’ of each installation.

The theme of fragments reappeared in the work with the ‘broken’ objects. Fragments relate to ruins, archeology, art, psychoanalysis, history, memory.

frag·ment [n. frag-muhv. frag-muh nt, -ment, frag-ment] noun

1. a part broken off or detached: scattered fragments of the broken vase.
 2. an isolated, unfinished, or incomplete part: She played a fragment of her latest composition.
 3. an odd piece, bit, or scrap.
- verb (used without object)
4. to collapse or break into fragments; disintegrate: The chair fragmented under his weight.
- (*dictionary.com*, no date)

Working with fragments is not necessarily melancholic. It is not about reparation, but about building new things out of cast-offs, out of what is available.

Collage, and its will to connect things that could be antagonistic and not erase their history, marks the beginning of modernism. Explosions, fragments, destruction, became the proper image of modernity.

Wrapped Objects (March 2011)

Wrapped Objects was related to a consultancy I had with a V&A specialist in plastic conservation, in November 2010. I discovered that many of the synthetic materials I have been using in my work are unstable, and have a high probability of crumbling in less than five decades. As I had recently bought a great quantity of new materials, all made from polymer based components, I reasoned that there were two ways of responding to plastic: rejecting or embracing it.

The decision to use the materials despite their instability had a challenging attitude to it. I wrapped three objects I had picked up from London streets: a chair, a bird cage and a stuffed toy. These abandoned objects suited my mood. The chair was wrapped with silver PVC (figure 27) and the other two objects with Sellotape (figure 28). On each piece I attached a Perspex tag warning about the material used:

Cellophane Tape

can shrink over time

Contains Plasticizer

very unstable material



27. *Chair, Wrapped Objects series, 2010*
Discarded object, PVC and ceramic objects



28. *Birdcage and Toy*, *Wrapped Objects* series, 2010, detail
Discarded objects, Sellotape and metal chain

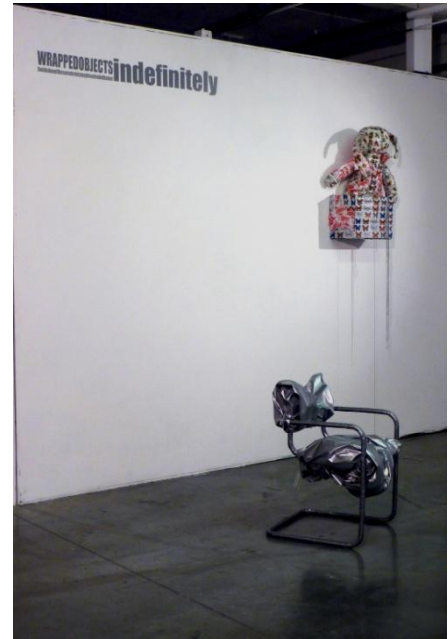
Because of the human scale of the objects, I displayed them directly on the floor and wall (figure 29). I realized then that larger pieces have this advantage of, literally, standing by themselves without the need for plinths or shelves.

Curiously, I didn't think of *Wrapped Objects* as an installation. To me it was two sculptures and a text ('The Life Time of These Materials May Be Extended but Not Indefinitely'), three independent objects put together. A colleague praised this work because there was 'less interference' of my curatorial eye. I am willing to accept the criticism but finding a space where I can be both the artist and curator is important to me. In 2011, all the installations I made were, in part, about me experimenting with different ways of putting objects together in space.

Wrapping objects was as symbolic as breaking objects. We wrap things in order to preserve them. For the first time ever I started to consider the life-span of my work. Materials such as plastic are more flexible and light but more volatile, they decay quicker, and they crumble.

Canadian media theorist Harold Innis suggests that materials bias the culture that uses them. A culture that uses heavy materials, like stone, will be biased towards time and religion; a culture that uses lighter materials, like papyrus (and plastic), will be biased towards space and politics. (Jones, no date)

One of the things I am interested in is the tension between perception and truth. Things we assume are X turn out to be Y. This is behind my fascination with synthetic materials, which try to emulate natural materials.



29. *Wrapped Objects*, 2011, AVA, UEL

Art Doctorate: Isms x Material and Culture (June 2011)

In 2011, I was immersed in the world of objects and the role they play in both art and mass culture. Of the artists working with installation, Barbara Bloom and Susan Hiller were an inspiration due to their faith in the meaning of objects.

The installation *Art Doctorate: Isms x Material and Culture* (figure 30) was comprised of vases and stones. The vases (plus the tables and shelves I used to display the objects) were all from IKEA. The stones were brought from trips abroad, one from Brazil, another from Iceland. I had them all [vases and stones] engraved with words I selected from the books I was reading for the doctorate (figures 31 and 32).



30. *Art Doctorate: Isms vs Material and Culture*, 2011, AVA, UEL



31. *Yellow Vase*, 2011. Engraved glass



32. *Material and Culture*, 2011. Engraved stones

This work was created in response to my readings on both consumerism and Object Oriented ontology. Also, it followed a seminar discussing the use of language in my installations, where it was suggested that my texts were too illustrative: 'If you want to use text in your installations you need to deconstruct them the way you do with objects'. I realize now my response to the criticism I received was quite literal, as I made the work and the words to be one.

Stones and glass-vases belong to distinct universes. One is natural, the other is man-made, one is heavy and opaque, the other is light and transparent, one is undecorated the other is ornamental. By engraving the stones, I transformed them into ‘objects’ (the black box way); by engraving IKEA vases, I caused a little disruption in the object’s production system (during the riots in London, I thought that one of the ways of subverting the hold that brands have over us is by imposing our identity on the objects they sell and by valorising cheap things).

To use an object is necessarily to interpret it. To use a product is to betray its concept. To read, to view, to envision a work is to know how to divert it: use is an act of micro pirating that constitutes postproduction. (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 24)

Becoming a curator is another response to the quantity of stuff in the world. With so many possibilities available, organization becomes as important, or more, so, than the things themselves. It is more crucial to arrange than to create.

The Artist’s Studio: An Allegory of 3 Years of my Artistic Life

(Jun. 2011)

This installation was a complement of *Art Doctorate: Isms, Material and Culture*. Both works were intended to be a record of my experience at the doctorate. In terms of display, *Isms*, representing theory, was schematic and minimal; *The Artist’s Studio*, representing practice, looked more organic and chaotic.

Makers can achieve their individual voice through the materials they select, the tools and ideas they use, and the aesthetics of their work. I now believe that important qualities of the work are related to the actions that generate it. In order to explore this idea, I made a list of possible actions to employ in the studio, followed by materials and their qualities:

Actions cover, burn, pull, push, break, empty squeeze, tear, split, crumple, wrinkle, glue squash, paint, display, sculpt, wash, embroider, embellish, wrap, make holes, draw, scratch, fill, photograph, film, cut, edit, ...

Materials paper, copper, leather, ceramics, paint, fabric, oil, PVC, acetate, graphite, metal, wax, gesso, terracotta, gold, glass, acrylic, enamel, gouache, rubber, words, resin, wool, cotton, silk, wood, stone, found objects, straw, cellophane, bronze, foil, brass, marble, food, silicone, ...

Qualities solid, liquid expensive, cheap, soft, hard, spiky, light, heavy, black, white, coloured, big, small, monumental, transparent, opaque, light, dark, static, mobile, textured, smooth, round, square, ...

For *The Artist's Studio* I chose random words from the lists above and matched them with images from the collection *Water & Cities*, photographs I have been taking since 2008. The pictures were printed on transparent Perspex blocks - photo-blocks - to give the (water) images the solidity of an object (figure 33).



33. *Qualities, Materials and Actions (on Water)*, 2011, digital photography (Venice, Cairo, Somerset, Frankfurt and Reykjavik)

The installation (figure 34), was intended as a metaphor for matter and thought, a 'river' of London bricks and photo-blocks displayed along the gallery floor. One single photo-block was also placed up on the wall, 'the 'found object', (Appendix 1, image XI), facing the mirror from the installation '*Art Doctorate: Isms x Material and Culture*'



34. *The Artist's Studio: An Allegory of 3 Years of my Artistic Life*, 2011, AVA, UEL

Both installations *Isms* and *The Artist's Studio* had a Modernist austerity. I wonder if it was to do with the fact I was working with 'collections'. I already said I find some of Barbara Bloom's installations cold and controlled. Is it the 'collector' mind coming through the work?

By breaking up time, our 'habitual' patterns dispel the anxiety-provoking aspect of the temporal continuum and of the absolute singularity of events. Similarly, it is thanks to their discontinuous integration into series that we put objects at our sole disposition, that we own them. (Baudrillard, 1968, p. 100)

Estandarte Granada (June 2011)

Estandarte Granada was a third installation I showed together with *Isms* and *Artist's Studio*, at the 2011's doctoral showcase exhibition. Originally inspired by embroidered baroque napkins I saw at the V&A, the concept evolved into an *estandarte* form. *Estandartes* are flags or colourful banners used in religious or military events. In Brazil, they are very popular during the carnival festivities.

Similar to the methodology of *The Artists' Studio*, I chose the image from a collection of pictures of leafless trees taken in cities I have visited since 2008 (leafless trees are part of Brasilia's savanna-like landscape). I designed three pieces: Granada, Brasilia and London (Appendix 1, image XII), which were printed onto velvet and sent to Brazil to be embroidered by a cooperative of women. Originally I intended them to be part of the installation *Baroque Feast* I presented at AVA Gallery in 2010 (p.45), but I only had the pieces back in London in 2011. It was interesting to discover that it had a lot in common with the new *Isms* and *The Artist's Studio*. The three works used words and material from personal archives/collections of images. Also, they all involved commissioned craftwork: printing, embroidering and engraving.

The installation I did was very simple (figure 35). I covered the back-wall of a self-contained space with black velvet and hung the piece in a banner fashion. I think this work was more successful than the other two because the scale object/space was right. Pieces on the floor are more difficult to display, they tend to get lost in the space.

By the end of the 3rd year I had approached the 'nervous system' of my practice. Thinking in terms of sculpture opened up a new realm of possible processes and methodologies. I felt less constrained by the weight of art history, as we live surrounded by three-dimensional things. Sculpture exists in the same space where everything material that is not art also exists.



35. *Estandarte Granada, series Cities & Trees, 2011, AVA, UEL. Print on fabric, embroidery*

A Room of One's Own (March 2012)

In 2011, I was invited by a friend, Laura Virginia, to create and co-direct a video as part of her residence in screen-dance in London. Her background is in dance, with a strong interest in literature and feminism, and although we had already worked together in Brazil - where she has performed in some of my installations - this was a completely new area for me.

Initially, I was concerned the project would have no connection with what I had been doing. Being focused in installation and object-making, a video could be a distraction, if not a disaster. Surprisingly, I was very happy with the result, and learned a lot from it.

One of the key arguments of Graham Coulter-Smith (2006), in *Deconstructing Installation Art*, is that because of its narrative dimension, installation art is more connected with video art (and media art, in general) than with sculpture. Most of my work with installation has a symbolic narrative behind it. I realized that one of the keys for the success of the video was narrative; the viewer knew where he/she was standing:

The artist cannot rely on shared knowledge or memory with the audience. All referents must be contained in the work itself or in the information told or written (leaked) about the work.... Or as Julian Barnes writes in Flaubert's Parrot, "How submerged does a reference have to be before it drowns?" (*Barbara Bloom Present*, 2011)

Having never been in London before, Laura told me that her fantasy of what London was like came from Virginia Woolf's books. In turn, I told her that for me London had become intrinsically associated with its museums. Our point of departure was therefore to explore London's museums and Virginia Woolf's universe.

The book '*A Room of One's Own*' is an extended essay based on a series of lectures Virginia Woolf delivered in 1928, under the title of 'Women and Fiction'. It was there that as a teenager Laura heard of the British Museum for the first time. Knowing that Virginia Woolf had lived close to the Museum, we went on a tour of the area. We were both taken by Bloomsbury. We chose five locations (a church, the British Museum, a five star hotel, Gordon street and Gordon square), and from this we developed the narrative for the video.

I decided to match Bloomsbury's Georgian architecture with something surreal, a blend of Englishness and carnival (figure 36). I did it by playing with Laura's costumes and with the introduction of some objects, as well.

Laura's stylized Carmen Miranda was a homage to Brazilian culture, to dance, and to women artists of the 20th century (by some accounts, the Portuguese-Brazilian singer Carmen Miranda was the highest-earning woman in the United States, in the 1940s). The cape was inspired by *Wings of Desire* (1987, Wim Wenders), the film where an angel descends to the streets of Berlin.



36. *A Room of One's Own*, 2011. Screen-dance, performance Laura Virginia

We tucked self-adhesive vinyl spots (leftovers from the installation *Play Back* (p.43) into every location we filmed. My ‘trade-mark’, the spots, was used as a demarcation of territory and a metaphor for women’s emergence into the public artistic arena; the sculpture *Frog* (p. 47), was present in all the internal scenes at the hotel bedroom, when Laura appears reading Virginia Woolf’s book, in a reference to *The Frog Prince*.

The project took place between February and August 2011, with many breaks due to our busy timetables. The filming itself took place over a five day period, in May when we moved temporarily to Bloomsbury. There was no script and I learned how to use the video camera on the spot by reading the manual and by trial and error. After we finished the editing we decided to use a voiceover. The quotes, extracted from Woolf’s essay, added a narrative structure and provided the ‘musicality’ of Virginia’s prose.

I showed the video in March, in a video-installation at AVA Gallery, UEL (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mn8DgiTGMZk&feature=plcp>). The images were projected inside a round frame and I used dressing tables and a mirror to create an ambient evocative of the feminine, referencing to art history themes of portraiture and the picture inside the picture (Appendix 1, image XIII).

Reflecting on the creative process, I think my approach to making the video was similar to the way I tend to work in the studio: superficial technical knowledge, an eye for serendipity and ‘clumsy’ appropriation (the parody element present in most of my work which the video made visible, literally). However, although the filming was free and spontaneous, the camera gave me a level of control over the visual framing of my work that I had missed since some of my installations in Brazil.

CURATORSHIP

Uma Viagem Entre Duas Historias de Amor (Sep 2010)

This was my first commission to curate an art exhibition (my previous experience as a curator was in a numismatic museum). It was both exciting and worrying as I had to learn through negotiating each decision with the artist, Cicero Bezerra. At the beginning I felt insecure about my role. He is a photographer and my relation to photography is more focused on the content of images, I tend to pay not much attention to technical or

formal issues. What initially seemed like a confrontation slowly became a partnership. It was gratifying to be able to build this kind of bond with another artist out of a process of curatorship.

We worked remotely, during two months, by Skype, email and video-conference. It was frustrating not to be in Brazil for the opening. I love the intensity of last minute decisions and changes. All I could contribute was the project (Appendix 1, images XIV and XV)

Object Oriented (June 2011)

In November 2010, I created a discussion group about objects. The group included artists, a programmer and a philosopher. We met occasionally to reflect on the many ways objects are perceived, used, made, thought about and studied.

Ordinarily, an object is whatever has edges, in opposition to a landscape, which has no clear edges or boundaries. Objects can be handled, landscape can't. Working with sculpture is about transforming a landscape (a material) into an object by finding its boundaries.

In early June 2011, I organized an event at Leighton Space which combined an exhibition, talks and a workshop (Appendix 1, image XVI). It was an informal forum where we shared with others some of the ideas we had discussed in the group about objects (mainly art objects), Object Oriented programming, and Object Oriented Ontology. The installation *Art Doctorate: Isms x Material and Culture* (p.53) was originally conceived for this event.

March Past (March 2012)

March Past (figure 37) is my most recent project. I commissioned one of my doctorate colleagues to make a painting for my final exhibition.

Dear Tim Weston,

I am very impressed by what I have seen in your site and I am considering commissioning you to paint some of my personal objects. Please, contact by email so we can arrange to discuss your prices and availability.

Your admirer

I had a positive reply from Tim and we arranged for him to come up to London to pick up my objects. We discussed size, price and composition. Two weeks later my painting was ready to be collected.

Tim described the picture as follow: 'It is called *March Past* as the car with the machine guns gives the whole picture a military feel, also the military band shown on the toffee tin in the background. It is a summer day in a banana republic and the big smiling figure on the left and the shiny waving cat on the right are cheering a military vehicle being driven past by the sweet figure with a bow in her hair. '



37. Tim Weston, *March Past*, 2012, oil on board

The curator has to be flexible: sometimes he is the servant, sometimes he is the assistant, sometimes he gives the artists the ideas about how to present their works; in group shows he is the coordinator in thematic, the creator; but the most important thing is to do it with enthusiasm, with love, to be obsessive. (Szeemann, 1995, cited in Obrist, 2010, p. 100)

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

We live in a century in which the exhibition is more and more of a medium and more artists claim that the exhibition is the work and the work is the exhibition. (Obrist, 2010, p. 98)

The professional activities I was involved in between 2008 and 2012 included exhibitions, curatorship, residences and artistic partnerships. Also, I attended many art-related events during this period. As art history plays a central role in my work, visiting exhibitions, museums, theatres, workshops, conferences and talks is both research and strategy, as it provides the conditions for my work to happen.

More importantly, all the professional practice of the last four years enabled me to understand how space can be used, not only to articulate or reinforce a specific view of the world, but to create new ways of seeing.

YEAR I - 2008/2009

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Exhibitions

June 2009, AVA Gallery, London, End of the year doctoral show, installation

Feb. 2009, Thinking Hands, APT Gallery, London, installation

10 Aphorisms about my work (*1min. presentation at APT Gallery*)

I prefer Materials

I prefer Malevich to Kandinski

I prefer Appropriation

I prefer Poundland to Giorgio Armani

I prefer Art History to Economics

I prefer Childhood

I prefer Art to Design

I prefer (The Hell) of order to (The Hell) of chaos

I prefer Surrealist's ideas and Baroque forms

In Brasilia, I prefer Modernist tiles; in Granada, I prefer Islamic tiles; in London,

I prefer wall paper

(After Szyborska poem *Possibilities*)

Publication

April 2009, 'Au Plein Air', RETICENCIAS, Contemporary Art Magazine, on-line publication, Brazil - <http://www.reticenciascritica.com/> A short essay discussing the use of the computer in contemporary art practice and my need for counterbalancing it with a more direct medium. A dream I had while writing my doctorate proposal, where I was sitting outside painting from nature, triggered the thoughts that originated this article.

Residence Application

2010, short-listed for an artistic residence in Havana, Cuba <http://www.batiscafo.org/>. The proposal I sent to Cuba was an extension of the curatorial project *Vizi – Social Club Unidade da Vizinhaça*, developed in a collaborative residence, in August 2008, at the Museu Murillo La Greca, in Recife, Brazil.

Professional Activities Attended

Short courses

April - June 2009. 'Baroque Interiors', V&A, London. This course explored art and architecture, between 1600 and 1750, in Versailles and Hampton Court. It inspired much of the work I developed at the following academic year, and established a long-term love relationship with the V&A collection.

Conferences and talks

July 2009, University of Chester, 'The Art of Appropriation & Kurt Schwitters in England: Authenticity, Reproduction, Simulation'. The conference brought together artists, lecturers and art historians to discuss appropriation in contemporary art and its implications. I was introduced to David Evans (responsible for the editing of the Whitechapel book *Appropriation*)

Exhibitions and other public art events

Futurismo, Tate Modern

Walking in the mind, Hayward Gallery

Mark Wallinger: The Russian Linesman, Hayward

Venice Biennale, Venice

Colour Chart: Reinventing Colour, 1950 to Today, Tate Liverpool

Annette Messenger: The Messengers, Hayward

Rodchenko & Popova: Defining Constructivism, Tate Modern

Roni Horn aka Roni Horn, Tate Modern

Altermodern: Tate Triennial, Tate Britain

Francis Bacon, Tate Britain

Cildo Meireles, Tate Modern

Rothko, Tate Modern

Lulu, ENO, Opera

The Cunning Little Vixen, Leo Janacek. Royal Opera House

Travels

Southampton, Granada, Venice and Brasilia

Brief notes about exhibitions

- My disappointment with Yayoi Kusama's installation at Hayward Gallery (*Walking in the Mind*, 2009) made me realize that immersive installations, with few exceptions, are normally a frustrating experience for me. They tend to leave no lasting impression.

The nonlinear narrative strategies of montage and chance pioneered by Dada and Surrealism are so crucial to deconstructive art that it is possible to argue that installation art that engages in pure sensation without a nonlinear narrative dimension is not deconstructive; it becomes, instead, akin to 'retinal' art. (Coulter-Smith, 2006)

- Churches, or mosques, are immersive environments that inspire contemplation and mystic thoughts. Can installation art provoke the same? I can think of video-installations, Land Art, and architectural installations like the *Weather Project*. It is hard to think of other kinds of immersive environments that are not easily consumable.
- Scenery can be very powerful but the experience it gives us is different from that of an installation. In a theatre, space is *represented* for the viewer; in an installation space is *presented*.

YEAR II - 2009/2010

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Exhibitions

June 2010, AVA Gallery, UEL, London. End of the year doctoral show

Feb. 2010, AVA Gallery, UEL, London. Mid- term doctoral show

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES ATTENDED

Courses

April/June 2010, Victoria & Albert Museum, 'Cabinets of Curiosity to Galleries of Modern Art: Cultures of Collecting'. The course examined the history of collectors and collecting from the early days of cabinets of curiosities to today's museums/galleries of contemporary art.

March 2010, Whitechapel Gallery, 'How to Make an Exhibition'. This day long course outlined the working practice of Whitechapel's gallery management, from planning logistic to installation, problem-solving and conservation.

Sep./Dec. 2009, AVA, UEL, Painting and Sculpture's workshops

Conferences and talks

May 2010, Tate Britain, 'The Contingency of Curation'. The conference took up three themes of curatorship as the framework for the discussions: the autonomous curator, collaboration and authorship, and the curator as the agent of change.

May 2010, Tate Britain, 'Beyond the Academy: Research as Exhibition'. Conference discussing what new forms of research and collaboration can bring to the concept and curatorship of exhibitions. (*Is the idea of exhibition being distorted or creatively extended by research?*)

March 2010, British Museum, 'The Parthenon Sculptures'. Talk on the history of the Parthenon sculptures in the British Museum.

October 2009, Tate Modern, 'Good business is the best art'. One day debate led by Alison Gingeras, curator of the exhibition *Pop life, Art in a Material World*.

Exhibitions and other public art events

Apart from the V & A and the British Museum, which I visited many times, I attended the following exhibitions:

Nairy Baghramian and Phyllida Barlow, Serpentine

Van Doesburg, The International Avant-Garde: Constructing a New World, TM

Brian Eno's 77 Million Paintings, Fabrica, Brighton,

Conquest of the Useless, Rachel Harrison, Whitechapel Gallery

Victoria & Albert, Love and Art, The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace

Fodasefoice, Nuno Ramos, Gallery 32, Brazilian Consulate in London

The Real Van Gogh, The Artists and his Letters. Royal Academy of Art

New Paintings, Daniel Senise, Gallery 32, Brazilian Consulate in London

The Concise Dictionary of Dress, Blythe House

Contínuos, Ana Maria Maiolino, Camden Art Centre

After, Ângela de la Cruz, Camden Art Centre

The Edges of the World, Ernesto Neto, Hayward Gallery

Richard Hamilton, Serpentine

The Science of You: Music, Science Museum Lates

Decode, Digital Design Sensations, Victoria & Albert Museum

Chris Ofili, Tate Britain

Henry Moore, Tate Britain

The Empire Strikes Back, Indian Art Today, Saatchi Gallery

Design Real, Serpentine

The Museum of Everything # 1

50 years of painting - Ed Ruscha, Hayward Gallery

No Love Lost, Blue Paintings, Damien Hirst. Wallace Collection

Studiowork, Eva Hesse. Camden Art Center

Ori Gersht New Photographs, Mummery + Schnelle

The Nature of the Beast, Goshka Macuga, Whitechapel Gallery

Tirol Folk Art Museum, Innsbruck, Austria

Fridericianum Museum, Kassel, Germany

Laszlo Moholy-Nagy Retrospective, Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Germany

Pure Beauty, John Baldessari, Tate Modern

Blue Circle, Steve Mace, White Nights, Brighton

Passing thoughts and making plans, curated by Catherine Yass. Jerwood Visual Arts

Turner Prize 2009. Tate Britain

Abstract America, New Painting and Sculpture. Saatchi Gallery

Pop life, Art in a Material World. Tate Modern

Anish Kapoor, Royal Academy of Art

DX Flux do-it-yourself-art-centre, Old Police Station, Deptford

Jeff Koons: Popeye Series. Serpentine

Billy Budd, Benjamin Britten. Glynbourne Opera House

Satyagraha, Philip Glass. English National Opera

Le Gran Macabre, Gyorgy Liggeti. English National Opera

The Caretaker, Harold Pinter. Trafalgar Studio 1

Enron, Noel Coward Theatre

Lucia de Lammermoor, Donizetti. English National Opera

Ravel's Bolero, Copyright Free Night. Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich

Travels

Frankfurt, Kassel, Innsbruck, Zurich, Venice, Sintra, Evora and Paris.

Brief notes about exhibitions

- Anish Kapoor's exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts provoked a 'wow' moment but the exhibition didn't inspire me. I think it was the size. I left, promising myself I would never make anything monumental.

To make a big splash in the global pond of spectacle culture today you have to have a big rock to drop. (Foster, 2001)

- Eva Hesse's exhibition was a counterpoint to Anish Kapoor's. It was hard to tell if the objects exhibited at Camden Art Centre were experiments or finished pieces. They were pieces found at her studio at the time of her death. I simply loved it. It helped to see my experiments in the studio under a different light.

- Baroque art is a game of illusions and excess. In many contemporary appropriations of baroque aesthetic the works are too obviously keen to seduce. I would like to find a balance for this problem in my own work
- Damien Hirst was invited to discover works in the Wallace collection which ignited his imagination and to work from them. Responding to a given subject is a way of working that suits my imagination.
- In 2009/2010, I 'discovered' Henry Moore, John Baldessari, Ed Ruscha, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy and Eva Hesse.
- 'I think of all my paintings as book covers The title of my art works is very important to me - Sometimes as important as the work itself' (Ruscha, no date)
- 'I like to play with images and objects in the room to kind of orchestrate the viewer's encounters. It is important that interpretation is slowed down' (Skier, 2009)
- In Jeff Koon's *Popeye* series, many of the images in the paintings came from his 3D work. I liked this circulation of visual information from one media/format to another. He is now appropriating from his own work.
- Extracted from a text about Richard Hamilton, at Serpentine, 2010: 'His work raises questions about the authenticity of images, often pairing the real with the simulated' [...]. Richard Hamilton is an artist fascinated by the history of visual forms and styles of representation.'
- Western culture can be viewed as a collection of collections.
- Although I liked the curatorial idea behind the Museum of Everything #1 (they invited established artists to select their favorite work/artist from a collection of outsider art), I was frustrated. There was a general mood of hyping the exhibition, but a lot of what I saw there did not interest me.
- Looking at the collection of the Science Museum, I realized the British industrial revolution forged our modern world through the objects it invented, made and used.

- Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's retrospective in Frankfurt was one of the most important exhibitions I visited. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Having never seen any of his work before, I was completely impressed by the quality of it, in all of the media he worked with. At the same exhibition I had the opportunity to entering his *Room of Today*, a 'gallery display of contemporary art and design' which had never been built before 2009; this installation-like exhibit brought together many of Moholy-Nagy's theories about art, objects, design, photography and film. I identified with his energy and his attitude of not giving preference to a certain medium or activity, as well as his avoidance of exaggerated specialization – he was always involved in many different projects and working with more than one medium at a time.

YEAR III – 2010/2011

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Exhibitions

June 2011, AVA Gallery, End of the year doctoral show

June 2011, *Object Oriented*, Leighton Space, London

March, 2011, AVA Gallery, Mid- term doctoral show

Homage

April 2011, *Projeto Fora do Eixo Vol 3*, Brasilia, Brazil. Ten days of a national event of urban intervention and art. I received a special acknowledgment at the opening, as one of the co-founders and organizer of the original event.

Curatorship

July/September 2010 - Curatorship of a solo exhibition of photography in Brazil: *Uma Viagem Entre Duas Historias de Amor*, Cicero Bezerra, CAL, Brasilia, Sept. 2010 (Appendix 1, figures XIV and XV)

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES ATTENDED

Courses

January 2011, 'Website for Artists', Space Studios, A two day workshop to help artists build their own websites (www.giselacondazevedo.com).

November 2010, V & A. Consultation about synthetic materials with Dr Brenda Keneghan, Polymer Scientist from the Conservation Department.

October/September 2010, Photoshop Skills, V & A -. An eight weeks workshop to improve my understanding of Photoshop tools.

August / July 2010, Victoria & Albert Museum - *Architectural Design with Sketch-Up*. A 3 days workshop to learn how to digitally create a 3D architectural model using Google SketchUp.

June 2010, 'Installation as Laboratory', V & A. Workshop with Finnish-Norwegian architects Rintala Eggertsson. The event was related to *Small Places*, a V&A exhibition of seven installations using the landscape of the Museum as a test site.

- The curator of *Small Places* said that as a curator she could not just behave as an artist, as she had to be able to step-out: 'Artists are invited to dive in, curators are invited to link the artist to the public' (there are as many ways of being a curator as of being an artist. To me curatorship is about selection; art is about selection)

Conferences and talks

February 2011, 'What is an Object?' Freud Museum, London. A one day conference which brought together psychoanalysts, artists and anthropologists to talk about their understanding of what an object is.

- Cornelia Parker was the invited artist. She showed some of her past work, where she transformed everyday objects by crushing or exploding them. She said it had nothing to do with destruction, but with her fascination for how change can create something completely new. I think that what she calls change is what I

call action. However, change suggests a more passive kind of intervention than action does. Perhaps that's because she mainly orchestrates the changes while to me it is very important to be physically involved with transforming the objects.

- Parker works with objects which are loaded with associations, such as Freud's cigar. I wonder if she finds it essential to work with the original. Could it be a replica?

'An object is a very familiar thing and that is what I love about working with them: I like to work with clichés.' (Parker, 2011)

February 2011, 'Home and Abroad: a project of residence in Portugal', Gaswork, London. Talk about Gaswork/Triangle's project involving British and Portuguese artists.

February 2011, 'Screen Dance Symposium 2011', University of Brighton. Day meeting with the community of screen dance practitioners, researchers, students and artists interested in explore current debates and concerns.

- There was a lot of discussion as to whether screen dance was just mediation, a simulacrum of dance, which was expected to be about real presence. 'How can a film add to a theatrical event rather than diminish it? Theater has a live quality.'

December 2010, 'The Trouble With Curating', ICA, London, Symposium. How has the role of the curator developed and, as the boundaries are increasingly blurred between the artist and the curator, is there a fundamental difference of position between them?

November, 2010 – 'Tea with Anthony Caro'. Talk with the artist.

- The artist was keen to emphasize that all the models were made after the sculptures and not the opposite. At the museum where I work we use scale models the whole time as tools for exhibition design, a practice I have brought to my work with installations. Is there really a limit to the level of control we can exert over an art work without compromising it?

October 2010, 'Susan Stockwell: In the Studio'. Talk with the artist.

'Painting is more transparent than sculpture; it takes us back to the subject; it is more direct than making objects; in the process of making objects you can lose yourself where in painting is more like a confront zone: losing/finding yourself.'
(Stockwell, 2011)

July, 2010, 'Forgery in Art', Philip Mould Fine Paintings - Talk. Philip Mould Ltd specialises in British art and Old Masters from 1500 to the present day, with a particular emphasis on historical portraits and portrait miniatures.

Exhibitions and other public art events

Modern British Sculpture, Royal Academy of Art

Gabriel Orozco, Tate Modern

Susan Hiller, Tate Britain

4th Annual Exhibition of Korean Artists in London, Bargehouse, Oxo Tower Wharf

Contemporary Eye Crossovers, Pallant House Gallery, Chichester

Move Choreographing You – South Bank

Musee Magritte Museum's collection, Brussels

New Contemporaries 2010, ICA

Lamentations, by Rachel Kneebone. White Cube, Hoxton

The Reykjavík Art Museum, Reykjavík

Museum of Childhood, London

Horniman's Museum, London

The Geffrye Museum of the Home, London

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, Hastings

Frieze Art Fair, Regent Park

Things, Wellcome Collection

The Surreal House , Barbican, London

Sir Peter Blake Collection Museum of Everything,

Gauguin Maker of Myth Tate Modern

Egyptian Museum, Cairo

Kupferstichkabinett: Between Thought and Action, White Cube, Hoxton

Introspective Retrospective Tomoko Takahashi, De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill

Francis Alys, A Story of Deception - Tate Modern

Turner Prize 2010, Tate Britain

Newspeak: British Art Now – part One, Saatchi Gallery

Italian Renaissance Drawings, British Museum

The New Décor: artists & interiors, Hayward Gallery

Hackney Wicked Festival, Hackney Wick

The Red Pavilion, Serpentine:

The Children's Hour, Play, Comedy Theatre

Blue Dragon, Barbican, multimedia spectacle.

Tanhauser, Opera, Royal Opera House

Jose Carreras Gala Concert, Opera, Royal Albert Hall

A Dog's Heart, Opera, London Coliseum

Nearly Ninety, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Barbican

Pelleas and Mellisande, Opera, Holland Park Opera

The Great Game, Play, Tricycle Theatre

Travels

Cairo, Luxor, Reykjavík, Brussels, Brasilia and Hastings

Brief notes about exhibitions

Modern British Sculpture, Royal Academy of Art, 2011

- This was the first survey of sculpture I have ever seen. The juxtaposition of modernist sculptures and Native American, Indian, and African pieces borrowed from the British Museum and the V&A, was both didactic and inspiring.
- I had the impression curators weren't very sympathetic towards contemporary art. After Anthony Caro's *Early One Morning* room, the exhibition became chaotic. I needed to make an effort to finish the exhibition. .
- Carl Andre's arrangement of fireplace bricks (*Equivalent VIII*, 1966) is a formal statement not an expression.
- My favourite piece was Naum Gabo's sculpture *Construction: Stone with a Collar* (Appendix 1, image XVII). A moving object. It taught me to look at stones. It inspired the piece *Material and Culture* (p.56)

Frieze Art Fair, Regent Park, 2010

- 'Art can define ultimate states of being in a more responsible way than economics because art is concerned with philosophy as well as with marketplace'. (Koons, 1992, p. 37)
- This was my first art fair. I approached the fair with curiosity rather than suspicion. To begin with, I was surprised by the huge queues and the presence of the Deutsche Bank. Inside, I found its format more enjoyable than biennales, which are too monumental.
- The way the galleries were categorized by country of origin shaped my experience of the event, as I kept trying to match my ideas of a nationality to the quantity, the size and the quality of its galleries.

- Small thoughts: American galleries like big works; I wish I had done Damien Hirst's dot paintings; there was a horrible Tapies from 2010. When I first looked at it I thought: 'There are so many bad artists copying Tapies'; many British artists are in American galleries; Brazil had more galleries than Portugal and Spain together; I loved David Hockney's ink prints; how come terrorists never thought of putting a bomb in an art fair?; Polish artists love gory images - taste or trauma?; I saw some paintings by Paul Morrison, one of the few painters, along with me, selected for the New Contemporary 1997. I miss painting; not many painting at the fair, and not many women artists either; there is a boom of objects (shall I call them sculptures?); the best work was a very small portrait, by Peter Doig.

YEAR IV– 2011/2012

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Exhibitions

August, Museu do Trajo, Viana do Castelo, Portugal. Intervention (forthcoming)

July to Sept, Hastings Museum. Intervention (forthcoming)

June, AVA Gallery, End of the year doctoral show (forthcoming)

March 2012, AVA Gallery, Mid- term doctoral show

Museum Intervention (*re-Discoveries*)

This project (Appendix 2) is a collaboration between myself and the British artist Rachel Cohen with two European museums. Our aim is to create dialogues between their collections and the artworks that we will make, establishing a kind of artistic town-twinning.

We will be working in museums in two maritime towns, Hastings, in England, and Viana do Castelo, in Portugal. Both towns have histories relating to their coastal locations, Hastings is known for the Norman Conquest and then as a fishing port, Viana do Castelo as a port and naval base where voyages to the Americas set sail.

Themes that are central to the identity of these towns are also universal: the sea, travel and boats. Also, museums all over Europe are a product of a colonial past that began with 'voyages of discovery' by sea.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES ATTENDED

Conferences and talks

Dec. 2011, 'The Real World: Working with Collections'. Whitechapel Gallery. The talk looked at different models and methodologies undertaken by artists working with collections. It included presentations by the curator of temporary exhibitions at the Wellcome Collection and the artist responsible for the curatorship of *Charmed Life: The Solace of Objects*, an exhibition that was concurrently at the Wellcome Collection.

November 2011, 'Displaying Fashion', V&A. Talk focused on new ways of displaying fashion.

October, 2011. 'Tableau: Painting Photo Object', Tate Modern – This two day symposium, which brought Michael Fried and Jean- Francois Chevrier, along with other art critics, discussed the word 'Tableau' and its links to a series of discourses that address questions of artistic practice, the status of the art object and questions of spectatorship.

- *Tableau vivant* is French for 'living picture'. The term describes a group of costumed actors carefully posed and often theatrically lit. Throughout the duration of the display people do not speak or move. Before the age of colour reproduction the *tableau vivant* was used to recreate paintings 'on stage', based on an etching or sketch of the painting. *Tableau Vivant* associates theatre stage with painting and photography (some scenes of the video 'A Room of One's Own' have a *tableau vivant* flavour, in the manner of Peter Greenway's films).

July 2011, 'Hal Foster at Southbank Centre', Purcell Room - Hal Foster is a writer and art critic who argues that a fusion of art and architecture has come to define a global style in contemporary culture, highlighting the new cult of the 'starchitect' across the world. He discussed how globally renowned architects draw on art to reanimate their

design, and explored the opposite journey whereby architecture has inspired transformations in painting, film and sculpture.

May 2011, 'Futureproof Plastics Symposium', Arts University College at Bournemouth – A one day conference to discuss the impact of plastics on art and design and their future potential in our lives. Eco design and the sustainable use of plastics were threads running through all the papers. The day was held in celebration of the EU funded project *Preservation of Plastic Artefacts* in museum collections. Speakers were drawn from both art and design, and scientific communities

Course

May 2012, 'How to photograph art works', workshop, The Space, London

April 2012, 'Polymer Clay', workshop, London, Debbie Carlton

November 2011, 'Creative Ceramics Workshop', British Museum.

Exhibitions and other public art events

The Stuff that Matters, textile collected by Seth Siegelaub, Raven Row, London

Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman, British Museum

Yayoi Kusama, Tate Modern

Ligia Pape, Serpentine, London

Pipilloti Rist, Hayward Gallery, London

Carte Blanche, John Armleder, Palais de Tokyo, Paris

Yayoi Kusama, Centre Pompidou, Paris

Eduard Munch, Centre Pompidou, Paris

Cyprien Gaillard, Centre Pompidou, Paris

Leonardo Da Vinci, Painter at the Court of Milan, National Gallery

PostModernism Style and Subversion 1970 - 1990, Victoria and Albert Museum.

What the Folk Say, Compton Verney, Museums Collection Intervention

Frieze Art Fair, London

Gerhard Richter, Tate Modern, retrospective

Museu da Ceramica, Caldas da Rainha, Portugal

Museu do Traje, Viana do Castelo, Portugal

Museu de Arte e Arqueologia de Viana, Portugal

Museu de Arte Popular, Lisbon, Portugal

Michael Pistoletto, Serpentine Gallery, Installation

Love is What You Want, Tracey Emin, Hayward Gallery, retrospective

The Power of Making, Victoria & Albert Museum, crafts and design

Jake and Dinos Chapman, White Cube Hoxton Square

Illuminazioni, Giardini-Arsenale, Biennale, Venice, Italy

Joan Miro, Tate Modern, retrospective

Down Town NY: Laurie Anderson, Trisha Brown and Gordon Matta-Clark, Barbican

Museum of Design in Plastics, University of Bournemouth

Einstein on the Beach, opera by Philip Glass, Barbican

Master class (Maria Callas), play, Vaudeville Theatre

The Riots, play by Gillian Slovo, Tricycle Theatre

Broken Glass, play by Arthur Miller, Tricycle Theatre

80th Anniversary Charlemagne Palestine, Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, musical performance

Musica Sotto La Torre, Laura Furki, piano and voice, Pisa, Italy

Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Arena di Verona, Italy

Priscilla, the Queen of Desert, musical at the Palace Theatre, London

Madame Butterfly, Trafalgar Square, opera transmitted from the ROH, London

Travels

Pisa, Verona, Venice, Lisbon, Obidos, Viana do Castelo and Paris.

Brief notes about exhibitions

PostModernism Style and Subversion 1970 - 1990, V&A, 2011, was a survey of postmodernist art, design and architecture.

- Text extracted from the introduction of the exhibition: 'Post Modernism is a mixture of Theatrical and Theoretical'.
- Italy was at the centre for critical practice in the late 1960s, and Italian architects and designers played a strong role at the beginning of post modernism. Post modernism in the arts started with 'functional' arts.
- Versailles and Las Vegas → high classicism and low pop culture were the primary ingredients of post-modernism. The principle of both/and rather than either/or.
- *Les Immatériaux*, a multi-media installation curated by Jean-François Lyotard and Thierry Chaput, at the Centre Pompidou, in 1985, was an attempt to put together information theory (cybernetics) and the post-modern condition.
- Another famous exhibition of the period, also at the centre George Pompidou: *Le Magiciens de La Terre* (1986), brought together artists from around the world, addressing issues of cultural hegemony within the contemporary art world.
- Post modernism is optimistic. It has an elegiac sense of the past that modernism had excluded. It glues together the ruins of the past.

- Bricoleur: someone working with oddments left over from human endeavour; combining hand made with readymade.
- Post modernist art is ‘more like a broken mirror than a window for a new world’
- Main key principles of post modernism: complexity, contradiction and self-awareness about style.
- The exhibition relates postmodernism to the power of commodity and the rising of neo-liberalism. It portrays it as belonging to the past. In according to the curatorship, post modernism ‘died out’ in the beginning of the 1990s.
- The anthropologist Bruno Latour sees post modernism just as an extension of modernism. He promotes what he calls anti-modernism over postmodernism. Latour views post-modernism as an era that annulled the entire past in its wake, and therefore he presents the anti-modern reaction as accepting of such entities as spirit, rationality, liberty, society, God, or even the past. (Latour, no date)

CONCLUSION

Putting together all the pieces of my research - studio, theory, art history, exhibitions, seminars, artists, courses, tutorials, London, travelling, museums - I realize that I have found the 'question' that has been underlying my past and present work. It concerns time and deterioration and how I can respond, as an artist, not only to the fact that everything material will eventually disappear but to contemporary art's longstanding interest in the 'de-materialisation' of the art object.

The doctorate has helped me to identify the inter-related roles I assume in my practice – that of the Organizer, the Curator, and the Maker. I have always used organization and meticulous planning as a methodological tool in the studio to access personal and collective memory. My lists, plans and obsessive re-arrangements are an expression of the urgency to absorb as much as possible and I recognise that this methodology gives my work its particular aesthetic qualities. Organising as a methodology is connected to my interest in collecting and curating. Through my sculptural experiments and my reading on installation and theatricality, I have investigated the web of relationships art objects are entangled in, their physical relationship with other objects, the space they exist in and the viewer, as well as the social and cultural relationships that define them and give them value. Reflecting on my third role, as the maker of objects, has revealed the connections between my work, material culture and consumerism.

Museums and Mass Culture have both been central to my research and my art practice. Coming from a relatively young country and growing up in a Modernist city during a military dictatorship, my sense of history is very different to that of a European. The past to me has seemed almost a fiction. Living in London, museums and art galleries became my aesthetic laboratory. They were the source of inspiration for the majority of works I made during the doctorate. If working with collections has fuelled my imagination, so has my encounter with mass culture. Living in an Anglo-Saxon country has meant experiencing contemporary capitalism at its height. In some of my work I attempt to capture a sense of the desires and aspirations of the culture of consumerism. Mass culture is also implicated in my obsession with ordinary objects, fragments and

cast-offs and I have been led to inquire into the idea of ‘eternal’ value in a world of disposable items.

Finally, the critical success of my most recent pieces, *A Room of One’s Own*, the video with the choreographer Laura Virginia, and *March Past*, the painting commissioned from Tim Weston, has been surprising. In these works I pulled back from the object in favour of a wider context. For most of the doctorate, I have started with objects and then conceived the space around them. In the video I started with a specific space, The British Museum in Bloomsbury, and created a piece which captured in visual form my interest in theatricality, museums, installations and the Brazilian carnivalesque. In this piece questions of gender and national identity were visible for the first time. In *March Past*, I enacted my passion for curation by commissioning a still life painter to depict objects from my personal collection.

On reflection, collaborating and working from a settled ‘space’ allowed a more intuitive and imaginative response to emerge. These works provided the ultimate reflection on my journey.

VIVA / FINAL EXHIBITION

Viva: 31st of June 2012

Examiners and Chair: Tamiko O'Brien, from Camberwell College of Arts, and Tim Allen, from University of East London; Karen Raney, from University of East London.

My final show had the same title as my doctorate dissertation and it was an attempt to turn my words and speculations about objects into visual art. As the installations were strongly connected to my experiences as an art student in Europe between 2008 and 2012, I decided to give them the titles of the places, people or objects which have somehow inspired them. It is was my homage to everything and everybody that have contributed to my artistic development during the doctorate

All the texts were adapted from either extracts I read during the doctorate or contributions I requested from friends. They were intended to give an additional 'flavour' to each installation.

FOR GRAYSON PERRY AND THE CERAMIC COLLECTION OF HASTINGS MUSEUM



38. Pottery (objects and polymer clay) and *Art Doctorate: Isms* (engraved IKEA glasses)

The Potteries of Sussex and Kent

In the early 17th century decorated slipware was imported from Holland and the style was copied by English potters. Sussex and Kent potteries developed in the 18th century using similar slipware techniques.

The most characteristic Sussex and Kent pottery is impressed with printer's type and star punches, then filled with slip which shows yellow under the glaze. Many are inscribed items used for luxury goods such as tea, spirits and tobacco.

The potters also modelled animals including the Sussex pig with its detachable head. From the 1850s the Rye Pottery made grandiose pieces with heavily moulded, naturalistic decoration.

The last traditional Sussex and Kent potteries died out in the early 20th century.

(extracted from Hastings Museum archives)

FOR BRENDA KENEGHAN AND THE CAIRO MUSEUM



39. *Wrapped Objects* (objects and sellotape)

Plastic Conservation: *As we delved further into the chemistries of the various materials it became quite clear that plastics behaved differently and, therefore, must be approached differently to the more traditional materials...Plastic materials generally degrade in a more dramatic fashion than the more traditional materials. This is because the deterioration of plastics has a relatively long induction period followed by accelerating degradation. In lay persons terms - what looks in fine shape one day may be a pile of dust six months later... Finally, it must be accepted that the degradation of plastics is due to irreversible chemical reactions. Although it cannot be reversed it can, given the right conditions, be slowed down.*

(by Brenda Keneghan, Polymer scientist, V&A. Extracted from <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/conservation-journal/issue-50/plastics-preservation-at-the-v-and-a/>)

Mummification: *The earliest ancient Egyptians buried their dead in small pits in the desert. The heat and dryness of the sand dehydrated the bodies quickly, creating lifelike and natural 'mummies'. Later, the ancient Egyptians began burying their dead in coffins to protect them from wild animals in the desert. However, they realised that bodies placed in coffins decayed when they were not exposed to the hot, dry sand of the desert. Over many centuries, the ancient Egyptians developed a method of preserving bodies so they would remain lifelike.*

(extracted from <http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/mummies/home.html>)

FOR NAUM GABO

Conversation with a Stone

I knock at the stone's front door.

"It's only me, let me come in.

I want to enter your insides,

have a look round,

breathe my fill of you."

"Go away," says the stone.

"I'm shut tight.

*Even if you break me to pieces,
we'll all still be closed.
You can grind us to sand,
we still won't let you in."*



40. *Material and Culture* (engraved stones from Iceland and Brazil)

*I knock at the stone's front door.
"It's only me, let me come in.
I've come out of pure curiosity.
Only life can quench it.
I mean to stroll through your palace,
then go calling on a leaf, a drop of water.
I don't have much time.
My mortality should touch you."*

*"I'm made of stone," says the stone,
"and must therefore keep a straight face.
Go away.
I don't have the muscles to laugh."*

*I knock at the stone's front door.
"It's only me, let me come in.
I hear you have great empty halls inside you,*

*unseen, their beauty in vain,
soundless, not echoing anyone's steps.
Admit you don't know them well yourself."*

*"Great and empty, true enough," says the stone,
"but there isn't any room.
Beautiful, perhaps, but not to the taste
of your poor senses.
You may get to know me, but you'll never know me through.
My whole surface is turned toward you,
all my insides turned away."
I knock at the stone's front door.
"It's only me, let me come in.
I don't seek refuge for eternity.
I'm not unhappy.
I'm not homeless.
My world is worth returning to.
I'll enter and exit empty-handed.
And my proof I was there
will be only words,
which no one will believe."*

*"You shall not enter," says the stone.
"You lack the sense of taking part.
No other sense can make up for your missing sense of taking part.
Even sight heightened to become all-seeing
will do you no good without a sense of taking part.
You shall not enter, you have only a sense of what that sense should be,
only its seed, imagination."*

*I knock at the stone's front door.
"It's only me, let me come in.
I haven't got two thousand centuries,*

so let me come under your roof."

"If you don't believe me," says the stone,

"just ask the leaf, it will tell you the same.

Ask a drop of water, it will say what the leaf has said.

And, finally, ask a hair from your own head.

I am bursting with laughter, yes, laughter, vast laughter,

although I don't know how to laugh."

I knock at the stone's front door.

"It's only me, let me come in."

"I don't have a door," says the stone.

(by Wislawa Szymborska)

FOR THE PARTHENON MARBLES



41. Frieze (object and shelf) detail of installation

The Metopes of the Parthenon are a series of marble panels on the outside walls of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece. Fifteen of the metopes from the south wall were removed and are now part of the Parthenon Marbles in the British Museum, and others have been destroyed.

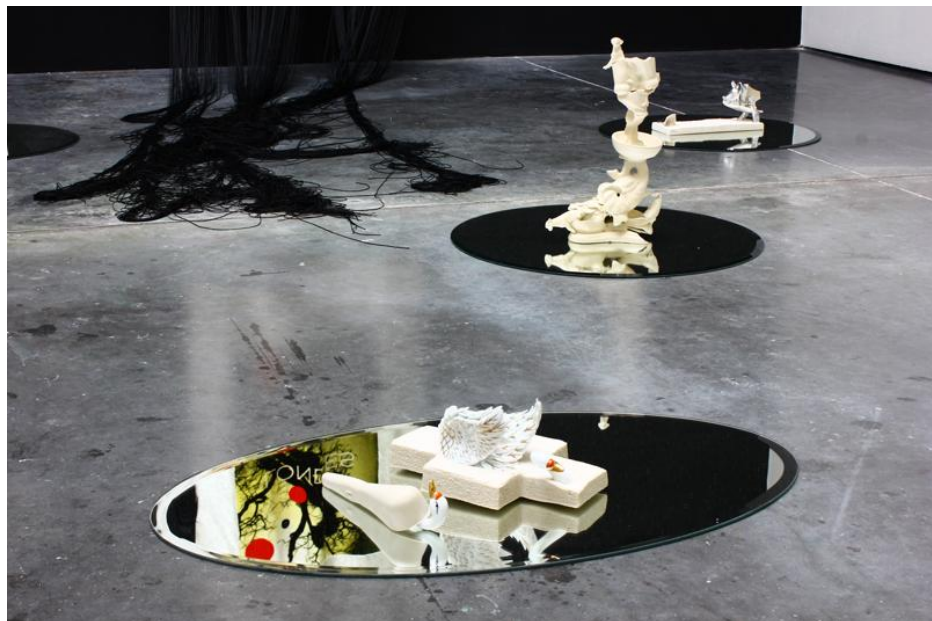
The metopes of the southern wall present the Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs, also known as the Centauromachy, in which the mythological Athenian king Theseus took part. The battle between the Centaurs and the Lapiths broke out during the wedding feast of the king of the Lapiths and personal friend of Theseus, Peirithus. According to one version of the myth, the Centaurs, insulted from being excluded from the celebrations, attacked the Lapiths while according to another, during the feast drunken Centaurs reacted violently under the influence of wine. The result was a fight between the Centaurs and the Lapiths and an attempt of the former to abduct the Lapith women.

(extracted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metopes_of_the_Parthenon)

FOR THE BAROQUE COLLECTION OF THE V&A

In the Baroque palace the ruler ate ceremonially in public attended by the court. Eating was a movable occasion, although larger meals usually took place in a special room near the start of the apartment. At Versailles, Louis XIV ate supper, in public, in his bedchamber. For special occasions the ancient tradition of public feasting continued. The tables were decorated with elaborate sculptures in folded linen or cast sugar, and the buffet was piled high with huge silver dishes and vessels. Every detail proclaimed the power and wealth of the host. Developing concepts of civility and decorum, and the introduction by the French court of new types of food and service, prompted the invention of new forms of tableware: soup tureens, wine coolers, salad and fruit dishes, condiment sets, sauce boats and matching sets of knife, fork and spoon. Adaptable centrepieces were used for the service of multi-course meals à la française.

(extracted from <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/b/baroque-palaces/>, no author)



42 and 43. *Baroque Feast* (print on velvet, sculptures in Jesmonite and mirrors)

FOR CARL ANDRE AND RONI HORN



44. *The Artists Studio: An Allegory of 4 years of my Artistic Life*
(detail: bricks, photoblocks and found object)

A found object

For those who roam the floors, it all starts with finding something. Whatever is there is there to be found. Whatever is found - be it a planet, or the object small-a, or a road, or a pot, or a grove – carries a promise, a suspense, an open future. It tantalizes. Jane Bennett makes use of the notion of messianicity crafted by `Derrida to ensure that assemblages of materials have a trajectory. The found object displays the messianicity of each object: each one is there to save the day for another. When I first heard about the idea of waiting for a Messiah, I thought: how could I recognize the Messiah? Well, they told me, it will be found. This is what gatherers in the rubbish all know: one has to be prepared for the found object, seek for something without knowing what is sought. Like finding the Messiah. The found object could be a tin-opener, a lock-opener, a horizon-opener. A brick. A drop of water. A small statue. Objects transcend their use because they can be found. Not left with their instructions. Just being there. An installation has this quality of a floor, it holds what is left there for the next founder. A source of foundations. Ultimately, everything goes back to what we have found –

*and what we haven't. Because an object – even a brick – can be found,
they are never just another brick in the wall.*

(text by Hilan Bensusan, 2012)

FOR GRAHAN HARMAN AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT ROOM OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

In praise of hoarding

“Compulsive hoarding (or pathological collecting) is a pattern of behavior that is characterized by the excessive acquisition of and inability or unwillingness to discard large quantities of objects that would seemingly qualify as useless or without value”.

(Frost, R., & Gross, R. (1993). The hoarding of possessions. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 31, 367–382).

- 1- I want to understand why collectors are accorded a certain respect in our society, while hoarders are demeaned and disregarded. I believe that discrimination against hoarders can be traced to some of society's deepest fears about the power and mightiness, temporality and infiniteness of the universe in which we find ourselves. I believe that hoarders, voluntarily or involuntarily, express this vastness, while collectors seek to keep it at bay.*
- 2- The order we impose on the world with laws of physics and classifications of the natural world is certainly a fiction and, to some extent, an illusion. For even though we give things names and arrange them scientifically into phyla, genera and species, all that is actually arranged is names and thoughts. Whatever name we give a thing, and whatever taxonomic order we fit it into, the thing in itself and its private relations remain unknown to us. One of the founding activities of many sciences including chemistry, biology, physiology and psychology, turns out to be, to some extent, a game of words. An object is always and imperturbably itself and not its name.*

(text by Tim Weston, 2012)



45. *Enlightenment* (painting, object, chairs and table)

FOR THE ALHAMBRA AND THE HORNIMAN MUSEUM

From the diary of Frederick Selous:

Picture, if you will, Horniman, foremost of the great 19th century orientalist, trained, equipped, pepped-up and unleashed by the good fellows of the Royal Geographical Society, hacking and slashing his way through the tea-forests of Africa. His right hand wields a machete. His left drags a large sack labelled "swag". On his face, a moustache that would arouse envy in the Kingsland Road.

A rustling in the undergrowth is not lost on his exceptionally alert senses. He whirls around and, in one graceful movement, the machete slides into his belt and is replaced by the light rifle that has been hanging over his shoulder.

A figure emerges from the forest gloom and I admit, I am momentarily startled. For its head is a large, square block of wood marked with nothing but two dark slots from which I sense only an acute and penetrating gaze. The mask reciprocates nothing of the expression of the faces of those in front of it. It is a deliberate void. An abstraction.



46. *Golden Objects*(inflatable, plaster and gold leaf) and *Western Arabesks* (photography, paint and objects in Perspex box)

Horniman steps forward with more confidence than I could have mustered and talks briefly to the apparition in a strange language of whistles, clicks and growls. Now this man will show us the way to the lost Alhambra, where he says we will find tiles of great age and artistic skill. By my calculations, the city of Alhambra is well over 2000 years old, and the walls may carry depictions of the extinct Giant Pikachu."

"Of course, I have several of the smaller, modern Pikachu and its relatives stuffed in my collection," Horniman continues. "One sent to me by Wallace himself when I told him that I wanted to present the natural history of this curious creature to the people of Forest Hill. But all we know of the Giant Pikachu comes from a few shards of bone. And yet some of these are so archaeologically recent, that our own ancestors may have known them alive. And it is my belief that we have some hope of finding illustrations of our quarry there, in that long forgotten city."

(text by Philip Jones, 2012)

FOR RODCHENKO & POPOVA



47. *Poker Chips Constructions* (digital print on watercolour paper)

Constructivism was derived largely from a series of debates at INKhUK (Institute of Artistic Culture) in Moscow, from 1920–22. After deposing its first chairman, Wassily Kandinsky, for his 'mysticism', The First Working Group of Constructivists would develop a definition of Constructivism as the combination of faktura: the particular material properties of an object, and tektonika, its spatial presence. Initially the Constructivists worked on three-dimensional constructions as a means of participating in industry: the OBMOKhU (Society of Young Artists) exhibition showed these three dimensional compositions, by Rodchenko, Stepanova, Karl Ioganson and the Stenberg Brothers. Later the definition would be extended to designs for two-dimensional works such as books or posters, with montage and factography becoming important concepts. Rodchenko and Popova were the key figures of the Constructivist movement, rejecting the idea of 'art for art's sake' in favour of an art that participated in the revolution's transformation of everyday life.

(extracted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constructivism_%28art%29)

FOR VIRGINIA WOOLF AND BLOOMSBURY



48. *A Room of One's Own*, video installation of a screendaance, Performer Laura Virginia.

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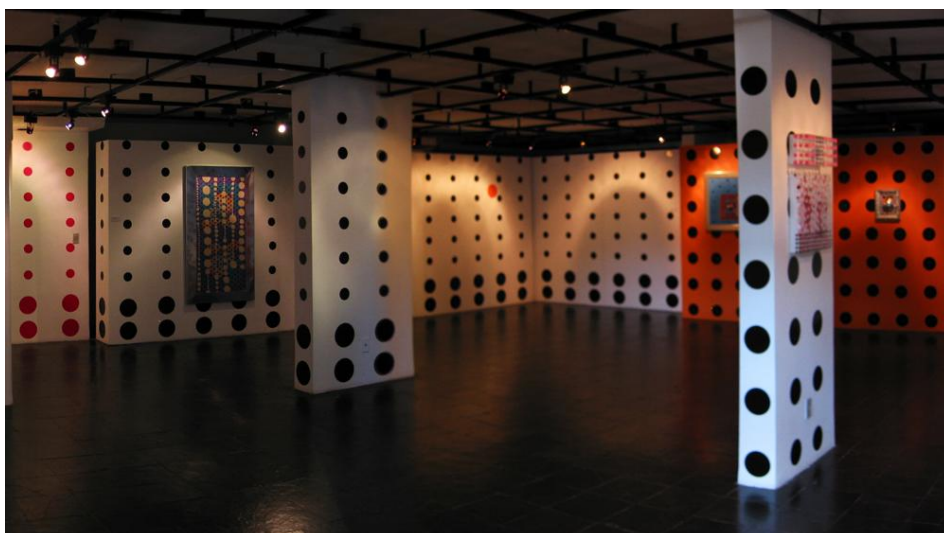
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APPENDIX 1



I. *Besouro*, series *Mother and Child*, 2003
Objects and metallic paint; 22 x 17 cm



II. *Spotland*, 2003, installation, Galeria CAL, Brasilia, partial view
Paintings/objects, wall paint and vinyl cuttings



III. *The Supranatural Art of Gardens*, 20005, installation, Galeria UnB, Brasília, partial view
Digital photography, objects, wall painting, vinyl cutting and synthetic grass



IV. *Self-portrait as a painter*, 2005, digital photography



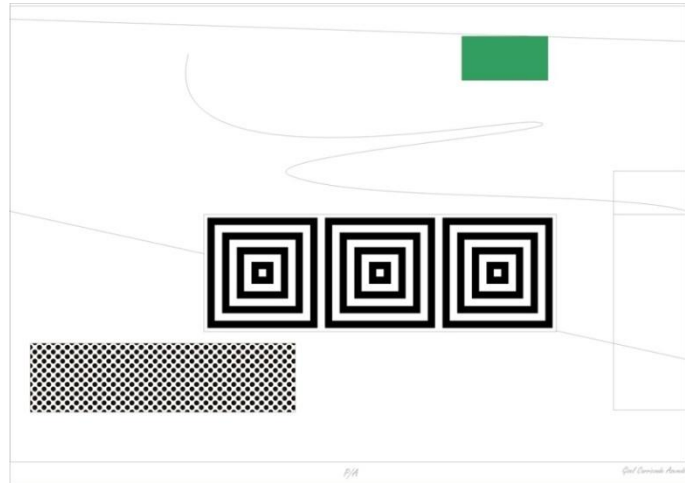
V. *Lift*, 2007, museum intervention, Museu da República, Brasília
Engraved stainless steel (in collaboration with Waleska Reuter)



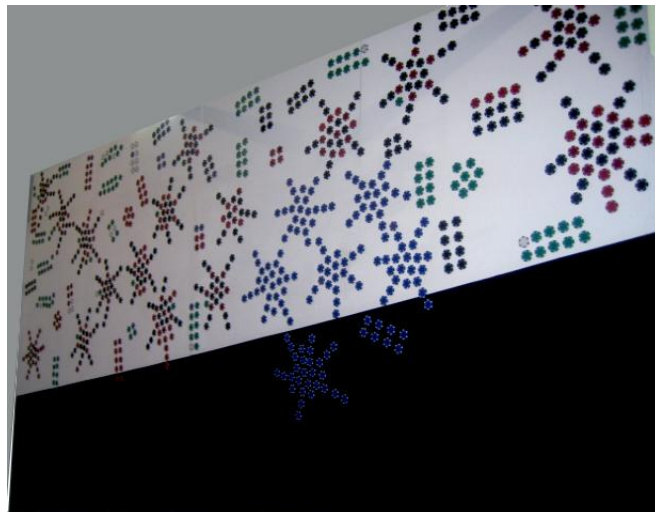
VI *Vizi- Clube Unidade Vizinhanca*, 2008, installation, partial view
Museu Murilo La Greca, Recife; Objects, texts, wall paint and sand
(in collaboration with Maycira Leao and Krishna Passos)



VII. John Armeleder, *John M. Armleder, Gerold Miller, Gerwald Rockenschau*, 2008
Installation, Städtische Galerie Ravensburg, Ravensburg, partial view



VIII. *Poker Chips, Construction 5*, 2009
Digital print on watercolour paper; A4



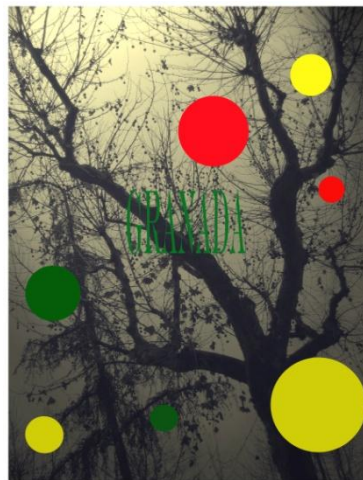
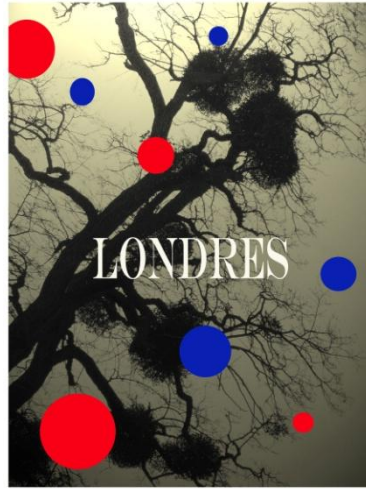
XI. *Play Back*, 2009, Installation, AVA Gallery, UEL, partial view
Wall paint and poker chips



X. *Viridian Green and Zinc White*, series *British Museum, The Parthenon Galleries*, 2010
Acrylic on Acetate; 15 x 10 cm



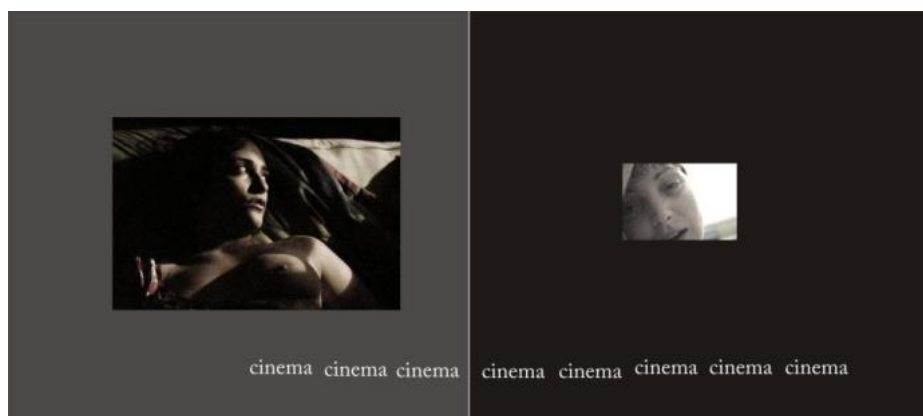
XI. Untitled, photo-block, 2011
Perplex; 15 x 20 x 2 cm



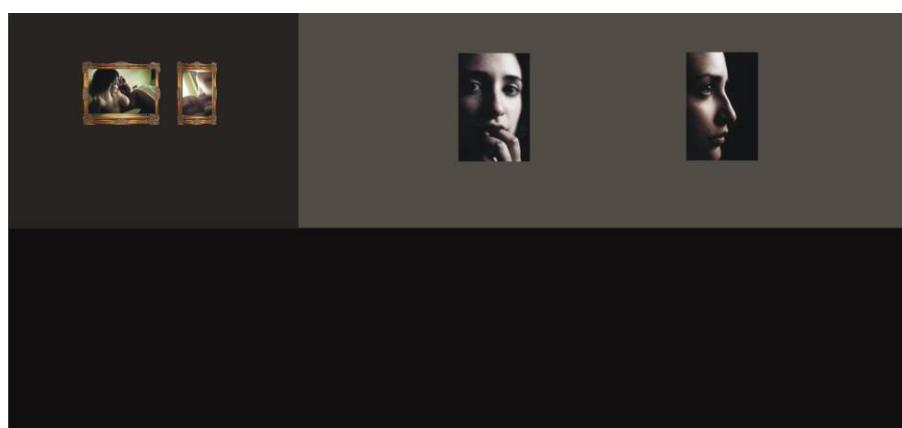
XII. *Series Cities and Trees*, 2009, digital photography and Photoshop



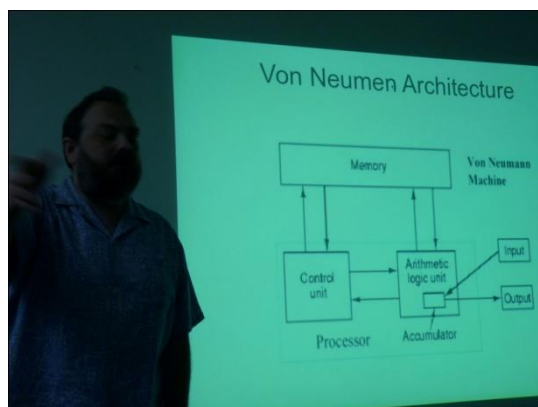
XIII. *A Room of One's Own* 2012, video-installation, AVA Gallery, UEL, partial view



XIV. *Um Viagem Entre Dois Amores*, 2010, study in Adobe Illustrator
Curatorial project, Cicero Bezerra, photography, Galeria CAL, Brasília



XV. *Um Viagem Entre Dois Amores*, 2010, study in Adobe Illustrator
Curatorial project, Cicero Bezerra, photography, Galeria CAL, Brasília



XVI. *Object Oriented*, Leighton Space, London, 2011



XVII. Naum Gabo, *Construction: Stone with a Collar*, 1933
Stone, cellulose acetate, slate and brass; 37 x 72 x 55 cm

APPENDIX 2

RE-DISCOVERIES

Gisel Carriconde Azevedo & Rachel Cohen

In the Hastings Museum, our proposal for the intervention focuses on two collections: the Potteries of Sussex and Kent (image I) and the Durbar Hall, which contain objects collected by Anna Brassey on her voyages around the world in the 19th century. In Viana do Castelo, Portugal, the collection is split between two sites: the *Museu do Traje*, which is a survey of local traditional costume and textile arts (image II), and the *Museu de Arte e Arqueologia de Viana*, which is based on the collection of a wealthy local family and situated in their former residence. The collection at Viana includes local and national ceramics and the museum has been working closely with a local ceramics factory run by a Women's Cooperative.



I. *Ceramic Room*, 2011, Hastings Museum, partial view (image from personal archive)

We plan to create works that weaves together the historical collections of these two towns' museums, bringing to the research our own contrasting backgrounds and our artistic skills and knowledge.

As part of the project, we will be giving talks in Portugal and England (Hastings and Brighton and Hove Museum), and a creative drop-in workshop in Hastings. All events will be focused in our experience of working collaboratively in the two museums.



II. Museu do Traje, 2011, Viana do Castelo, Portugal (image from personal archive)

Part 1 - *Hastings Museum*, UK

We have been working with the curator and the Museum's collection for the whole of 2011. The exhibition will run for three months from July to September 2012.

Part 2 - *Museu do Traje* and *Museu de Arte e Arqueologia de Viana*, Portugal

We both went to Viana do Castelo in September 2011 for a short period, in order to see the collection. We will be there for two weeks in August to create a temporary intervention. We are planning to work closely with a group of local handcrafters who teach traditional embroidery at the museum and a Women's Cooperative that runs a local ceramics factory.

