



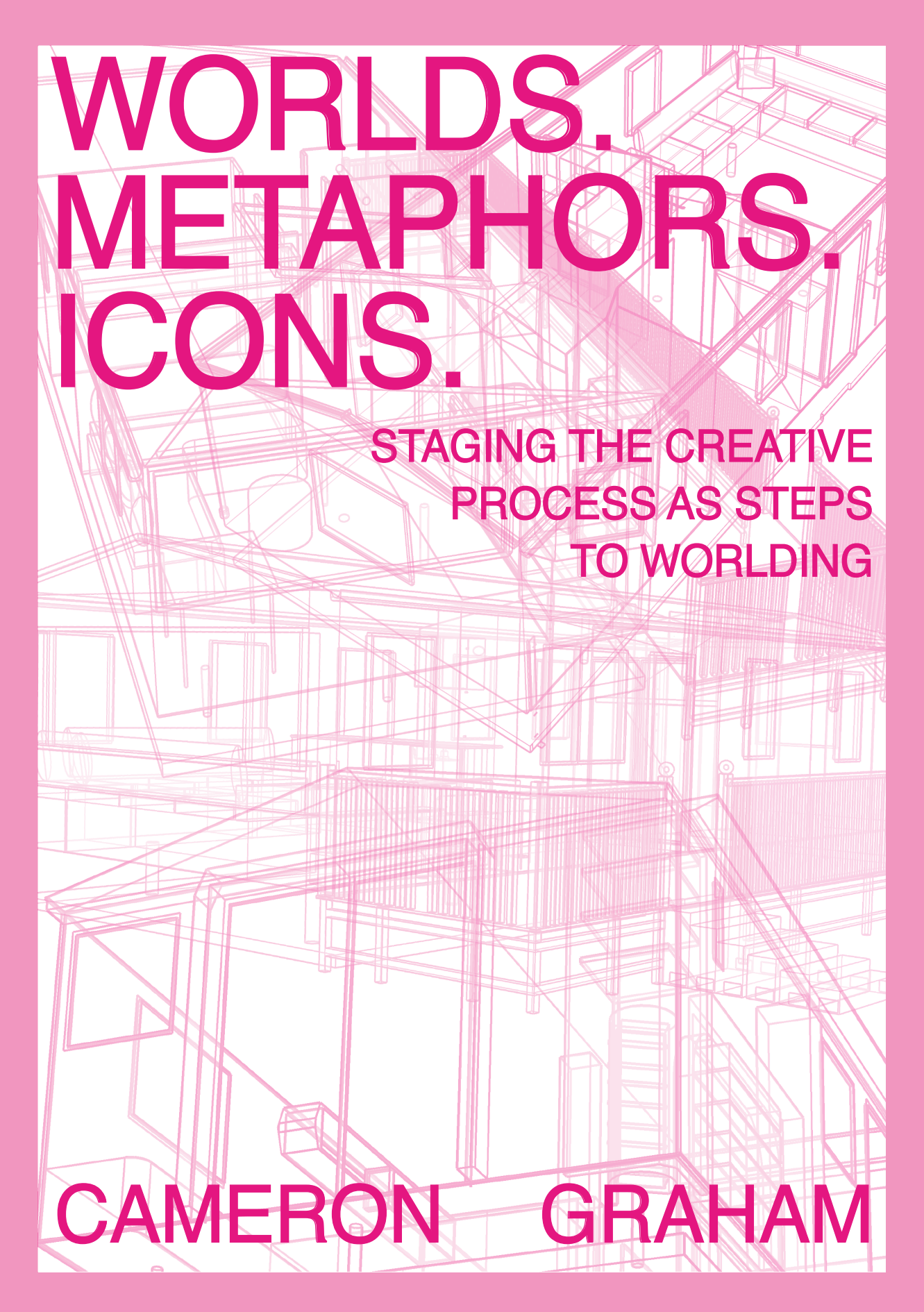
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WORLDS. METAPHORS. ICONS.

STAGING THE CREATIVE
PROCESS AS STEPS
TO WORLDING

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University of Southampton

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Music

**WORLDS. METAPHORS. ICONS.
Staging the Creative Process as Steps to Worlding**

by

Cameron Graham

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2023

University of Southampton

Abstract

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

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Cameron Graham

This practice-based PhD explores three interconnected subjects: novel approaches to staging the creative process, the aesthetic nature and role of metaphor, and the use of worldbuilding methods in the creation of audiovisual art. Relationships between process and product, and the agency of technology in intermedia composition are also explored. The submission includes a portfolio of four core compositions, 3 additional compositions, and a commentary. The commentary first defines and discusses the subjects named above in order to articulate the aesthetic intentions underpinning my work, placing my practice in an expansive artistic framework. The project both plots the trajectory and critically reflects on two key ways my practice has transformed across the PhD. Firstly, from small-scale concert projects to a nebular art practice including methods of website design, exhibition formatting, 3D modelling and printing, virtual simulation design, speculative engineering design, and long-form durational installation. And secondly, from a shift in focus from ‘staging the creative process’ – through metaphor creation – to ‘worldbuilding’.

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List of Accompanying Materials

The following works are included as part of the submission

- *Poet Mechanic V: BUILD-A-POET*
- *Comfort Objects*
- *Lot No. 1517*
- *Untitled, Or, Symphony of Red Bubbles*
- *Untitled, Or, The Thing About Shoegaze is it Doesn't*
- *Untitled, Or, Thirty-Three Confessions*
- *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0*

All works can be accessed through the following link:

<https://doi.org/10.5258/SOTON/D2702>

Additional links to work are included in the appendix

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To Seal Bay Resort (formerly Bunn Leisure). Thank you for letting me steal the raw materials to build my new world.

Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: **CAMERON GRAHAM**


Title of thesis: **WORLDS.METAPHORS.ICONS. Staging the Creative Process as Steps to Worlding**

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

Signature: Date: **21/11/2023**

An architectural line drawing of a building facade, viewed from a low angle looking up. The drawing shows several rectangular windows of varying sizes and a door at the bottom. A large, stylized graphic element is overlaid on the right side of the building, consisting of a dark blue vertical shape that tapers towards the top, with a lighter purple shape extending from it. A solid dark blue square is positioned to the right of the building's upper section.

**WORLDS.
METAPHORS.
ICONS.**

INTRODUCTION

1. WORLDS. METAPHORS. ICONS. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Opening

The following commentary accompanies a portfolio of intermedia compositions created between 2018 and 2022. The project initially focuses on staging the creative process, moving then onto the compositional and aesthetic function of metaphor, intermedia and technological agency and, finally, embedding the previous thematic explorations into a worldbuilding and worlding framework. The project first illustrates the staging of the creative process as an inherently discrete and subtle practice, kaleidoscopic and nebular, housing and nurturing a multitude of extra-musical thematics within concert music works. Following this, the practice of worldbuilding is introduced and defined broadly as an effective aesthetic, methodological platform on which to develop larger, and far more ambitious intermedia artwork.

The artistic pieces and projects broadly channel themes of metatextuality, audiovisual archival and retelling, documentary, liminality, oneirism, kilter and, particularly in the more determined projects, begin to propose notions of open-endedness and, finally, world-building. The latter section of the project situates the practice of world-building as a form of idealised artistic container that can effectively, and harmoniously, house considerably disparate approaches that an artist's work may take. Worlding¹, this project will propose, serves to blend a consonant multiplicity of materials, methods, media aesthetics and participatory frameworks. We will explore how worldbuilding allows the artist to confidently conceive and produce genuinely infinite and open-ended projects that can be engaged on the same terms as more finite, finished and polished projects.

The creative process is not boldly or instructively revealed in my own work, but is instead heavily metaphorized, alluded to, and often more subtly woven into the global narrative structure of a piece that often will not focus the audience's attention explicitly or immediately on the creative process. The creative process, in this project, is treated as an artistic, compositional element with equal value to that of pitch, harmony, timbre, rhythm, colour, sculptural and spatial form. It is treated as a cultural, human phenomenon on the one hand, and an aesthetic material for audiovisual composition on the other. The creative process, as a usable artistic material, is nested as sound, image

¹ The term 'worlding' is used later interchangeably with 'worldbuilding'. Chapter 6 discusses worlding at length.

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and moving image into dense and colourful audiovisual scenographies. Across the portfolio, a vast number of musical and visual media are implemented – from mixed classical, DIY and electronic musical instrumentation, to hand-made and found objects, film and digital simulation, soundtracks and stereo tape, theatrical design, and gently unorthodox performer roles.

The submission consists of four central compositional projects:

1. *Untitled, Or, Symphony of Red Bubbles* (2019) (*Untitled 1*)

Written for trumpet, trombone, bass clarinet, baritone voice, three films and soundtrack, premiered in March 2020. A three-part concert work exploring biographical and journalistic references to my own creative process, this through carefully composed film scenes and composed performer actions. The work moves from self-reflexivity and archive to a pure audiovisual reference to the act and experience of art making. This work is discussed in chapters 2, 4 and 5.

2. *Untitled, Or, The Thing About Shoegaze is it Doesn't* (2020) (*Untitled 2*)

Written for prepared grand piano, three films, small speakers and soundtrack, premiered in June 2021. A type of audiovisual stage scenography exploring metaphorical connections between the work's presented materials – a static caravan and a piano. The work is also the first to introduce traces of worldbuilding in my work. The work is discussed at length in chapter 4.

3. *Untitled, Or, Thirty-Three Confessions* (2020-21) (*Untitled 3*)

Written for electric guitar, keyboard, cello, speaking performer, soundtrack, optional film and 3D-printed confessionals. Premiered in June 2021. The piece stages the confessions of the speaking performer whilst immersed in an unstable, murky and bent tonal soundworld. Both the metaphor and worlding play a crucial role in the work. The metaphorical content of the work also attempts to instigate a more involved creative engagement on the part of the audience, as they are pushed to reflect on their own relationship to confession and confessional acts. This work is considered in chapters 4 and 6.

4. *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0* (2020-21)²

A large-scale concert installation for cello, electric guitar, bass clarinet, percussion, violinist (doubling on objects), prepared tin cans, two films, lighting, soundtrack and scenography. Premiered in August 2020. This work further develops the worldbuilding methodology, whilst staging choreographed musical and

² This piece is not to be confused with *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club Ltd.*, a virtual worlding project in progress – a video example of which is included to accompany the final two chapters of the thesis.

INTRODUCTION

theatrical activities of the musicians. The work sets up a thick audiovisual ambience, made up in part of previously composed pieces and recordings, drawing the audience into a deeply reflective aesthetic narrative homage to the static caravan and caravan site. Leading towards the projection of a virtual reconstruction of the concert hall, the piece seeks to amplify the audience's experience of witnessing private creative activity, reflexive compositional commentary, along with self-reflexive visual simulation and worldbuilding. *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0* is discussed briefly in chapters 2, 3 and 4, whilst being discussed in greater length in chapter 5.

The submission also contains three works composed during the formative stages of my doctoral studies:

1. *Poet Mechanic V: BUILD-A-POET* (2019)

For a solo performer,³ laptop[s], video projection and composer (myself). Premiered in 2019. The first work produced in the doctorate, the piece explores the staging of real-time dialogue between the performer and me. The performer is given instructions to open an online document in which I am typing out instructions to her. First following loose contextual background about the work, the performer is given instructions to build a kind of hybrid sound sculpture. The work attempted to concretely stage the creative process of a performer encountering an instructional text score for the first time. The performer's laptop screen is projected on the back wall, allowing the audience to follow the piece as it unfolds. There is no documentation of the first performance, however the finished text score is included in the submission. The work is discussed in chapter 3.

2. *Comfort Objects* (2019)

For two performers and objects. Premiered in 2019. The work stages the creative process of the two performers of the Moscow based The Same Ensemble as they navigate and interpret a text score given to them less than an hour before the performance. The work was imagined as a kind of publicly revealed, private rehearsal of the two performers having to decode and reconstruct the one-page text score they were given before the performance. This piece is discussed at length in chapter 2.

3. *Lot No. 1517* (2020)

For any number of performers and video. The piece is in two parts: an instructional text score and video game scene. The game scene acts as a kind of score, or experiential springboard, which the performers download, explore and describe whilst recording themselves individually, at home alone. Each recording was collected, with the original video and audio parts given to an electronic musician and artist to remix

³ The work was written for, and first performed by British soprano Juliet Fraser.

INTRODUCTION

in any way they wished. The work was imagined as staging the creative interpretative faculties of the musicians, before giving complete creative agency to another musician to complete the final resulting product that would be presented to the audience. This work is discussed in chapter 3.

The appendix includes other works created during my doctoral studies that were less formative to the main submission. Some of these works are discussed briefly in the chapters of the thesis. Some of the projects are complete, others are in progress, whilst others are planned for the coming years beyond the doctorate. Discussion of the most recent works allows me to illustrate and expand upon how notions of worlding in art and music are increasingly central to my practice, ultimately giving a sense of where my work will be heading post PhD. I hope to ultimately demonstrate that worldbuilding implies a logical type of continuous, inclusive practice that does not necessarily have a neat or finite end.

The considerable broadening of my practice over the course of this PhD is, crucially, not to the detriment of my roots as a musician and composer. I consider all of my artistic output to be compositional – in both the traditional and more experimental sense of the word. Any project, either fully rooted in sound or more loosely including sound as part of a larger artistic configuration, is deeply concerned with music and musical experience. This will, I hope, remain clear throughout the chapters to come.

The thesis discusses each of the most relevant theoretical concerns to staging and worlding the creative process. It is formed principally on the argument that staging the creative process should rarely lead the audience to immediately recognise or understand the work as explicitly ‘staging *a* creative process’. An orientation towards process emerged, exploded, and has endured in a relatively stable fashion in music and art since the 1960’s. The more historic examples of what we will understand as staging a process in art music, particularly in the works of Alvin Lucier, and Steve Reich, married conceptual compositional elegance with experiential clarity and understanding. In the art domain, Robert Morris, On Kawara and Tehching Hsieh are discussed as exemplifying the process-as-product approach in art. Some art works by Kawara and Hsieh, in particular, last decades or longer, involving an almost daily dedication to the expression of a singular (or multiple singular) unfolding process(es). My approach to staging the creative process however is far more disordered and nebular⁴ than quotidian and rigorous. My creative process rarely begins or sustains in the same

⁴ I use the term nebular throughout the thesis to describe the more opaque, fragmented and ambiguously accumulative qualities that are present in my work. The term also alludes to a type of meandering or wandering experience that I aim to impress on the audience when experiencing my works.

INTRODUCTION

way from project to project. As such, the creative works, written content and methodological justification at the core of this PhD reflect this – my work intentionally blurs the lines between the faithful (documentary) and the fictional, the teleological (end-directed) and the purposeless, the didactic and the poetically ephemeral and elusive.

Whilst the process-product relationship is discussed in chapter 3, chapters 2 and 4 contend that the creative process is something that simply cannot be understood or expressed in simple teleological terms (outside, of course, of pure documentary and unedited reportage). I understand the creative process as a multimodal human phenomenon.⁵ It is a volatile and nebular phenomenon that is difficult to reduce down to clear end-directed purposes. The creative process leads both the artist and audience to moments both of intangible revelation, and downright bemusement or wonder. Should *staging* the creative process then, really focus on a didactic documentarity⁶ and dogmatic reportage of what activities and artistic results took place when, explaining how each specific activity faithfully led to the final artistic product? This, in my view, is less an exciting artistic approach than an arid expression of a kind of museological archive. I do not hope to impose a clear and precise methodological outline of how the creative process should be staged (or worlded), but hope more to offer the reader, listener and viewer an enriching journey through several broad but interconnected themes. I offer new ways to consider the role and multimodal nature of creativity and the creative process, the structural uses of metaphor in language, art and the act composition, the agential nature of digital and analogue technologies in the making and world-building process, and, beyond the PhD, the open-ended potential of machine-learning and digital simulation to create self-generating audiovisual universes that demonstrate an ability to morph and grow beyond the influence of their creator.

The creative process in my work is at most made visible and legible – at least palpably referenced – in a number of ways; from the reproduction of layers of scruffy and incomplete sketches, to documenting open-ended routines of archiving creative labours; from pseudo-documentary style audiovisual theatre to far more unpredictable media assemblages; from subtle biographically tinged streams of sound and film, to distant, poeticized, blurry metaphors for making, performing and willingly devoting oneself to the experience of making art. The work is ultimately focussed on amplifying the experiences of struggling and searching for meaning through artmaking.

The work, at times, projects metaphors for making, most of which are elaborated through scored or instructed activities of performers, some of which are more indistinctly stated through

⁵ The thesis does not discuss multimodality in any greater length. However, for a useful introduction to multimodal experience, see Nanay, B., The Multimodal Experience of Art, *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Volume 52, Issue 4, October 2012, Pp. 353–363.

⁶ Day, R, E., Documentarity: Evidence, Ontology, and Inscription, MIT Press, 2019

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image[s], object[s] or sound[s]. The portfolio presents dream-like, voyeuristic narratives composed out of manipulated documentation. Simply, whilst working on the earlier pieces in the submission I attempted to actively document the process of making (screenshots and audiovisual recordings), subsequently including some of the documented materials as audiovisual elements in the finally composed piece. Whilst the more fully formed works may rely on traditional performance contexts or presentation methods to aestheticize the subject[s], across each project I hope to channel the innately child-like processes of experimenting with *stuff*. In and between projects, I surround myself with *stuff*. *Stuff* pesters and charms me, both agentially directing, and inactively waiting, to be used in a period of discovery. A mass of equally playful and serious artistic *stuff* is palpably present throughout the process of musing upon, moulding, sketching and finally forming a project.

In my work, I strive to create experiences of elusiveness, oneirism, intoxication, kilter, sketchiness, playfulness, effervescence, listlessness, bemusement and, most recently, confession, déjà vu and simulation.⁷ I am attracted to these qualities as they invite a more active engagement from audiences. These qualities allow audiences to simultaneously question the nature of what they are experiencing, whilst actively engaging their own personal references to such qualities. Grappling early on with how to connect these qualities, it became clear that the most valuable contribution I can make to the wider creative field is to focus the thematic lens of my writing and creative work more sharply on creativity and the creative process itself.

Even as I write and compose, I am aware of how the act of writing is deeply connected to the practices of retracing and documenting (not to mention the evident transmedial importance of text and writing in the construction of worlds). The act of (or at least strong reference to) writing has, as a result, become foregrounded in some of the submitted work, both for its acoustic instrumentality and for its revealing and referential visual aesthetics/poetics. From the recording and manipulation of typing in three of the submitted pieces, to experiments with sonic transcription in other works, writing – whilst being an imperative act of documentation – has become a medium with and through which it has become possible to musicalise the scripting and sketching of compositional ideas in the final work.

The dependency on technology of an intermedia or transmedia music-making practice similarly brings its own topical interests. I see the computer as both a tool and a subject, a medium that effortlessly translates concept and ideation into ‘concrete’ reality, whilst also being an entity that can be subject to equal treatment as a musical material.⁸ I wish to bring essential poetic qualities of technological media

⁷ I have chosen not to unpack these descriptions beyond this list. I simply hope for these qualities to be understood as broadly reflecting my aesthetic aims as an artist.

⁸ Allowing elements of the work to explore themes of mechanism, glitch, utopic virtuality, human and non-human dependencies, failure and voyeurism, to name just a few. The computer in my work plays a similar role to the tape player, vinyl player, light strip, film or any fixed media technologies, in that in some cases, its use is theatricalised or made a performative element of the work, in extreme cases merely becoming a redundant instrument or allusive visual object. I am

out, whilst at the same time avoiding the work descending into being explicitly ‘about’ technology.⁹ It is principally a desire to render technologies and their specific methods visible and/or audible, this as a way to reveal rather than to conceal, to narrativize the influence of technology on the creative process, rather than to sterilise it.¹⁰ Technological affordance is a key element to developing new ways to stage or retell the creative, compositional process. Since 2018 I have created the majority of my work on a computer. It is therefore highly important to me that the workings (along with the misgivings, failures and lacking) of this technology should also be given a palpable aesthetic place in the architectural assemblage and, most importantly, the audience’s experience of any one piece.

In channelling creative activities and labours more deeply into the fabric of a piece, I intend for the audience to feel drawn more directly into contact with my personal artistic identity and aesthetic leanings as a maker, all the while considerably expanding both my critical artistic understanding and practical skills as a composer in the Twenty-First Century.

1.2 Core Issues and Research Questions

The thesis broadly navigates through five focal subject areas:

1. Creativity and the creative process
2. Relationships between process and product
3. Metaphors in art, music and language
4. Technology, media and transmediality
5. Worldbuilding and worlding

Broadly, the project moves through a number of questions:

- If creativity is a nebular, non-linear and ultimately, ungraspable phenomena, what kind of artwork emerges from staging the creative process?
- In what ways can an artistic work accommodate and narrativize the ongoing preoccupations and processual labours of its maker?

working to give even more of a physical, instrumental presence to the computer (along with the other mentioned media) in my future works.

⁹ The works of composers Stefan Prins, Remy Siu and Zach Thomas and, in some examples, Sarah Nemtsov, for example, focus more on technological mediation and limitation as core driving factors for a musical works wider commentary. The relations between new music and media arts are of central concern in my work, however at no point is there a desire to critique or amplify issues of technology as a form of cultural critique. The work of Joanna Bailie and Alexander Schubert are discussed at greater length in chapter 5, as I consider their approaches to be more similar to my own methodology and practice.

¹⁰ For a far more detailed discussion around this subject, see Schubert, A. (2021) *Switching worlds*. Hofheim am Taunus: Wolke Verlag.

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- How can an individual's creative process be meaningfully shared through being recomposed?
- What role does metaphor creation play both in the receiving and production of art?
- What role does technology and media play in both staging the creative process, and in the creation and experience of constructed worlds?
- How might staging and sharing acts of creativity be understood as a discrete form of worldbuilding?

The thesis is cast in seven chapters (including this introductory chapter), with subchapters and subsections.

Reference is made to the work of other practitioners throughout this commentary. Important examples include composers Alexander Schubert, Joanna Bailie, Colin Roche, Marcus Kaiser, Tetsu Inoue, along with artists Robert Morris and Ian Cheng. Likewise, I engage with writing and scholarship on issues central to my work, such as Mary-Anne Mace, Donald Winnicott, Adina Manta, Ian Cheng, and Mark J.P Wolf. Reference to these practitioners, artworks and scholarship is engaged to place in context, and enrich discussion, of my work.

1.2.1 The Creative Process: Chapter 2

I have detailed key ideas and propositions I engage with in chapter 2, which is structured around three central subjects in and around the interdisciplinary field of creativity studies, a research arena centred on studying the roots, technologies and categories of creativity in the context of cultural studies. I note the key authors I engage with in parentheses.

1. *The origins and early developments of creativity in human life:*
 - a. Childhood creative adjustments and development skills (paediatrician Donald Winnicott).
 - b. The proposition that creative learning and development is a type of liminal process that aids in our ontological understanding of the world around us (Winnicott).
2. *The creative process as a complex socio-materialist assemblage:*
 - a. The proposition that a theory of creativity must be socio-materialist (sociologist Adina Manta).

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- b. Relationships between artists, their chosen artistic materials, and the environment (ecological anthropologist Tim Ingold).

3. *Micro and macro processes of creativity in the arts:*

- a. Recent theoretical models and frameworks that see creativity as a series of cognitive processes nested within larger processes (psychologist Marion Botella).

Creativity studies offer a contextual backdrop to a number of the submitted creative works, many of which explore themes of self-reflexivity, self-ethnography and open-ended documentary, styled as media elements in the audiovisual assemblages. Reflexivity in my work is however rarely made immediately clear, but is presented more as a guided act of seeking, searching, dreaming and imagining *through and in* the musical, visual and performed materials presented to the audience. This, we will come to understand, is precisely the reason that creativity is better understood as fractal rather than linear, as an ungraspable phenomenon, and as a process not of faithful journalism but closer to that of kiltered experimental scrapbooking.

1.2.2 Process and Product: Chapter 3

The relationship between process and product in art is investigated, placing the works of a number of practitioners alongside one another to form a broad typology of processual orientation in the arts. Fine art, contemporary art, music and sound art are given equal focus in order to set context for my own intermedial approach to the process and product relationship. The three main types explored are: process-as-product, process-over-product and process-narrated. The fourth typology is more complex. It outlines a more hybrid approach in which the relationship between process and product is far more ambiguous, blurry, positively indefinite. This fourth approach, I will argue, is best suited to understanding my own practice. I will use the term ‘processual assemblage’ to describe this practice. It is not built out of faithful presentations of unfolding systems or processes, but rather implements process-orientation more generally as a material thematic that expresses the open-ended, unforeseen, experimental and intuitive qualities that the *creative* process itself presents in the artwork.

1.2.3 Metaphor: Chapter 4

The chapter on the role of metaphor articulates and investigates the creative process as an ongoing forming of otherwise unmade conceptual connections and meanings between sonic, visual and, more broadly, abstract and conceptual themes and ideas in artistic experience. The metaphor is both an invaluable communicative construct, whilst also being a powerful aesthetic vehicle for novel meaning making. As such, the metaphor is vital not just to my own work and process, but is studied in the work of other musicians employing metaphor in different ways. The metaphor, I contend, is crucial to what I describe as a shared creative process between the maker and receiver of an artwork.

1.2.4 Technology, Media, Transmedia: Chapter 5

This chapter is concerned with the agential role of technology in the unfolding creative process. Whilst the prevalent role of technology in today's artmaking may be self-evident, this chapter offers specific instances in which technology has been platformed as a subject of the artists' practice. It principally offers a distinction between the multimedial and intermedial, focussing on the latter for its broader potential to engage with the spaces between media, rather than treating media as a final presentational tool. Following this the section aims to elaborate on technological media as irreplaceable narrative elements in the staging of the creative process, and shows how this has been carried out in the work of two composers active today.

1.2.5 Worldbuilding and Worlding: Chapter 6

I define worldbuilding in this project as the creation, nurturing and intentional expansion of intermedial worlds. I approach worldbuilding as activating interactive, often immersive scenes that contain an abundance of physical and virtual sonic and visual elements; some of these seemingly interact with each other, most of which remain free within a explorable aesthetic assemblage. The concept of worlding is introduced through discussing my own and others' projects. Worlding is contextualised principally through the work of artist Ian Cheng¹¹. Worldbuilding and worlding are praised as novel artistic methods for containing and nurturing multiplicities (both in media, and in unfolding narrative experiences) in audiovisual composition. This chapter defines two types of worlding – finite and open –

¹¹ Cheng, I. (2018) *Emissary's Guide To Worlding*. Metis Suns. Kindle Edition

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both in the digital and analogue domains, exploring these in the work of artists, the development of modern brands and successful media franchises.

The works of mine that are discussed in the final two chapters represent the final creative culmination of the PhD. The projects discussed are the initial frameworks in which the two key themes of the project at large are connected – worlding is situated as a natural, fruitful and ultimately limitless extension of staging the creative process.

1.3. Methodology

Explored as a type of ‘research through art’, the methodology follows an ongoing process of seeking out and attempting to resolve the problems that staging and worlding the creative process precipitate. This process, set out in section 1.3. details an ongoing, active cycle between researching, reflecting, making, summarising, searching, researching, and further making. The making of audiovisual worlds is an exigent, open-ended pursuit in finding ways for the audience to enter, engage with, and ultimately, invest belief and trust in constructed multimedia narratives. The production of an artistic PhD project is an equally demanding pursuit in convincing an examination panel of the artistic value of the research media that is presented. Taken together as a whole, then, my creative practice and the accompanying PhD should be best understood as a panoramic snapshot of an ongoing, hopefully lifelong, artistic research endeavour in channelling my own experiences into a growing transmedial world that first offers a useful addition to the broader art community, whilst all the while allowing audiences and other artists to both witness, and eventually append, through their own creative engagement.

At the core of this project is the belief that re-articulating, re-forming and sharing acts of the creative process forges a more immediate sensorial connection between myself and the receiver of the work.¹² This thesis emphasises the ways that my work also strives towards nuanced experiences of oneirism, bemusement, kilter, wooze and other-worldliness. The staging of the creative process is a conceptual artistic vehicle through which a nebular series of non-linear, non-hierarchical artistic strategies are employed. These qualities invite audiences into their own spaces of reflexivity in which they might

¹² Beyond the simplicity and directness of this statement, I refer to ‘immediacy’ as the ability of a receiver to more naturally and easily understand or assimilate otherwise intellectually complex references in musical or visual information – this as a direct result of the music, its contextual presentation, and its sonic and visual content. To counter the Adornoian criticisms of music made in the service of immediacy, this project assumes that the focus on art-audience immediacy has great potential for recourse, revitalisation and reinforcement in 2022. This includes music that is ‘easily accessible’ – tonal, diatonic, ambient, gradual, gentle, luscious and rhythmically consonant – qualities that much of the music submitted in this project demonstrate.

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enact their own creative process in decoding and forming affections towards, and meanings of, what they are experiencing in sound, image, and installation-like transformations of performance spaces. The transformative process of enacting one's own creative process when faced with aesthetic pieces leads to deeper experiences, to states and sensations of allure, charm, curiosity and emotional attunement.

There are a number of methodological models readily available and well documented for the artist practitioner to situate their approach.¹³ I align my practice to two specific methodological frameworks, focussing principally on Christopher Frayling's notion of 'Research Through Art'.¹⁴ The reason for choosing Frayling's framework initially was that it proved the most fitting to my own artistic process (from research through to the making and finishing of a piece). However, as I began to study and draw out the details of this and aligning models, they began to inspire me to consider ways to act creatively *on them* – to attempt to further develop them – this in part for want of more detail in the models themselves, in part to simply explore would happen from a creative perspective.

In re-forming aspects of reality, novel insights and ontologies can emerge that did not exist before. In a manner kindred to speculation and curiosity, supported by a desire to generate new insight, the artistic methodological models below are treated as raw materials to creatively develop upon (to re-compose). A series of models that, in and of themselves, suggest further creative development and experimentation leading to newer models; a type of pre-methodology articulated as a methodological expansion of pre-existing methodology.

1.3.1. Methodology – *Research Through Art*

This PhD implements the *development work*¹⁵ and *action research*¹⁶ models as methodologies that assert and argue for the priority and primacy of practice – the composition and the production of music and art works, led by investigations into ways of staging the creative process, followed by an integration of the resulting music and art works into the later, more ambitious framework of constructed audiovisual worlds (worldbuilding).

This methodological area makes three primary assertions:

¹³ For a broad overview, see: Barrett, E. and Bolt, B. (eds) (2019) *Practice as research: approaches to creative arts enquiry*. London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts; Hannula, M., Suoranta, J. and Vadén, T. (2014) *Artistic research methodology: narrative, power and the public*. New York: Peter Lang (Critical qualitative research, Vol. 15); Adams, L. (2010) *The methodologies of art: an introduction*. 2nd ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, a member of the Perseus Books Group.

¹⁴ Frayling, C. and Royal College of Art (1993) *Research in art and design*. London: Royal College of Art.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See Adelman, C., (1993) Kurt Lewin and the Origins of Action Research, *Educational Action Research*, 1:1, 7-24. Also: Gallos, Joan V. 2006. *Organization development: a Jossey-Bass reader*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. pp 185-201

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- That topics within the academic study of the creative process can be used as stimulating thematic lenses for my own composition and artmaking.
- That an implementation and experimentation with technology and technological media provides novel avenues for sonic and/or visual self-reflexivity.
- That existing models and methods of worlding and world-building (principally in the artistic domain) offer an expanded methodological model that frames and nurtures the developed *research through art* model.

In this practice-led model, action research¹⁷ and action reflection¹⁸ allow an ongoing and persistent cycle between research (searching for/uncovering key aligning works, writings and theoretical models), reflection (summary, evaluation, contextualisation and assimilation), and action (creating, composing and producing). The more global methodological structure is the Research Through Art model. The following sections elaborate on this methodology in more detail, using three core subjects – research, reflection and action – as central nodes within an active and agential creative framework.

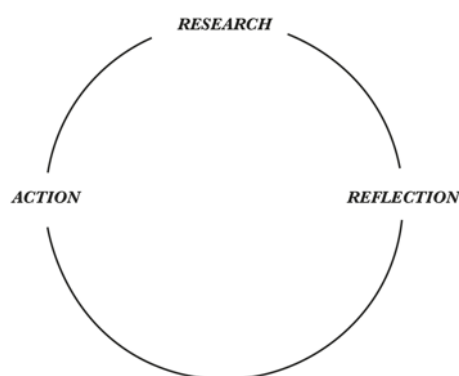


Fig. 1.1: Visualising the *research through art* cycle.

1.3.2. Research, Reflection, Action

Research and investigation form the theoretical underpinnings of a project. Research *into* art typically takes the form of critical readings of literature, and/or an active and persistent engagement with

¹⁷ Action research is a much-documented working process in the arts and social science, in which ‘doing research’ and ‘acting [upon research]’ are held together by ‘critical reflection’. Like action reflection, action research offers a useful insight into understanding how the arts practitioner may confidently and effectively research and create work simultaneously. In action research, reflection and reflective analysis are used to effectively contextualise an artistic work with its aligning research topic[s]. See Burns, D. (2007) *Systemic action research: a strategy for whole system change*. Bristol: Policy Press.

¹⁸ Action reflection is a form of reflection in which – at any given point in the process of learning or engaging with a topic or activity – an immediate, yet informed, decision is made in order to resolve one or more problems presented by the topic or activity, this in order to move forward in that learning or engagement process. See Satariyan A., Reynolds B. (2016) A Reflective Model for Action Research. In: Fan S., Fielding-Wells J. (eds) *What is Next in Educational Research?*. SensePublishers, Rotterdam.

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other works of art and music. Research precedes one or more stages of reflection; of thinking through research findings in order to marry relevant topical elements critically and aesthetically to the planned creative project. Reflection both on and through research findings leads to decisive creative activity (the production of musical and artistic work). Upon the creation of artwork, accompanying written academia is produced – a distillation of swathes of personal notes, earlier written reflection[s] and, more loosely, reports or contextual summaries of any notable creative detritus from periods of active composition and making that are key to understanding a finally produced work.

In short: *research investigation* triggers a *state or period of reflection* that leads to assured and informed *acts of artmaking*.

The Research Through Art model provides a large-scale framework allowing for all communication of elements (artistic and theoretical) within the research project as it has matured. This model has (and continues to) lead back into new opportunities to develop the exercise of research (investigation), the confidence in practice (action), and even the approach to reflection itself, further. Newly uncovered research topics, materials or artistic languages generate two types of reflection: discrete reflection or, more broadly, reflective practice (discussed in 1.3.3). Reflection on the whole leads to the production of new artistic work, and the research–reflection–action cycle continues, this upon critical summary that often leads to new research. Staging and, later, worlding the creative process serve as foundational methodological settings/containers onto/through which a broad range of technical and creative research, reflections and actions manifest as concert music works, installations, audiovisual and digital projects.

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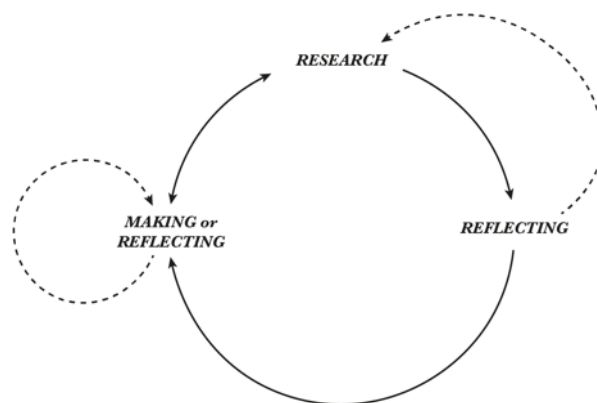


Fig. 1.2: Developing the *research through art* cycle to contain additional layers of feedback. Reflection *on or through* research can lead back to new research before creative action (making). Research also often inspires immediate acts of making without reflection. Making is itself at times an active form of reflection. Making (action) as reflection creates its own nested feedback in the development cycle of a work, this before any new research may be carried out.

When engaged in making art, we are simultaneously generating and experiencing several feedback processes. The predominant feedback cycle can be understood in relatively simple terms (fig. 1 and 2) – enacting research (as reading, watching or listening) feeds into reflection, a state or process that informs concrete artistic decisions that carry the artistic work to completion (which, leading to written summary and contextualisation, leads back into new research).

Almost every artwork either contains or expresses one or more established aesthetic paradigms, as is almost every artwork inescapably bound to some form of conceptual rule[s] or framework[s] – however seemingly opaque, conceptually arid or aesthetically immature the work may seem when first encountered. Simply put: art cannot escape being identified within or alongside a particular aesthetic idiom, nor can art be made without the presence of a driving conceptual intention. With this in mind, then, it is important to add a useful appendage to the cycle (fig.3). The below additions indicate the more discrete (but still considerably potent) processes of aesthetic or conceptual assimilation and development. These processes are of course unique to each arts practitioner; their value cannot be overestimated within any successful creative compositional or broader artistic methodology.

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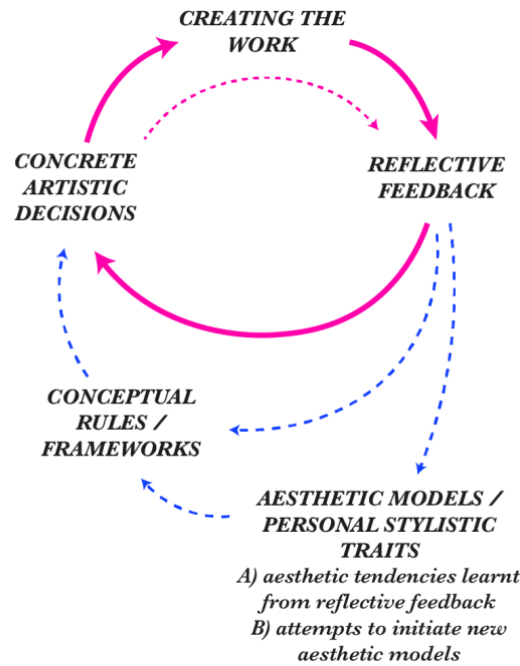


Fig. 1.3: Practically expanding the *research through art* cycle, reconceived here as a simple model for the creation of an individual artwork.

As can be seen above, ‘aesthetic models’ (the more loosely defined sonic, visual or physical aesthetic stylistics of a project) manifest either as *refined aesthetic tendencies* (point ‘A’) that are carried across from previous projects, or as new, *exploratory aesthetic models* (point B) – both of which, in my own work, emerge out of reflective feedback. Often, this stage is a healthy blend of the two; previous or ‘habitual’¹⁹ aesthetic models are suppressed or widened to include previously unexplored aesthetic models. ‘Conceptual frameworks’ (the rules that define the structural and/or proposed experiential framework of a project) develop either through the sculpting of aesthetic model[s] into strictly defined compositional rule[s], or more immediately as compositional rule[s] or framework[s] generated entirely from reflective feedback. In the latter case, the conceptual rule[s] or framework[s] have often been less strictly defining of the structural or experiential form of a project. This can lead to less compositionally rigorous, but potentially more sensorially and aesthetically rich results.

¹⁹ The methods in our working process that we typically describe as being able to lean on; the ‘comfortable’ or ‘safe’ options that we know will ‘work’, these based entirely on previous pieces or projects that made use of similar sonic or visual expressive styles or languages.

1.3.3. Research, Reflection / Reflective Practice

Reflection, as distinct from research, plays a dominant role in the artistic methodological process. Researchers Ruth Leitch and Christopher Day suggest that reflection is “predominantly associated with acts of cognition that are associated with learning ‘how’ rather than learning ‘what’ or ‘about’”.²⁰ If the stage or process of research is best understood as *uncovering the subjects or issues* (the ‘what’), acts of reflection are the processes of navigating the *problems or solutions of those subjects or issues* (the ‘how’). Reflection, unlike research, is a somewhat more indirect, responsive part of the methodological cycle. This said, it can be a more effective element in the cyclical process of creative understanding and production, as indirectness in artmaking is crucial to creatively assimilating and connecting concrete structural ontologies that present themselves in research.²¹

Reflection has been characterised as a state or stage of ‘hesitation’²², ‘mental difficulty’²³, or more specifically as [an] “act[s] of searching or enquiring to find material that will resolve [the doubt]”²⁴.

“Through doubt, comes insight”²⁵

Leitch and Day distinguish between two differing forms of reflection: ‘reflection’ and ‘reflective practice’.²⁶ ‘Reflection’ is understood as the assimilation of new applicable knowledge and intellectual assurances following on from stages or periods of research (investigation), whilst ‘reflective practice’ can be seen as an active, ongoing and persistent reflective engagement whilst making (acting). In my own work, an ongoing reflective practice allows for a balance between impulsive creative action with premeditated compositional preparation – of intuitively acting on new materials or media, or carefully sketching structural forms or teleologies.

If reflection is the key component in solving the problems or challenges presented through research findings, research and reflection then form a kind of entangled binary processual necessity of

²⁰ Leitch, R., Day, C (2000) Action research and reflective practice: towards a holistic view, *Educational Action Research*, 8:1, 179-193

²¹ The notion of indirectness is recontextualised in chapter 4: *The Creative-Process is Metaphor-Making*. In this section, the metaphor is spotlighted as a conceptual and aesthetic construct through which indirectness and allusion serve as artistic materials that, once composed and embedded into a piece, can offer audiences a far more engaged, even participatory, experience of art and music.

²² Dewey, J. (1997) *How we think*. Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications. pp – 12.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Leitch, R., Day, C, Ibid.

²⁵ Caravaggio (1986) Directed by Derek Jarman. United Kingdom, Cinevista (USA)/Umbrella Entertainment (AUS)

²⁶ Leitch, R., Day, C, Ibid.

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the Research Through Art methodology. The research-reflection binary can be understood as the cornerstone of the artist's cognitive and aesthetic experiences throughout and beyond the process of sculpting their practical artistic output. When the time comes to create (act/action), the artist has gathered the necessary skills and abilities to embed aesthetic and conceptual rigour into containers for experiential sonic and/or visual richness.

1.3.4. Developed Model

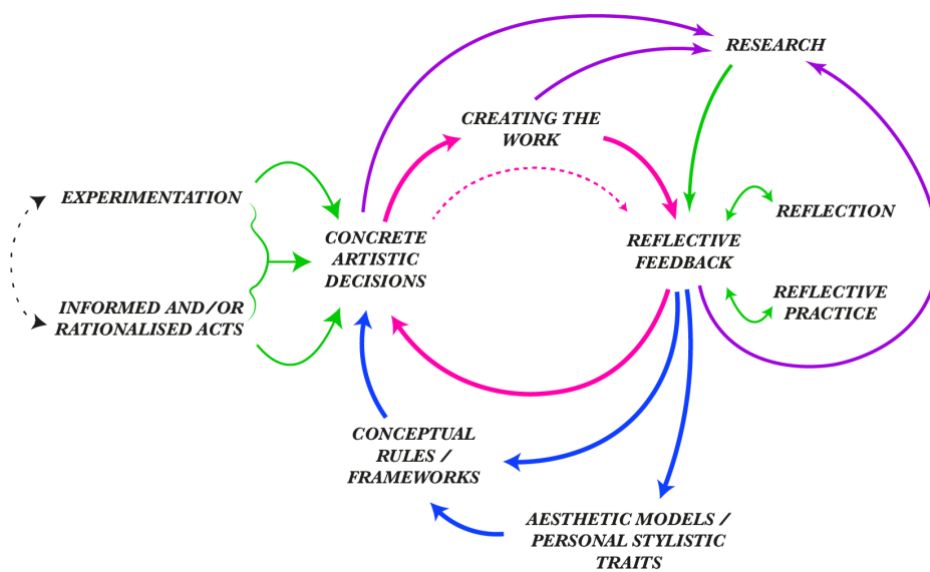


Fig. 1.4: Visualising a large-scale research *through art* model.

A final developed model can be seen above. The final model is considerably more tentacular in its inclusive and enmeshed complexity of methodological agencies. Here, the 'research-reflection-action' cycle can be seen as a further appendage to the developed 'work creation' model from fig. 1.3. Additional nested cycles are present: concrete artistic decisions make use of either informed and more rational acts, or from more typically experimental approaches in which a kind of 'anything goes', improvisational attitude is enacted. The model is created in this way to demonstrate that, at its core, my methodology is triggered equally by acts of making that are informed by reflection, as by research investigations. Research investigation is here a healthier result of art making, whilst of course at times being an initial departure point for the cycle. It is important to note that research is here cued not only through the nested work

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creation cycle, but is also cued by reflection (itself triggered by both creating work and by research), and is cued by concrete artistic decisions that may not lead to work creation, but lead to new research demands of artistic technique, aesthetic theory and conceptual formulation.

Ultimately, research, reflection and action change both in order and relevance from project to project. The resulting methodology places a considerable focus on the vitality of intuitive creativity, whilst making sure to demonstrate the importance of intellectual and academic research in the forming of any reflective capabilities that are necessary to create in an informed and confident intuitive manner.

1.3.5. Worldbuilding Methodology

Notions, theories and practices of worldbuilding lead the concluding chapter of this PhD. Worldbuilding is identified as a practice that is heavily dependent on transmediality, or “the state of [something] being represented in multiple media”²⁷. Given that my work (though principally musical at its core) makes use of a multiplicity of media to express, nurture and connect a nebulous of audiovisuality, an expansion of the above methodological cycle into a type of methodology of worldbuilding is here attempted.

Consider the large-scale model in fig. 4 as a single, isolated creative project. Media – acoustic and electronic sound, film, image, text, stage performance, sculpture, gamified simulation environments, etc. – are not merely passive tools for creation.²⁸ More often than not, media actively suggest or necessitate new compositional methodologies for a project’s aesthetic language and/or conceptual framework, which in turn generate the core artistic decisions inherent to the work’s final construction.

Worlding – in this PhD presented as a progressive instant beyond *staging* – the creative process, enables a type of open endedness of production both in and across different pieces and projects. This open endedness, or ‘infinite’,²⁹ informs a novel cyclical methodology that accommodates and expands upon the Research Through Art model[s]. The ‘Corset Model’ below is an attempt to accommodate both a working methodology for transmedia artmaking (worldbuilding), whilst also betternesting both the *research through art/development work/action research* and *reflective feedback* cycles.

²⁷ Wolf, M.J.P. (2013) *Building imaginary worlds: the theory and history of subcreation*. New York: Routledge.

²⁸ Discussed in greater detail in chapter 5: *Technology, Media, Transmedia*

²⁹ Carse, J.P. (1989) *Finite and infinite games: the chance of a lifetime*. 6. print. New York: Ballantine Books.

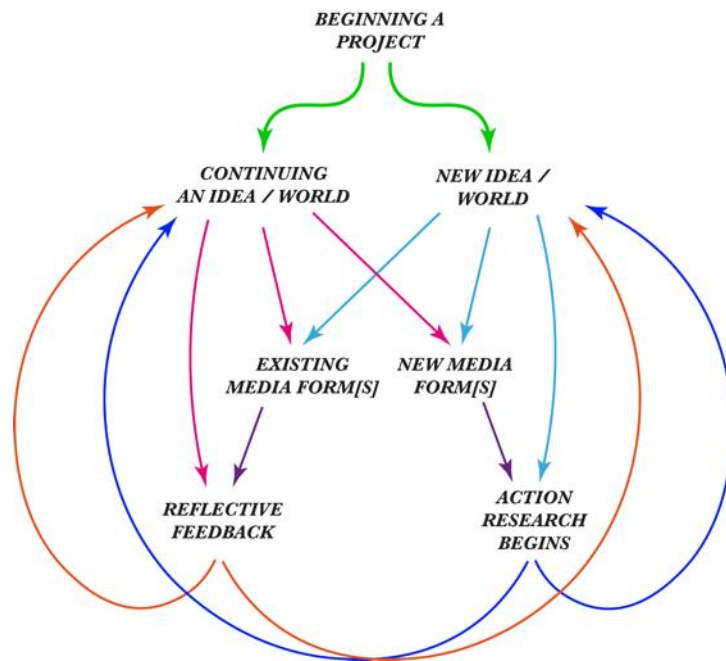


Fig. 1.5: *Corset Model* for either narrative or non-narrative worldbuilding.

Creating a work begins in one of two directions, continuing an idea (or worlding thematic), or developing a new idea (or worlding thematic). From here, a work makes use of either new (previously not encountered or used) or existing (used in previous projects) media. Where existing media are used, a type of reflective feedback informs creative decision making, which typically leads back to the continuation of the original project. Where new media are used, the previous cyclical process of research–reflection–action often guides the development of the work. The latter process happens simply because with any new media comes a new language that must be learnt and assimilated into the existing aesthetic, technical or intellectual armoury.

The corset cycle presents evident crossovers, as very few projects of my own since 2019 make exclusive use of a single media. A new idea, using new media forms, may lead inexorably. However, in chapter 6 and 7, the corset cycle will prove useful in considering the inherently ongoing, open ended, assemblage-like nature of the PhD as a whole. It will also prove useful in demonstrating the ways that worldbuilding is used exclusively in my own practice.

1.5 Conclusion to Chapter 1

Over the course of this PhD, it has become clear that the aim of this work should not be to argue for any single formal methodological framework for staging (narrating, retelling or illustrating) my own creative process. Where my work does draw on additional themes or aspects, it does so hesitantly and loosely, through a removed and metaphorical lens, approaching a concept from a distinctly more poetic, rather than critical perspective.

The practical side of my works place strong emphasis on recording, repurposing, reusing and revealing on the one hand, whilst intentionally mystifying, metaphorizing and even abstracting the processes underlying the workings on the other. Whilst in some projects I am looking to illustrate a simpler, singular and more direct approach, most of the portfolio juggles a greater number of methods and media in order to stimulate me to find new ways to dramatize, fictionalise, musicalize and most importantly, aestheticize the staging of my own creative process. My works ultimately offer a blurrier and manipulated impression of authenticity and documentary, rarely giving a clear sense of direct development from process to product, at times more overwhelming the audience and demanding that they themselves find meaning in pure poeticism and oneirism.

I, at times, find it impossible to plainly communicate exactly *why* or *how* some elements and themes even exist in my work. That said, embracing rather than previously excluding some of the more inexplicable decisions and directions taken has, I argue, served to enrich the experiential qualities of my work. Rather than trimming down, hiding and deleting throughout the process, my work now amasses, layers and saturates elements together into a larger multimedial assemblage. Some materials have a clearer and more logical place in the assemblage, whilst others seem to exist with no comprehensible reason, as richly poetic, impulsively created strands of material that make ‘sense’ to me, but only in a more intuitive way. The assemblage as a multi-layered scrapbook of creative experiments is what is offered to the audience. Experiencing this kind of work is to encounter a number of smaller, loosely connected sonic and visual entities that, meshed together, create a singular, immersive, meandering experience not dissimilar to the inner workings of my own mind when *in the process of working*.

With quiet confidence, I have found a greater ability throughout this project to attune more to micro-moments of thought, flashes of what may not exist yet but can (and will) if I make sure to immediately articulate, document and embed it somehow into the already unfolding process. This working period has also reaffirmed my love and curiosity for diverse media and media disciplines. Digital

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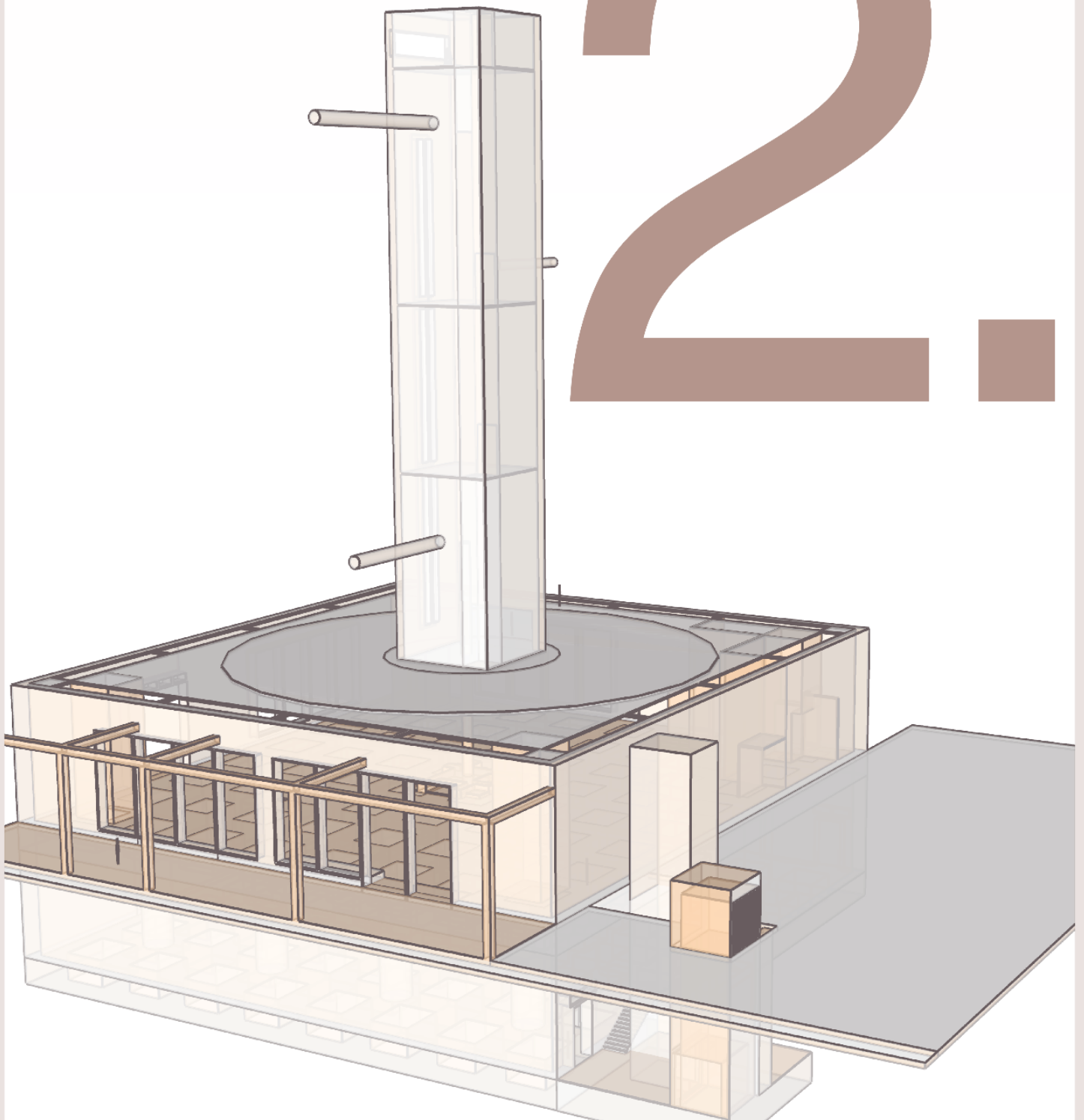
film and design,³⁰ simulation, game design, live and dead electronics,³¹ traditional, repurposed and hand-built instruments, open-scoring, scenographic practices, website design and semi-improvisational materials are welcome to exist alongside each other in any one work. I am trying to better understand, articulate and control the palpable poetic mayhem that explodes both in and out my work. What follows is an attempt to reign in, calm, and channel my everyday creative life into a deeper discussion of what inspires me, how this inspiration manifests and the ways in which ideas have morphed, bent, assembled and settled into the final works that form the practical submission of this PhD.

³⁰ I work (with intermediate skill) across Adobe Premiere, Illustrator, Photoshop, Dimension, Davinci Resolve, the Unity game engine, Sketchup, Blender, AutoCAD, Ableton Live and Max MSP on an almost weekly basis, with the list of software growing on an almost monthly basis since mid 2019. A somewhat raw and untrained approach to using all of this software has only helped me to find novel ways to expand my process whilst learning, failing and cracking the surface of these softwares as I develop.

³¹ I first became aware of this distinction in a presentation given by composer Joanna Baillie at Southampton University in Summer 2019.

CREATIVITY & PROCESS

2.



2. CREATIVITY AND PROCESS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the creative process from three differing perspectives within the field of creativity studies. Taken together, the topics serve to outline a short but broad ontology of the creative process as I understand and implement it in my own artistic practice. In my work, the creative process has been treated as a focal thematic and aesthetic methodological container, within which to compositionally embed forms of reflexive, metaphorical and surrealistic audiovisual media narratives. The following chapter contextualises this, developing on the relevant theoretical ground and aligning specific artist examples where necessary. Several the submitted projects attempt to either stage or foreground, suggest or allude to the creative process as focal aesthetic experiential materials for the audience. The creative process has been, in many cases, an initial point of departure for a compositional project, however it is not the end goal, inasmuch as the work is neither *about* the creative process or attempting to didactically retell the process in its entirety. Creativity, and the many teleologies of the creative process are a persistent reference point that support other concepts in a work (discussed in later chapters). This chapter ultimately frames the creative process as a critically elusive, multiplicitous and assemblage-like phenomenon.

Two principal questions guide the development of this section:

- How, if possible, might we uncover a consolidated explanation of creativity and the way that the creative process functions?
- What of the creative process, if considered as an aesthetic compositional material equal to sound or image, can be composed into an artwork?

Section 1 briefly seeks out the locus of the creative process, focussing on the reasons and ways it is nurtured and refined. In this section, my own work *Comfort Objects* is also discussed for not only stimulating the performers' creative process, but also in triggering the creative processes of the audience whilst in the

process of receiving and decoding the work.³² In section 2, creativity and the creative process are explored as complex assemblage forms – as phenomena built of nested interactivities enmeshing makers and materials, the practitioner and their surrounding material conditions, together in the processual experience of producing art. In section 3, an analytical study of the creative process articulates some of the more concrete terminologies used in taxonomising the linear stages of artmaking in the work of others.

2.2 Flow

The work of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has had a dominant influence on creativity studies. His scholarship addresses subjects ranging from intrinsic motivation,³³ the processual experience of pleasure and happiness,³⁴ along with defining what he terms the ‘flow’ experience central to ‘optimal’ states of creative or productive activity.³⁵ While I largely reject his theories, given his centrality to the field, I contend with his work in the passage that follows.

Csikszentmihalyi characterises ‘flow’ as the experience of complete immersion in an activity, so much so that “action and attention are focussed exclusively in the present.”³⁶ To experience flow, an activity is described as needing to be ‘autotelic’ in nature, i.e., the goal of the activity is quite simply to *be carried out*, to be experienced, or to be exercised – exclusively for its own sake.³⁷ Autotelic activities are wide-ranging. They include informal sporting or leisure activities, leisurely painting, hobbyist craft activities, and foreplay. Importantly, an autotelic activity is intentionally carried out by those carrying out the activity. The development and unfolding of said activity is guided by those actively taking part. In this sense, then, watching a play or listening to a piece of music are not considered autotelic in nature, as they are characterised more through a state of passive receivership. Writing a script, or composing the music, then, would be the autotelic elements of these activities. All creative areas of the fine arts, media arts and music can be broadly described as autotelic-aesthetic activities exhibiting the potential to generate flow experience – for those carrying them out – simply by their being a) autotelic b) often able to retain full, undistracted focus.

³² The creative process of a work’s receiver (the audience) is also referenced a great deal more in later chapters. Chapter 4 describes the metaphor as a vehicle for total creative engagement on the part of its receiver. Chapter 6: *WORLDING* explores the active creative engagement of audience participants in the development and nurturing of created worlds.

³³ See Csikszentmihalyi, M., Hermanson, K. (1995), ‘Intrinsic Motivation in Museums: Why Does One Want to Learn?’, in Hooper-Greenhill, E. (ed.) (1999) *The educational role of the museum*. 2nd ed. London; New York: Routledge.

³⁴ See Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002) *Flow: the classic work on how to achieve happiness*. Rev. and updated ed. London: Rider.

³⁵ Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990) *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row.

³⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 62

³⁷ *Ibid.* Also see Giamatti, A.B. (2011) *Take time for paradise: Americans and their games*. 1st Bloomsbury USA ed. New York: Bloomsbury. Pp. 15-17

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Flow has also been described as playing a central role in the pleasure domain of artistic practice³⁸ – the ‘lost’ hours spent immersed in compositional or other artistic activities is perhaps the most commonly recalled flow experience by artists. The experience of reaching a feeling of conclusion or finality in a project after a long period of focussed creative activity could then be understood as the moment of moving out of, or ceasing to experience, flow. To suddenly be consciously aware of one’s surroundings, as if emerging from a trance, is certainly an experience I do recall in my own practice. In summarising flow, it could be best understood as a type of ideal, undistracted, trance-like state of focus, attention and unbiased (even innocent) pleasure or experiential immersion that is generated through making art – simply for the sake of making it.

I contend that Csikszentmihalyi’s theorisations are problematic for several reasons. Firstly, as Peterson, Baker and McGaw have argued, flow is neither easily reached or attained, nor does flow occur regularly (or reliably) over the course of dedicated, investigative and experimental creative activity – the experience of flow is often prevented if ideal conditions for deep engagement by the subject are not met.³⁹ Secondly, as Giamatti has argued, flow does not manifest in all forms of pleasurable intentional activity (leisurely, non-competitive sport seems to be one of the very few activities that can be described as *completely* autotelic in nature,⁴⁰ as the activity in question must contain set rules, demands that specific skills be learnt that are exclusive to the activity in question,⁴¹ whilst does not present any challenges beyond the capacities of participants, their skill sets and interests.

Csikszentmihalyi states that “for flow to occur outcomes must be significant and determined by individual volitional action; the act must be intrinsically rewarding.”⁴² A dedicated art-making practice is a complex assemblage of undertakings. Creative practices include acts of unresolved experimentation, both rewarding and troubling periods of intellectual and emotional reflection, (often unforeseen) critical revelations or setbacks, along with varying levels of analytical thinking as to both micro and macro details of any project.

The process of making art is rife with experiences of contradiction, failure, doubt, distraction and negation. In short, art-making is absolutely not altogether intrinsically rewarding. Even when the results of artistic practice are rewarding, the creative process underpinning the work often remains highly challenging and open-ended, often beyond an artist’s immediate cognitive or aesthetic intention. The notion of flow is situated as more positively end-directed – a singular, experiential immersion that occurs *at some point[s]* during artmaking, however I argue that it is not a state that necessarily serves productively to the creative process as a whole. Instances of flow, although certainly appearing at times over the course of art practice, do so more

³⁸ Csikszentmihalyi, M. Ibid.

³⁹ Peterson, P.L., Baker, E.L. and McGaw, B. (2010) *International encyclopaedia of education*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Elsevier. pp. 605

⁴⁰ Giamatti, Ibid.

⁴¹ Blasutti, M. (2020) ‘Flow and Optimal Experience’, in *Encyclopaedia of creativity*.

⁴² Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990) *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row. pp. 15

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in discrete periods of overwhelming temporal and cognitive suspension. Flow is a nested part of a far broader experiential assemblage. Flow does not account for the more critical, intellectual, crossmodal sensory processes (experiences) inherent to contemporary artistic practice.⁴³

This PhD focuses on (and celebrates) creativity and the creative process as complex entanglements of cognitive and emotive experiences, less as more innocent volitional acts guided exclusively by the desire for intrinsic reward, optimal experience, or even pseudo-trance states. The creative process is an entangled network of intellectual and experiential modalities, a tightly knitted persistent clashing of problems and solutions, sensory and emotional investigations through media use and experimentation, periods of reflection and structures of reflective practice (see methodology) within, across and regularly autonomous from, artistic projects.

I work within the contemporary art critical, experimental academic field of artmaking. In this, any meaningful sensation or experience of ‘intrinsic reward’ is rarely present over the course of a project. This is not to state that the field of contemporary artistic practice is completely painful or bleak. It is simply the case that notions of reward (or gratification) seem less important than the ongoing search for meaning through making. In most cases, reward comes later on, less as a joyful loss of time or sense of place in the process, and more as a natural response to a long working process characterised in equal measure by pleasure and struggle, tension and relaxation, confusion and lucidity.

The PhD project posits that staging the creative process is a type of seeking out and sculpting reflexive audiovisual assemblages. The earlier works in the portfolio, in particular seek to highlight a shift between revealing acts of making and acts of reflecting, moments of informed decision making and moments of total experimentation. This approach ultimately seeks to frame creative and aesthetic experience as open-ended and, ultimately, revelatory in nature. Creative practice is an immersive and constant experience of searching, uncovering and becoming, a process that I believe can be transferred into the materials of the final artwork, and in turn onto the audience, leading them to enact *their own* creative process of decoding and understanding the artwork, in turn generating entirely new meanings and understandings of themselves and the world.

The creative process blooms in spite of immediate conscious awareness. It threads itself through personal, artistic, and everyday experiences. It triggers new conceptual connections, in turn enhancing the flows and complexities of communication (aesthetic and linguistic) and communal social engagement.

⁴³ See Spence, C. and Driver, J. (eds) (2004) *Crossmodal space and crossmodal attention*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

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Creativity, as also argued below, is a tool for making sense of the immeasurable, ontologically withdrawn world around us, a world that is otherwise beyond our total conceptual grasp.⁴⁴

Although many of the processes underlying creativity may be commonly shared, as with a common multisensory experience of reality, the essential qualities of the creative process remain mysterious and intangible in the ways that they manifest throughout daily life and activity. The creative process is, I argue, essentially antithetical to critical explanation and discourse.⁴⁵ The creative process is also not unique only to artists, scientists, entrepreneurial magnates or curious children with crayons.⁴⁶ Appearing first in infancy, the phenomenon of creativity plays what we might consider the most vital role in a human's development from birth through to adolescence and adulthood. The creative impulse is ever present in the life of a human being; however, I feel it is crucial that it is treated with a regularity of exercise – an active and careful nurturing – in order to remain healthy.

I hold that a definitive and long-standing commitment to creative thinking and practice leads directly to a more meaningful experience of life. Creative existence may not only breed novel ideas. It is a fundamental part of human evolution, a natural phenomenon that enriches and stimulates unfolding global histories, contemporary scientific, political and social developments, guiding the ways in which the world forms and reforms itself as a mirror of human consciousness, failure, communication and experimentation.

For the purposes of this PhD, I treat the subject exclusively as a creative practitioner seeking to articulate something of the processual nature of creativity, uncovering how it can be employed as material—both literal and conceptual—for composition and intermedia artmaking. I do not shy away from the broader ramifications of creativity mentioned above, however can confidently state that my skills and specialisms are particularly suited to contributing a more personal artistic and aesthetic account of creativity, this above any potentially thin attempt at contributing sociological or critical theory. The following section approaches the creative process from differing though complementary perspectives: as an ineffable and elusive human phenomenon, a vital human modality in the ongoing process of meaning-making in both my art and life. Creativity, as the next section argues, can be understood as a natural phenomenon that is necessary to our

⁴⁴ See Harman, G. (2011) *The Quadruple Object*. Zero Books. Also see Harman's 2014 lecture, *Objects and the Arts*, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJ0GR9bf00g> (Accessed 10th March 2021). Harman describes the ways that external reality 'withdraws' from total access. All perceivable objects in the world, he states, possess essential qualities beyond absolute, unfiltered contact. What we experience when engaging with an object (entity) are merely its qualities – surface realities of one type of a real, unreachable object. In this way, object-oriented philosophy argues that 'real' objects must be hidden or withdrawn for them to be able to contain or project so many different 'essential' realities when encountered by an observer. True reality is beyond our grasp. Creative acts perhaps provide a way to deal with the unreachable reality that we exist in – this through the manifestation of imagination into reality, and through the ways that art presents entirely different realities even in the case of modelling, mapping or mimesis. Creativity – in drawing together different material and conceptual qualities and entities in an act of pure synthesis – provides a positive and enriching alternative to the real.

⁴⁵ As recently as 2018, psychologist Marion Botella states that researches of creativity have not yet "achieved a consensus regarding the nature of the number of stages involved in the process". In Botella M, Zenasni F and Lubart T (2018), *What are the Stages of the Creative Process? What Visual Art Students Are Saying*. *Frontiers in Psychology*. Vol. 9. pp. 1. This perceived lack of any consensual agreement as to concrete stages of the creative process has not however hindered the ability of the community to speculate and develop upon the current available research.

⁴⁶ Townsend, P. (2019) *Creative States of Mind: Psychoanalysis and the Artist's Process*. Routledge

cognitive, emotional, physical/spatial and intellectual development, from nascency all the way through to adulthood.

2.3 Beginnings and Threads

An ontological understanding of external reality begins with a series of primitive engagements with the physical world around us.⁴⁷ This is vital to developing and refining the necessary spatial, auditory, kinaesthetic and perceptual capacities that provide humans their dominance in the world. The paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott has explored the phenomenon of the creative impulse in infants, citing the relationship between the mother and baby as the first and perhaps most crucial stage in the early formation of creative skill and awareness.⁴⁸

Winnicott traces the developmental stage of an infant's "primary creativity" (creating or 'bringing into being' the mother's breast as a result of the state of hunger) through to the introduction of transitional phenomena (toys and objects of comfort and play introduced to replace the mothers persistent presence and attention), to further maturation periods of child-like amusement through social play settings and, finally, to more definitive and structured experimentation and creative complexity in thought and action later through to adulthood.⁴⁹ The idea that we, so early on, *create* solutions to natural human problems (the desire for food causing the appearance of the food source, for example) reveals that, through repetitive and responsorial engagement, humans naturally (and incredibly quickly) develop unique methods for overcoming the trials of desire, hunger, pain and frustration with help of the creative process. In this we can acknowledge undoubtedly that human development owes an immeasurable debt to the phenomenon of creativity.

⁴⁷ For a detailed discussion, see Winnicott, D. (1991) *Playing and Reality*. Brunner-Routledge.

⁴⁸ Townsend., *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Winnicott, D., *Ibid.* pp. 65. Also see Winnicott, D.W. (1990) *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: studies in the theory of emotional development*. Reprint. London: Karnac Books [u.a.] (Karnac books), and Winnicott, D. (1953), Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34;88-89.

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Developing through early childhood, Winnicott argues that the mother's physical presence is replaced by the "transitional object" or "comfort object".⁵⁰ The comfort object is most commonly a blanket, teddy bear or soft toy (although it could also be a melody, pleasant olfactory source or sweet tasting food).⁵¹ The physical substitution of the mother plays two roles. The first is to help transfer a child's unmitigated dependency on their mother's body onto a new physical or sensual object; mediating their total dependency towards the initial stages of partial, and eventually total, independence. The second purpose of the comfort object is to pave the way for a child to begin exploring the relentlessly new and immersive physical external reality around them, however, crucially, on their own and without the mediation of an authoritative guiding parental figure.

With regards to the second purpose of the comfort object, children will begin to form concrete physical understandings of their external reality independently – this, crucially, in direct relation to their own body and its capabilities to affect and further 'create' the world around them.⁵² The creative instinct is nurtured in close parallel to our kinaesthetic and proprioceptive agential development. Physical bodily movement and spatial interaction, smells, colours and sounds all filter into a growing multisensory assemblage of ontological understanding of the world, and our agential capacity to affect it. Multisensory development, we could therefore say, is rooted in a type of creative urgency to rearrange, refigure, adjust and personalise our external reality to fit with an ever more complex network of intellectual and emotional desires about and from the world around us. The comfort object allows us a real sense of respite, safety and control in the face of the absolute perceptual horror of the unknown world we are literally thrown into and forced to navigate endlessly – until death.

As we build, through experiment and play, a wider and ever-more complex profile of our external reality (along with our understanding of how we affect and further create that reality), an exponential growth in our creative capacity could be understood to take place. As a primary human characteristic, creativity flowers from a natural, vital instinct implemented to solve fundamental animal challenges, into complexities of experimentation, jest, suggestion, pretence, representation, metaphor creation and allusion,⁵³ to name just a few resultant phenomena of human creativity. In so many ways, we are born grasping onto the initial creative impulse, and never fully let go.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ My own piece, *Comfort Objects*, discussed later, builds loosely on the idea of a melody being a comfort object.

⁵² Winnicott, D., (1991) *Playing and Reality*. Brunner-Routledge.

⁵³ Metaphor and allusion are discussed in detail in Chapter 4: The Creative Process is Metaphor-Making.

2.3.1 *Comfort Objects*

With the phenomenal entity of the transitional object as an inspirational guide, a concert piece was created in which to explore a type of shared, private creative process in real-time between two performers. In *Comfort Objects* (2019), the duo of the Moscow-based The Same Ensemble⁵⁴ were tasked to carry out a number of unrehearsed performance activities. The work imagined some of the processual routines, relational activities and intimate personal reflections of performers that could be translated from the conceptual container of the comfort object.

The performers are first tasked with reading aloud a short text which contains details about the composition of the work, this along with a brief description of what the comfort object is, and how it might be understood in an art or performance context. Following this, through a series of quiet and focused gestures and tasks, the performers intimately attune themselves to uncomplicated activities, carrying them out in a manner that is comfortable for them. Enacting their own creative interpretations of a simple text score, the performers forge a type of personal connection to the materials with which they are presented: a short explanatory text to read out, a recollected melody from their childhood, a broken amplifier that generates a quiet crackling white noise when touched, and a small bag of diatonically tuned pitch pipes. The work reimagines the traditional concert stage setting as a publicly shared intimate exploratory space in which the audience are voyeurs to the two performers' unprepared, quiet search for comfort and stability through sonic and poetic action.

⁵⁴ The singer and music curator Sasha Elina, along with the composer and performer Kirill Shirokov.

The work draws on Winnicott's description of the comfort object as a vital entity in early human development, one that provides psychological comfort for a child as they develop independently from their mother.⁵⁵ Winnicott describes the introduction of the comfort object by the parent as giving the infant their first instance of "intermediate experience".⁵⁶ This intermediacy is described as the period "between primary creativity and projection of what has been introjected, between primary unawareness of indebtedness and the acknowledgement of indebtedness".⁵⁷ The comfort object represents a type of liminal period of human development in which an object (and its sonic potentiality, in the case of my composed work) replaces the mother's bodily presence and helps the child learn more about their objective self, this in relation to another entity outside of their own or their mother's body. Comfort objects are "not part of the infant's body but are not yet fully recognised as being a part of external reality"⁵⁸ – the comfort object is, in my work, treated conceptually as an instrumental material, or cue to musical action (see footnote 28) that bridges the gap between the performers' improvised explorations and the audience's passive receivership and experience.

Winnicott outlines five essential qualities surrounding the comfort object:

1. The nature of the object.
2. The infant's capacity to recognise the object as "not-me".
3. The place of the object—outside, inside, at the border.
4. The infant's capacity to create, think up, devise, originate, produce an object.
5. The initiation of an affectionate type of object relationship.⁵⁹

In *Comfort Objects*, points 1,3,4 and 5 of Winnicott's list served as a core material from which to generate a performative process for the performers to enact⁶⁰:

- **[1] The nature of the object[s]**

- a. Broken, faulty, delicate, in need of careful contact to activate: A faulty amplifier *
- b. Small or innocuous, able to be activated easily, produces gentle experience of musical pitch: Pitch pipes
- c. Warm, nostalgic, safe: A childhood melody

⁵⁵ Winnicott, D. (1953), Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34;88-89

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ The comfort object, as described by Winnicott, is evidently an emergent object or entity, rather than didactic or pre-selected. In this piece however I decided to pre-select musical entities (materials) that, in different ways, would concur, stimulate and cue immediate musical action for two performers I already knew very well. In this way, the piece did not attempt to stage the emergent experiences of encountering a new comfort object, but rather to use the comfort object as a conceptual container for a mostly improvised, quiet theatrical concert piece.

- **[3] The place of the object—outside, inside, at the border**
 - a. OUTSIDE: the amplifier
 - b. INSIDE: the voice
 - c. AT THE BORDER: the pitch pipes, along with the text read by both performers

* The faulty amplifier was placed on a table in front of performer 1. She was instructed to touch the amplifier body and buttons in order to ground the unit's electrical current. As a result of her grounding the amplifier, a quiet but unstable crackling white noise was projected from the speakers.

- **[4] The infant's [performers] capacity to create, think up, devise, originate, produce an object**
 - a. Performer 1 is asked at the beginning of the piece to remember a melody from her childhood. Later in the piece, she is asked to recall this melody, and reproduce it (sung, whistled, hummed etc.)
 - b. Performer 2 is asked to arrange any number of pitch pipes and improvise a slow and quiet melody; he composes a real-time accompaniment to the sound of the amplifier.
- **[5] The initiation of an affectionate type of object relationship**
 - a. Both performers are asked to attune intimately to each material and task they must carry out. Attunement, in this sense, describes a sense of introspection and discovery; attunement is a purely, and immediately, creative act.

2.3.2 Reflections on *Comfort Objects*

Although the performers read the conceptual inspiration and intention of the work aloud as the piece begins, *Comfort Objects* ultimately failed to truly express the intended sensation of intermediacy and immediacy that I had hoped for; simply, the work failed to transmit what I originally intended across to the audience. However, in failing to produce this original conceptual clarity, another perhaps more fruitful result emerged.

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The audience, left with too little information as to the reasons for the performers' actions. led them to create new meanings out of an otherwise ambiguous series of interactions (with equally ambiguous materials). Whilst the work was misunderstood by a number of audience members, it led me to consider the relationship between 'positive' and 'negative' ambiguity in a work of this kind. Where the work's ambiguity might have led to an altogether negative experience for the audience (negative ambiguity), *Comfort Objects* ultimately led to constructive and novel responses that I had not foreseen (positive ambiguity). The work was strongly cast, however, both the diffidence of its performance and lack of clearly defined features may have impeded the audience's ability to understand its core intentions.

I spoke with several audience members after the concert and many said that they were unsure as to how much of the work was improvised, and how much was carefully composed. Others said they did not recognise the work as a composed piece at all, instead understanding it as either a staged rehearsal, or a "weak, but mesmerising 'performed interval' ".⁶¹

This unintentionally more complex experience opened up a new reflective space, a more intimate creative experience *for the audience*. Perhaps faced with too cryptic an explanation of the work, the audience underwent a different new music concert experience: a wholly personal process of meaning-making when faced with a lack of definitive musical features. What was ultimately an entirely unrehearsed, staged process of creative activity resulted in a quietly transformative, transitional, reflexive and, ultimately, shared creative experience for both actors (performers) and audience members.

While I had initially envisaged *Comfort Objects* would explicitly, almost didactically, attempt to stage the creative process of the performers, the piece led to a more ambiguous experience, which arguably stimulated far more active and creative engagement from the audience. Faced only with an essence of the subjects and intentions of the work, the audience essentially created the final work, forming their own meaning, filling in the gaps in their experience in order to better relate to what they were seeing and hearing. My conclusion was that the positive reception the work achieved had minimal relationship to my original intentions, which I had failed to communicate.

2.4 Entanglements and Assemblages

Although creativity is shared across humans, there is no single, reducible teleological structure to the creative process, nor is there any single universal methodology for nurturing and refining it in any one individual. The creative process is simultaneously ubiquitous and ephemeral, often taking place between

focused activities in periods of absolute inactivity (that ever-painful lamenting stage in the making process), whilst in less common instances of flow, completely immersing the artist, dissolving all conscious awareness of time and place. I consider the creative process to be characterised by qualities of suspension, amorphousness, non-linearity, interconnectivity, multiplicity and becoming, this paired with conscious, critical, doubtful or revelatory awareness. From my own experience, the creative process gestates and overflows, suddenly dissipates and disappears completely, reappears, reforms, or perhaps suddenly explodes without any preparation, control or critical understanding of why it is simply so elusive and concretely present at the same time.

We could understand the creative process as a *fundamentally quotidian assemblage*. Our everyday creative capacity is inbuilt and overflowing, yet it is interlocked with numerous ‘non-creative’ factors (laziness, gestation, intoxication, attending to life and banal activities not connected to artistic work, for example). Sociologist Adina Manta describes creativity within the theoretical framework of the assemblage,⁶² highlighting the equal importance of “materials, places, spaces and learning encounters” in the processes and networked creative relations inherent to art practice.⁶³ To Manta, the creative process sits at the interstices between material, maker and environment — it does not stem solely from human activity and practice but depends on a complex of “material and social factors” in order for the artwork to be carried from genesis to completion.⁶⁴

This “socio-material process”⁶⁵ is rooted in the theoretical frameworks outlined most notably by anthropologist Tim Ingold and philosopher Bruno Latour. In Ingold’s concept of the “meshwork”,⁶⁶ he states that the creativity assemblage is affected by a persistent “combing and redirecting [of] the flow of things in the anticipation of what might emerge”.⁶⁷ Ingold’s notion of the creative process describes interwoven relations between *things* (objects, materials, inspired ideas) and the creative capacities, decisions and actions of the maker both *onto and in* response to external material agencies. Latour, most well-known for developing Actor Network Theory (ANT),⁶⁸ conceptualises the world as populated by actors or agents, each as “something that acts or to which activity is granted by others (...) [it] implies no special motivation of human individual actors, nor of humans in general”.⁶⁹ Latour’s ‘actors’, then, should be considered more as

⁶² The idea of assemblage theory was most notably developed by philosopher Manuel Delanda. See Delanda, M. (2016) *Assemblage Theory*. Edinburgh University Press.

⁶³ Manta, A. (2018), *Demystifying Creativity: An Assemblage Perspective Towards Creativity*. *Creativity Studies*. (11)(1). 85-101

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ingold, T. (2013) *Making*. Routledge.

⁶⁷ Manta, A. (2018), *Demystifying Creativity: An Assemblage Perspective Towards Creativity*. *Creativity Studies*. (11)(1). 85-101

⁶⁸ Latour, B. (1996), *On Actor Network Theory. A few clarifications plus more than a few complications*. *Sozial Welt*, Vol. 47, pp - 369-381

⁶⁹ Ibid.

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objects in their own constant state of flow around and in spite of one another (autonomous, yet deeply interconnected), each changing as a result of interaction with other objects, be they themselves factors of change or other objects changed by contact with the original object[s].⁷⁰

Latour in many ways positions the ‘human’ and ‘non-human’ on an almost equal footing, attributing equal agency to each in the developing creative process.⁷¹ Latour is perhaps suggesting that the materials of art making in some way may cause themselves’ to be organised and reformed along the way, all the while guiding the hand or mind of the artist. However, to accord each element of what I describe as the ‘creativity assemblage’ the same agency in directing the creative process is an unnecessary democratisation, even if researchers like Manta (through Latour) do outline useful discussions around placing value on places, spaces, materials and wider conceptual and exploratory encounters that surround creative practice. Ingold critiques Latour, first by arguing for the need to distinguish between what the philosopher describes as an “object” and a “thing”.⁷² Ingold is sceptical of the recent trend in the social sciences of “[solely] attributing agency to objects”,⁷³ a scepticism I share, even if struggling to fully endorse.⁷⁴

Focussing more sharply on the creative process, Ingold describes engaged creative activities as “generating new materials in the process which will in turn become mixed with other ingredients”.⁷⁵ I find greater resonance with the notion that the creative process is an ongoing process of collecting, discarding, repurposing and reconstructing materials and ideas over the course of any one project, materials and ideas that mesh into each other to lead towards the final work assemblage. The working process in my work is a form of open exploration, an interwoven mesh of ideas bleeding from past projects into present experiments. These works are limited only by their being cut, framed and finally presented as some kind of finished experiential object.

Drawing together Latour’s ANT and Ingold’s meshwork, the ‘assemblage’ of Manta offers a development in how to consider the creative process as a limitless set of encounters between a creator and [their] material, with each situated at one end of a swaying between agencies in the manifesting and evolving creative process. Creativity is “a fluid process that is in a constant state of becoming”⁷⁶ or “a continual process

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ See Latour, B. (2014). Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene. *New Literary History*, 45(1), pp. 1–18. Also see Sayes, E. (2014). Actor-Network Theory and methodology: Just what does it mean to say that nonhumans have agency? *Social Studies of Science*, 44(1), pp. 134–149.

⁷² Brown, B. (2004) *A Sense of Things*. University of Chicago Press.

⁷³ Ingold, T. (2010), *Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials*. NCRM

⁷⁴ I do not consider an artistic object to have agency without being used, but I certainly often feel guided by a the limitation or affordance of a physical instrument, object, hardware or software application, or sonic or conceptual material. Rather than a guiding force (agency), in my working practice the relationship seems more akin to a type of conscious attunement or permission given to certain qualities of an artistic material to guide the direction of a developing idea.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. pp.88

of ‘making the world [and being made by it]’ ”.⁷⁷ Whilst these descriptions are somewhat loose, taken as a whole Manta’s assemblage theory posits artistic creativity as a varying series of responses between the maker and material that form simultaneously into autonomous, finite fragments, finally meshing together into a globally formed artistic product. This to me describes a more fitting articulation of flow; an active assemblage of continuous interweaving, interrelation and agency.

2.5 ‘Macro’ and ‘Micro’

Even as a fluid, flowing assemblage, how might we define the creative process in more mechanistic and systematic terms? Problem solving, differentiation, preparation, design, ideation, concentration, analysis, incubation, insight, synthesis, production, evaluation, validation, verification, finalisation. These are just a few of the numerous terms offered in a short but comprehensive study by Botella, Zenasni and Lubart.⁷⁸ The researchers attempt to form a definitive taxonomy of the mechanisms underlying the creative process. The researchers consider the global macro-processes⁷⁹ of creativity – more simply, the visible results of creative engagement – as nesting a number of micro-processes. Micro-processes, the researchers argue, are the barely noticeable networks of semi-palpable creative stages that inform the global development of the artwork.⁸⁰ As I have argued, I believe there is no singular model applicable to all creative practitioners across the broad spectrum of creativity, artistic fields. However, it may be possible to isolate certain key stages between an artistic work’s initial genesis and its final realisation as, to an extent, ubiquitous to creative practice. Without simply regurgitating a lengthy and exhaustive list of terms and charts, I reference and briefly summarise the study below in order to consider one plausible model for how we might understand the creative process as a nested system of identifiable micro and macro processes.

The study initially centres around a four-stage model of the creative process developed by Marie-Anne Ward and Tony Mace, in which the authors cite four major milestones to an artwork’s development:

1. Conception
2. Development
3. Making

⁷⁷ Tanggaard, L. (2013). *The Sociomateriality of Creativity in Everyday Life*. Culture and Psychology. Vol. 19, pp.20

⁷⁸ Botella M, Zenasni F and Lubart T (2018)., *What are the Stages of the Creative Process? What Visual Art Students Are Saying*. Frontiers in Psychology. Vol. 9. pp. 1-13

⁷⁹ Ibid. pp - 1

⁸⁰ Ibid.

4. Finishing and Resolution⁸¹

Conception describes the potentially vague feeling or pressing sense of a sound, image or physical form emerging in the mind, this before any further physical or mental development (beginning to sketch, for example). Concept generation is said to derive from either an “ongoing art-making enterprise, the interplay of life, or [other] external influences.”. Mace and Ward include a nested stage of “idea selection,”⁸² or a process of discrimination between more and less favourable mental forms appearing at the conception stage. Botella et al. also identify this stage as “orientation”⁸³ and “problem definition”⁸⁴ amongst other terms.

Development is described as “a complex process of structuring, extending, and restructuring a particular artwork idea through a range of decision-making, problem-solving, experimental, and information-gathering activities.”⁸⁵ The development stage is the process in which a tentative structure begins to form around a conceived idea. This stage involves “enriching and extending [*the concept*] through idea association, metaphor and analogy.”⁸⁶ At this stage, the process of evaluation plays an important role in continuing to develop the structure, global form or conceptual intention of the artwork – this process is perhaps better understood as the beginnings of an ongoing reflexive process between the artist, their developing aesthetic ideas, and a growing collection of external references and influences.⁸⁷ In the development stage, either the entire work or smaller elements may also be abandoned, either saved for potential later projects or thrown away entirely.⁸⁸ Botella et al identify the development stage as including “preparation”⁸⁹ (defining the problems generated by the initially conceived idea) “analysis”⁹⁰ (carefully identifying relations between conceived ideas) or “ideation”⁹¹ (developing and beginning to sketch alternative ideas).

At the *making* stage, the artistic undertaking “undergoes a transformation from a purely conceptual entity into a conceptual and physical entity”.⁹² As this stage demands a more concrete, physical, drawing, sculpting or arranging form, the concept development of the work will change. Here, I understand a kind of accumulative drawing-in of the first two stages of the creative process in which conception, development

⁸¹ Mace M, Ward T (2002)., *Modeling the Creative Process: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Creativity in the Domain of Art Making*. Creativity Research Journal. Vol. 14(2). pp. 179-192

⁸² Ibid. pp.184

⁸³ Osborn, A. F. (1953/1963). *Applied Imagination, 3rd Edn*. New York, NY: Scribners.

⁸⁴ Runco, M. A., and Dow, G. (1999). “Problem finding,” in *Encyclopaedia of Creativity*, Vol. 2, eds M. A. Runco and S. R. Pritzker (New York, NY: Academic Press), pp. 433–435.

⁸⁵ Mace and Ward, Ibid, pp. 184.

⁸⁶ Mace and Ward, Ibid.

⁸⁷ See Chapter 1. 1.3.3: Research, Reflection/Reflective Practice

⁸⁸ Mace and Ward, Ibid.

⁸⁹ Wallas, G. (1926). *The Art of Thought*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

⁹⁰ Osborn, A. F. (1953/1963). *Applied Imagination, 3rd Edn*. New York, NY: Scribners.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Mace and Ward, Ibid. pp. 185.

and making join to set off a new complex teleology – *making* the work contains and affects new *conceptions* and *developments* as one growing process.

Before the third, *making* stage however, Botella et al identify an additional stage of “incubation”.⁹³ Incubation is described as a period of “solitude and relaxation, in which associations of ideas take place”.⁹⁴ Importantly (and certainly throughout my own process), the incubation stage is possible at multiple points during the creative process. It is also often unforeseen by the artist. Simply, the incubation stage is not necessarily an intended, isolated stage or event. Rather, it can be understood as a type of forced break in the artistic process. Taking, or being forced to take a break (to smoke, make food, sleep, run errands, be forcibly distracted and, as such, be taken away physically from creative work) can be considered as a vital contribution to any incubation stage. Incubation provides space for ideas to develop outside of conscious artistic attention, including stages of “activation and generation”⁹⁵ (connections formed or created between ideas without conscious awareness or dedicated focus).

Finishing or *resolving* the work described the final stage of the creative process. Here, “implicit and explicit processes of evaluation” lead to a work either being exhibited or presented, abandoned, destroyed or stored.⁹⁶ As is made clear both by Mace and Ward and Botella et al, the creative process does not stop at the finishing stage, but rather contributes to a “dynamically interactive, ongoing practice of art-making”. The *Verification* of an artwork’s success or value is said to happen in two ways at the finishing stage: ‘internal’ and ‘external’. Internal verification is simply whether the work stands up to, agrees with or verifies the artist’s initial conceptual intentions, whilst external verification describes the artist evaluating the response of the work’s audience[s].

The aforementioned studies provide a great deal of ground on which to elaborate a general teleological structure for both the macro and micro stages of the creative process on exclusively artistic terms. The creative process begins with the seed of an idea – the conception of a form, sound, image, physical shape or abstract experiential narrative. Ideas are then developed through a complex of processes, including the identification of problems generated both from, and as a result of, the initially conceived idea[s]. A loose structural guide emerges within this stage, leading to the formation of more concrete visual or sonic structures or elements that will be used to produce the artwork. The work is then made, produced, built, composed. This stage crucially draws in both of the first two stages of conception and development into cycles of reflexive feedback, that in turn help the artist to continue to make the work concretely. Stages of incubation,

⁹³ Wallas, G. (1926). *The Art of Thought*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace and Company. Also see: Runco, M. A., and Dow, G. (1999). “Problem finding,” in *Encyclopaedia of Creativity*, Vol. 2, eds M. A. Runco and S. R. Pritzker (New York, NY: Academic Press), pp. 433–435. Also see: Runco, M. A. (1997). *The Creativity Research Handbook*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

⁹⁴ Botella et al. *Ibid.*, pp. 3

⁹⁵ Cropley, D. H., and Cropley, A. J. (2012). A psychological taxonomy of organizational innovation: resolving the paradoxes. *Creat. Res. J.* 24, 29–40.

⁹⁶ Mace and Ward, *Ibid.* pp. 186

or more simply, breaks, can happen at any point throughout the process. These stages are arguably more ephemeral in terms of actual creative production, however are crucial for allowing new connections to be activated or generated that may not have happened in the more limited frame of focussed creative work. Finally, the artwork is finished, fully realised and either exhibited or stored, presented or abandoned.

2.6 Foregrounding the process

This project considers the stages of the creative process as potentially generating materials that can be shared and composed with. This approach adds useful compositional stopgaps between conception, development, making *and* finishing, as each of the steps is treated as a potential narrative, sonic or visual material in itself. In my own creative process, there exists an ongoing tension between the methodological and the chaotic, the severe and the playfully explorative, the didactic and the dream-like. *Conception* breaks down almost immediately into *making*, which has often cycled immediately back into *development*, for example.

Outside of evident external factors such as the site of a piece's premiere, its instrumentation, or predefined limitations on media, I consider a piece to be an entirely open processual playground for experimentation, with the conception stage already welcoming vastly different configurations of sound, image, performer roles and scenographic staging.⁹⁷ More often than not the conception of a single idea morphs quickly into a making process, generating a fixed material that is then reconceived or developed, leading to even newer unforeseen conceptual and material configurations that would not have emerged had I ignored any attempts to re-embed certain discoveries from within the ongoing creative process directly back into a work's architecture. In *Untitled, Or, The Thing about Shoegaze is it Doesn't*⁹⁸, for example, much of the pitch material given to the pianist emerged through a failed analysis of the field recordings in the work that took place before any considerable *development* stage.⁹⁹

The notion of failure in the creative process is just as strong a link in the chainmail of creativity as the notion of success. Complete and solid systems fail in that they characteristically do not allow novel changes to develop as the system unfolds. A successful system is defined through its ability to avoid the unforeseen and produce clear and concrete results. The aim to create a closed, solid system in art and musical composition will more often than not, and hopefully in spectacular fashion, fail. This failure to achieve severe,

⁹⁷ See chapter 5: Technology and Intermedia

⁹⁸ *Untitled 2*

⁹⁹ Using the SPEAR application for audio analysis generated a vertical visualisation of the spectrum of each recording (application can be found at <http://www.klingbeil.com/spear/>). Pairing the SPEAR session with the audio-to-MIDI function in Ableton allowed a process of cherry-picking the most prominent and aesthetically interesting frequency arrangements shared by both SPEAR and Ableton from each recording. The pitches gathered from this process were then compared with the original audio of each song captured in each field recording, leading to the composition of a loose field of pitch materials that were possible to sound through prepared piano harmonics.

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precise and accurate results in art leads to more raw, exploratory, charming and, ultimately, exciting results that involve audiences in a more engaged process of experience and exploration themselves. To consciously follow or commit to any type of set model in the creative process limits the ability to be creative.

Following a positive process of self-critical evaluation and judgement, much of the submitted works have benefited greatly from being so regularly scrapped, restarted, inaccurately recycled or refashioned across different media forms and across considerably different projects. My practice – my creative process – is often wayward and wandering, even when striving to create carefully crafted concert experiences. I am not a systematic thinker, developer, or maker, although I arguably spend a great deal of time on the finalisation stage of a work, its visual presentation to musicians, and the balanced audiovisual setting presented to audiences.

Ultimately, much of the work included in this submission represents an ongoing search for ways to continuously shake and vibrate any settling aesthetic curiosities and self-imposed creative rules. I do not endorse any single argument for how my work should be experienced or read. Very quickly, a singular idea (conception) will explode, morph, and leap to simultaneous states of development and making, leading to unplanned contact with new media and technology, leaving the unfolding compositional process to play out as a chaotic balancing of multiplicities of interactivities between materials and media forms, stale ideas and new intentions, finished microprojects and impossibly grand larger formats.

Comfort Objects, notwithstanding its distant, limp poetic thematic, presents a relatively orthodox concert music experience for the audience; the sole intention of the piece is for performers to carry out (mostly) musical tasks in front of a quiet and perspicacious new musical audience. The work may not clearly stage the creative process, however on reflection did succeed in forging a new type of shared transformative space in which the audience can experience a similar sense of affection, intimacy and exploration as the performers. This piece was formative in developing the confidence in presenting unresolved connections without the need for explanation.

Works like *Untitled, Or, Symphony of Red Bubbles* (2020)¹⁰⁰, focussed more on plunging the audience into a fast-paced linear retelling of my own creative process. This piece stemmed from a desire to retain a lucid, biographically tinged retelling of the work as it was being composed over a five-month period. The conception of the work's form took inspiration from the conceptual clarity of works like artist Robert Morris's *A Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* (1961)¹⁰¹, a work that invites its audience directly into contact

¹⁰⁰ *Untitled 1*

¹⁰¹ See chapter 3: Process and Product

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with the act of making, generating an audience experience similar to that of standing quietly next to the artist whilst they produce the final object over the course of a number of hours.

The initial intention of *Untitled 1*, of clarity and precision in the retelling of the process, began to fail very early on. The intended experience – a voyeuristic magnification of the singular activity of typing out sketches of compositional ideas – was, I quickly discovered, simply not effective enough to lead the audience to reflect on making in the way that I had hoped. To view a sketchbook being made is certainly revealing and intimate, however it does not offer any insights beyond the immediate, self-indulgent and rather shallow notion that self-ethnography is an impactful and meaningful creative methodology. Attempting to move beyond this the typed-out sketches of the work were re-composed into a single, central grid of screens (Fig. 2.1).

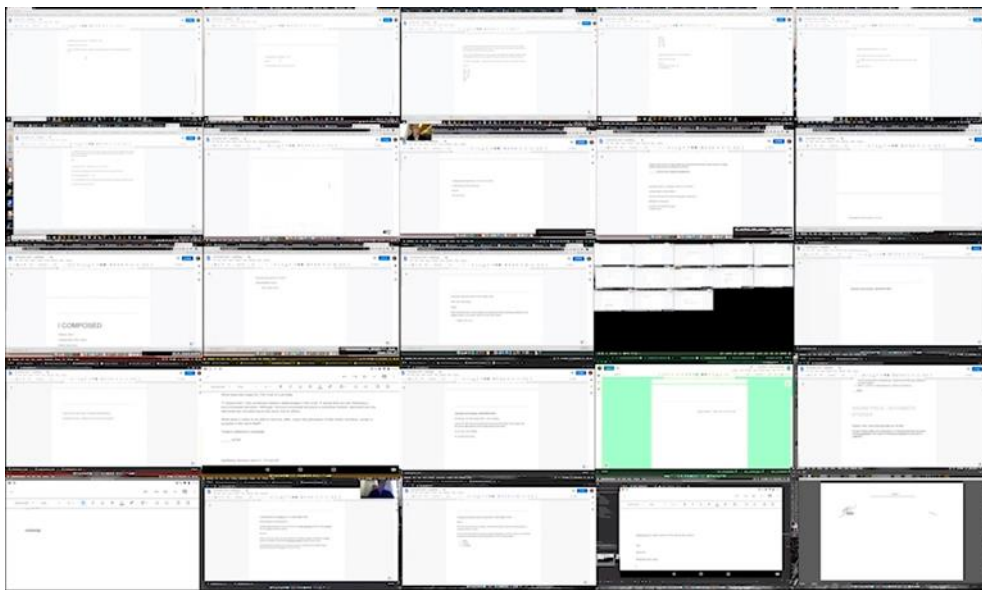


Fig. 2.1 : A still of one of the three video screens in *Untitled 1*.

This I hope shifts the sharpness of focus away from my sole authorial presence towards a more sickly and unnerving reflective experience of the isolating effect of working alone. Preceding this, a direct but kiltered reference to autobiography was later composed: a short and explosive first movement built out of flurries of daily photographs and cold electronic glitch. The work could now open with a photographic scrapbook of my own life outside of composing the work. However, this opening would unfold too fast for the audience to truly acknowledge or appreciate any biographical authenticity. The third and final movement later was conceived and developed into a kind duality of documentation and fantasy. Intimate close-up films projected an unknown sticky material flopping limply onto a table, whilst equally limp music looped and

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swooned around itself until simply dying out to silence. The work ends far outside of self-ethnography or journalistic retelling.



Fig. 2.2: Still from the premiere performance of *Untitled 1*, showing the full ensemble arrangement.

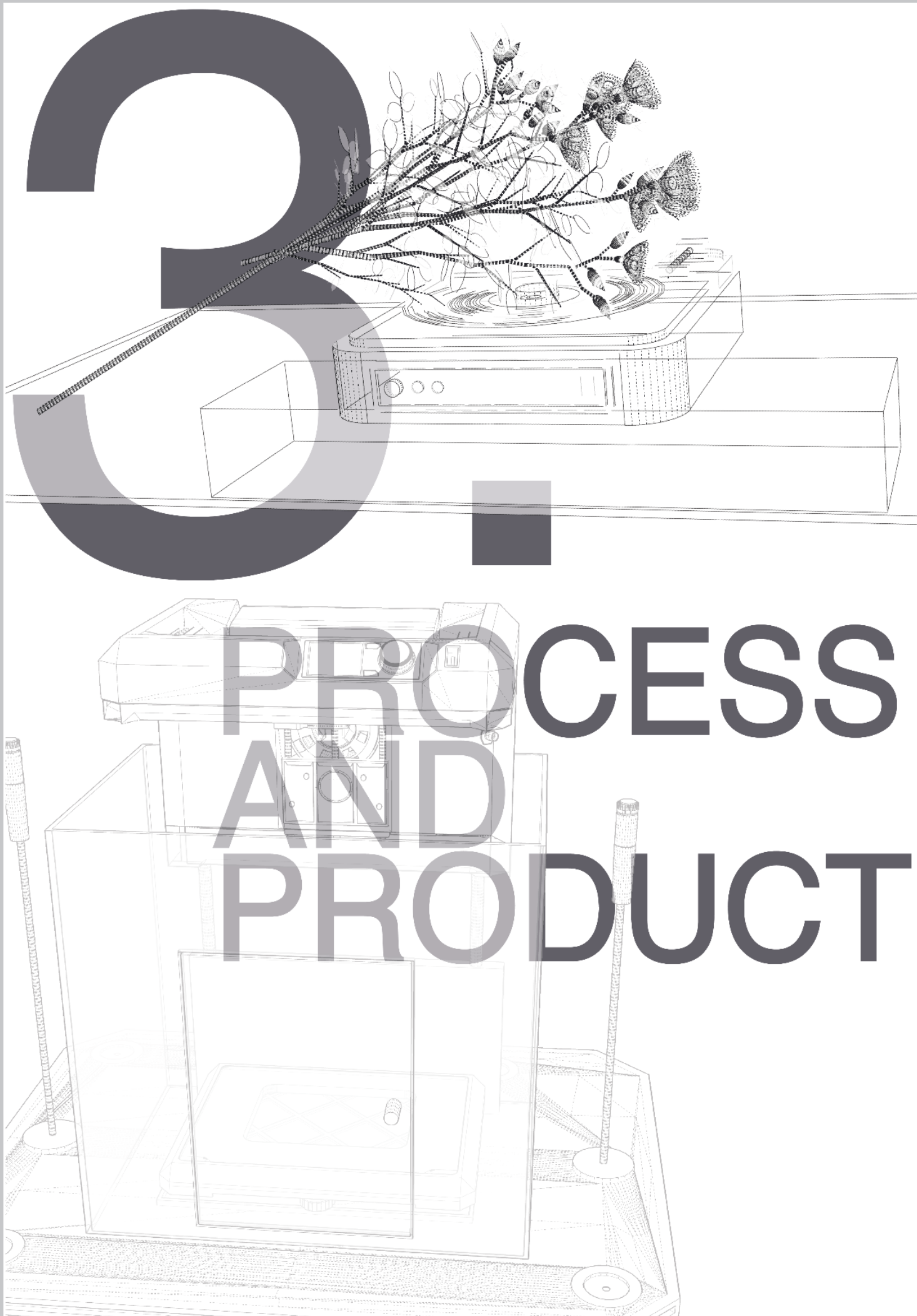
What began as an aim to compose a skeletal self-reflexive audiovisual account grew into a three-part experiential stream of compacted daily experience and activity through to pure musical and visual poetry. Whilst the form of the work only truly became clear at the point of finishing its current state, the materials and the way they would be experienced as a whole also only became clear as I received the work for the first time, live, in the space, as an audience member.

The creative process throughout *Untitled 1* is always at the centre of the audience's experience. However, the disparities between kiltered biography, digital voyeurism and filmic abstraction create more of a blissful experience of bemusement, rather than of encountering any honest documentary. My failure to compose a crisp retelling of the process led ultimately to a far richer audiovisual kaleidoscope than originally planned. Bemusement, kilter and dream-like assemblages of sound and image in fact lead the audience into more direct contact with my affinities and sensibilities as an exploratory maker, without the presence of any real sketchbook. Failure, paired with a messy collection of artistic media by-products, led to a reflective richness of experience that I had not yet considered in my own work.

2.7 Conclusion to Chapter 2

This chapter has identified creativity and the creative process as types of quotidian (daily, routinely), socio-materialist assemblages. The assemblage of creativity draws together artistic materials, makers and broader environmental agents into an ongoing and persistent dynamic relationship. The phenomenon of flow offers only a microscopic view of the creative process, unfortunately negating many other crucial experiential facets of creative activity. As primal human function, creativity runs throughout our lives, appearing in instances of primary creativity in infants, developing towards a self-awareness of our agency to affect external reality, growing further into dedicated creative and artistic practice throughout adulthood. In the latter, the creative process can be taxonomised into definitive stages, from conception, to development and making, through to the final realisation stage of an artwork. These stages are by no means conclusive, though they do offer a common image of the creative process to all artistic practitioners. In my own creative process, the failure to achieve accuracy in a system or method is wholly positive; in failing to make one thing, we will almost always end up making something of far more interest and beauty. The creativity assemblage therefore must welcome the inabilities, failures, errors and complete misunderstandings of the artist as equally essential to an effective creative process.

I have found that my own work is more successful when it does not didactically lead the audience through faithful retellings of the creative process. My own work does not strive towards the processual clarity of minimalist masterworks of artists like Robert Morris, Steve Reich or Alvin Lucier (see chapter 3). My work instead draws liberally on concrete notions (some found within creativity studies themselves), using broader conceptual and theoretical ideas in order to layer looser configurations of non-linear narratives that demand a more committed creative engagement from audiences. At the core of my practice, and this PhD as a whole, is the belief that music and art can achieve a more immediate connection between myself (the maker) and the listener (receiver). An immediacy that can somehow more directly transfer my aesthetic, psychological and emotional preoccupations as a composer and artist to the listener/viewer as they experience the work. Works like *Poet Mechanic V* (2019) and, most recently, *Untitled 1, Untitled, Or, 'the thing about shoegaze is it doesn't'* (2021) and *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club* (2020), each take a different approach to the possible ways in which to stage, retell (*reuse and crudely recycle*) or recompose aspects and elements of the creative processes as they emerge and form, directly into the finally composed piece. In these works, physical, conceptual and referential materials (including sound, image, film, sound sculpture and text) are given equal positions in the hierarchy of the work assemblage; the assemblage is a multimodal network of materials in which no one entity has charge or dynamic command over any other entity.



PROCESS AND PRODUCT

3. PROCESS AND PRODUCT

3.1 Introduction

When artists state that for them it is all about the process, they are saying many different things. At the simplest level, it is a declaration that they are dedicated and attentive to their creative labours.

– Kim Grant¹⁰²

If facts had any value, if they truly illuminated us (...) the Manhattan phone directory would be the book of books. Millions of senseless facts and verifiable facts, but senseless and uninspiring. The important truths remain unknown.

–Werner Herzog¹⁰³

Works of art that accentuate process come in a range of forms, foregrounding more immediate experiential connections between the laborious efforts of the artist, and the aesthetic objects, entities, images and soundworlds that result in the final work. Process-focussed works often function through a reduction of material, foregrounding bolder and clearer arrangements or material narratives, this often in order for the underlying labour of creating the work to be more clearly stated in the work's content – “It is the doing of the art rather than the outcome that is the most important thing for such artists (...) Process represents a vital alternative to the conception of the artwork as commodified object”¹⁰⁴. Either the process unfolding or taking place *is* the work that we experience, or the piece is a direct, immediately perceivable result of one or multiple explicitly articulated processes.

In articulating a more directly felt relationship between the maker and their material,¹⁰⁵ the pedestalling of process over the course of the 20th Century marked a shift in the way that aesthetic, commodified art objects challenged audiences' readings. Where previously the final art object was treated as somehow mythically detached from the pained labours of the artist,¹⁰⁶ foregrounding the process

¹⁰² Grant, K. (2017) *All About Process*. Pennsylvania State University Press.

¹⁰³ Herzog, W. and Cronin, P. (2002) *Herzog on Herzog*. London ; New York: Faber and Faber. Pp. 288

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. Pp. 2

¹⁰⁵ Morris R. 1968. *Anti-Form*. Accessed at <https://www.artforum.com/print/196804/anti-form-36618> [4th January 2021]

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

attempted to render the core preoccupations of a works creator more visible, legible and, crucially, tangible in a final reading of the work. Process became an experiential starting point through clearly defined, concrete settings and material configurations. Process art essentially opened a new dimension for visual and sonic art practices: the tangible presence, or at least explicitly legible reference made within the work to its own conception, development and making.

As discussed below, many process art works stage unfolding processes in a linear, stratified or systemically finite manner. My work is different as it foregrounds my creative process in a more messy, playful and oneiric fashion. Whereas orthodox process-focussed art strives towards completeness, end-directedness and finitude, my work favours non-teleology, non-hierarchy, pushing the sense of deficiency, bewilderedness and vagueness of process. The principal methods or themes in much of my work attempt to create sensations of multiplicity and blurriness over simplicity and legibility, pitting kaleidoscopic layers of references to process alongside one another, over demonstrating any single unfolding system. The works allow nonlinear processes to exist alongside and around one another as intermedia assemblages.¹⁰⁷ These are made from pseudo-archival reconstruction, metatextual and metaphorical narratives of and about the creative process, visual simulations of digital worlds-in-construction, audio recordings, re-recordings and transformations, audiovisual recycling and reuse. It is of great importance that my creative processes, reflections and activities are somewhat legible on one hand, whilst on the other feel more as cryptic, vague and elusive references to the qualities and nature of the artistic process in action.

3.2. The Process Product Relationships

The following outlines approaches and category types that manifest in the work of selected practitioners dealing in different ways with the process-product relationship. This is followed by an articulation of my own approach to staging the creative process, along with a consideration of how my own work might be experienced.

Art and music generally draw attention to process in the following ways:

1. Process-as-product:

Pieces in which the processes that make up a work's construction are implicit in, or in particular cases manifest solely *as*, the finally experienced work.

2. Process-over-product:

¹⁰⁷ See chapter 5: Technology, Media, Intermedia

Pieces in which social, participatory and communal forms of creative activity and engagement are foregrounded over any finally produced object, entities, images or soundworlds.

3. Process-narrated:

Artworks that implement and/or blend methods of documentary, reportage and autobiography in order to make direct comments on the underlying workings of a piece, and/or to aestheticize the concerns and thought-processes of the maker.



Fig. 3.1: Robert Morris, *A Box with the Sound of its Own Making* (1961). A strikingly clear example of process-as-product; encountering the work in a gallery, the audience encounters the box and listens to an unedited audio recording of the box being constructed by the artist on headphones.

4. Hybrid Models

More miscellaneous examples of the process-product relationship may draw together elements of the above, however in many cases we could consider the resulting work to exist outside of the predominant

processual framework driving the piece. In miscellaneous examples, we find stimulating tensions or obfuscations between the agential connections of the maker of the work and the material results.

3.2.1 Process-as-product

In Steve Reich's 1968 text score work *Pendulum Music*, the work's instrumentation takes centre stage over any performer interjection or activity. Four microphones suspended above loudspeakers are held up by performers to be released in unison and left to swing – producing feedback – until they come to rest. Beyond the performers initially adjusting the volume of the speakers to produce a pronounced level of feedback, there is no intervention on the part of either performer or composer. *Pendulum Music* stages an uninterrupted gradual decline of kinetic energies, manifesting musically as a series of feedback pulses that become progressively longer in duration. The physical process – the trajectory of swinging, *is* the musical product – sonic feedback. An example of perhaps only a few levels of processual complexity higher – Alvin Lucier's *I am Sitting in a Room* (1969), presents an equally non-interventionist form of process-art. The work's process is set off by a live reading of a written text, itself an indicative outline of what the work is and what it intends to achieve. The text is then played back into the room from separate loudspeakers and re-recorded, with this process being repeated over and over until acoustic resonance replaces discernible human speech. The resonant frequencies of the performance space blend and transform the formants of the performer's voice, revealing a gradual, almost seamless sonic transformation from human speech to pure architectural acoustics.

Both *Pendulum Music* and *I am Sitting in a Room* are set within highly defined parameters, with each work giving complete compositional agency to the technologies they implement: the four microphones generating a decaying pulse of feedback tone, and the acoustic resonant qualities of the performance space concentrating vocal formants into a smeared metallic ambience. In these pieces, recording technology stands in for any human control; little to no performer action or intervention is required to set the works into motion and generate a natural decay of the original materials. The works – the products – are, in their purest form, the unfolding of the process of system live; the nature of the result is known (feedback and acoustic resonance), however strictly musical details of these processes are not (rhythm, pitch, timbre, duration). Most pertinently, any scope for surprise or unforeseeable musical revelation – beyond the immediate, local surprise of newly created sounds – is mostly minimal, as the process is set by clear and strict parameters. In turn, whilst every performance of these pieces will be unique, the 'outcome' is clear in advance.

The experience of these kinds of works changes the role of the audience from passive listeners to witnesses of fundamental acoustic phenomena. The temporal qualities of attack or decay (of acoustic resonance or digital feedback) shift the status of these works from careful showcases of composed musical material, to non-interventionist presentations of natural acoustic activity.

Predating both Reich's and Lucier's works, Robert Morris's *A Box with the Sound of its own Making* (1961) features a small wooden box, resting on a plinth, containing an audio recording of the box being constructed (Fig. 3.1). In conceptual terms, the piece reduces the artistic object to a hard document or archive of labour. The physical wooden box is, in essence, a sober and featureless container for its acoustical traces, whilst the sounds of the work are themselves sober traces of private physical labour. The work explicitly narrates process from two key perspectives: the unedited documentation of creating an object, and the result of that documentation rendered in physical form.

In the above-mentioned works, the processes that inform and produce the finally heard or seen results are narrated throughout the works' experiences. There are no hidden pre-composed materials that are not in the final resulting works. In the wider art field, artist Tehching Hsieh's *One Year Performance* (1980) series explored a single process over a year-long period, transforming precisely registered daily activities into archived documentation. Perhaps the most notable of the works, *Time Clock Piece*, saw the artist punch a time clock every hour for an entire year, with an accompanying photograph taken to document his appearance every time this task was carried out. The resulting document, over 8,000 photos and over 300 punched work cards, fixes a ritualistic, obsessive routine in time, highlighting the temporal nature of both human activity and production, isolating the flow of an entire year into an easily legible hour-by-hour document of the artist's life.

3.2.2 Process-over-product

The process-over-product approach is work in which the social interaction of participants is considered of greater value to the work than hidden acts of composition or pre-production. The contents or activities in a participatory work also serve to replace the presence of any concrete artistic object or framed auditory or visual experience. In short, social processes that inform the content of a participatory work render audiences into active participants, the presence and engagement of which are the content of the work. This approach is discussed in length in Nicolas Bourriaud's text on relational art,¹⁰⁸ in which the writer explores the social interaction and aesthetic framing of communal experience between participants as central materials to contemporary art. The antecedents of the process-over-product

¹⁰⁸ Bourriaud, N., Pleasance, S. and Woods, F. (2002) *Relational aesthetics*. Dijon: les Presses du réel (Documents sur l'art).

approach can be found in the Happenings developed in the 1950's by conceptual artist Alan Kaprow. Kaprow's *The Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*¹⁰⁹ provides a broad and informative textual discussion to understand the development of participatory methods, both artistically and musically in the years following.

The process-over-product approach constructs distinct social settings in which engagements between participants and/or audiences form the content of the works, indicating the broader social imperatives of art practice, inviting participants to experience shared activities and/or to engage with types of simulated realistic everyday activities or rituals. Participation, at its core, reiterates the agency of the audience and in turn redefines the artist's role as closer to that of a mediator or facilitator of communal artistic activity. In the process-over-product approach, relational, non-hierarchical and participatory entanglement *is* the purpose and content of the work. Artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)* from 1996 saw a gallery's office spaces emptied, with the office furniture being replaced with kitchen equipment. The artist used this space to prepare Thai food, offering the meal to any audience member entering the space, breaking down the social distance and status between the artist and audience, making the latter's involvement an irreplaceable central element of the work. The work stages the process of making, sharing and consuming food in a setting not dissimilar to a typical dinner party between friends or family members. Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Stack Pieces* series from 1989 saw the audience invited to take home individual pieces of printed paper containing images or private notes created by the artist.¹¹⁰

3.2.3 Process-narrated

Works that narrate the process blend documentary, reportage and biography in order to comment directly on the inner workings of a piece within the final result. The works attempt to blend elements of the pre-production and compositional development of the work into the end result, exposing some of the details of how the work has been made within the frame of the final piece. The presence of the creator in the work is employed in order to offer some kind of explanation of how or why the work has been made. This approach engages first and foremost with issues of authenticity and good practice in narration.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Kaprow, A (2003). *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*. University of California Press

¹¹⁰ See Kee, Joan. "Double Embodiments: Felix Gonzalez-Torres's Certificates." *Models of Integrity: Art and Law in Post-Sixties America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019: 191 – 226.

¹¹¹ The concept of the unreliable narrator connects to the process-narrated approach in art. The term was coined by Wayne Booth in discussing the credibility of the first-person narrator in modern literature. My own work does not make use of spoken narration practices. It does however explore ways to narrativistically expand the first-person experience of video game design and virtual world building practices.

Works by the composer Alexander Schubert provide stimulating examples of the process-narrated approach, most notably in his 2018 film project, *Acceptance*.¹¹² Alvin Lucier's *I am Sitting in a Room*, although explicit in its setting of the process as the final work, employs a clearly defined narrative structure in the pursuit of staging the process as clearly as possible. Robert Morris' *A Box with the Sound of its Making* (1966) could also be understood as an example of process-narrated art, whilst also evidently exemplifying the process-as-product work. The works accompanying audio file projects, or *describes*, the process of the box being made as a field recording. Whether the audio file is authentic or not is of little importance, as the poetic roots of the work intend to draw direct attention to the physical act of making a box, over that of the physical box facing the viewer on the gallery plinth.

3.2.4 Hybrid Approaches

There are works that do not engage exclusively with the above three categories that do, however, employ approaches inherent to one or all of them. These works blend different explorations of process in novel ways, eschewing the now orthodox narratives of process in art. These works often produce a considerable, intentional ambiguity in the recognition of any underlying process, poetically masking or filtering the clarity of a work's source in favour of posing broader questions around the nature of the personal relationship between the maker and their artistic process, the audience and their personal experience of the laborious artistic processes of artists.

An example of a more poetically tinged process-work can be found in *Le Livre des Nombres* (2017-) by the French composer Colin Roche. In the work, Roche sets up a compositional task based on the real-time conditions of his body that are being registered through a series of monitors attached to his skin. Basic physiological information is captured by a bespoke software patch that translates the resulting complex of data (heart rate, breathing rate, temperature) into basic musical parameters (tempo, time signature, bar numbers and general expression).¹¹³ The physiological state of the human body is translated in real-time into raw musical information, however at this stage, the information does not result in any perceivably musical material for an audience member.

In a live performance of the piece, audience members are invited, one-by-one, to sit opposite the composer at a desk. They are given headphones that play both his heart beat, along with the sound of a contact microphone projecting the sound of the desk (intended to amplify his writing). The composer

¹¹² Discussed in more length in chapter 4: The Creative Process is Metaphor-Making.

¹¹³ The composer does not reveal the details of the patch and how it works, preferring to keep these details concealed.

sits in silence leaning over a large piece of empty manuscript paper on the desk. Whilst a small receipt machine produces scrolls of red and white paper containing lists of data generated by his body, Roche occasionally strips off a piece and begins to write on the score. From this data, rhythmic information is hand-written in equivalent silences (rests), with each new time signature beginning each new bar where instructed.

These initial elements of the work narrate a process live – the real-time conditions of the performer’s body as material that is registered and translated into concrete musical information. We could say that this exemplifies the process-as-product approach. However, this is not the final stage of the work. The auditory projection in headphones of the composer’s body forms a smaller, nested real-time process for the audience, a raw amplification drawing the audience more intimately into contact with the performer, whilst offering them a glimpse into the nature of the content of the score.

The recording and translation of the composer’s bodily conditions result in a score filled with bars of silence. This work presents two distinct but connected processual stages. The first stage most closely follows the ‘process-as-product’ approach by presenting an unfolding process live to an audience. The second stage or result is the object – the score. The scores of *Le Livres des Nombres* should be understood more as a visual by-product of a staged real-time process that, although a direct result of that process, are a new, secondary product or aesthetic object. The score is not the primary concern of the composer,¹¹⁴ but is nonetheless an inevitable and enriching aesthetic step of the work. Where the composer produces these scores without the presence of an audience, the work sits somewhat more naturally into the process-as-product category – the work we experience is the direct result of a kind of mapping of bodily information onto musical parameters. However, even when confronted with hand-written pages of silence, it is not clear of the source of the work. As the work is typically exhibited in gallery settings, *Le Livres des Nombres* can be understood as an ongoing archival project seeking to document the subtle changes in the creator’s physical state over time, rendered as scored musical works. Crucially, the works could later be performed or interpreted live by other performers as silent musical pieces, however this has not yet taken place.

If we consider the resulting scores of *Le Livre des Nombres*, the work renders the traditional musical score a purely visual, graphic object using musical notation as its systematic visual language. The score becomes a new, wholly unconnected object from its source. Similarly, to the work of Tehching Hsieh and On Kawara, the documentation of the artistic activity acts to fix a durational practice in time, posing subtle questions about the nature of the relationship between the human body and musical time. The

¹¹⁴ From conversations with the composer between 2018-2019.

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final resulting aesthetic object does not belong entirely to the original process, but is a direct result of an unfolding process of recording and mechanical translation.



Fig. 3.2: Colin Roche, *Le Livre des Nombres* (2007-). A still from performance. Provided by the artist.



Fig. 3.3: Colin Roche, *Le Livre des Nombres* (2007-). Exhibition view. Image provided by the artist.



Fig. 3.4: Tehching Hsieh, *Time Clock Piece (One Year Performance 1980–1981)* 1980–1. Detail.¹¹⁵



Fig. 3.5: Tehching Hsieh, *Time Clock Piece (One Year Performance 1980–1981)*. Detail.¹¹⁶

In Roche’s own words, *Le Livre des Nombres* is a kind of “poetic shaping”¹¹⁷ of the issues faced when confronted with an empty musical score page. The project articulates the relationship of sound to silence in the context of facing the “anguish of the blank page.”¹¹⁸ It is “both the story of [it’s] writing

¹¹⁵ <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/research-centres/tate-research-centre-asia/event-report-Tehching-Hsieh> (accessed 11th August 2021)

¹¹⁶ <https://visi.co.za/watch-tehching-hsiehs-one-year-performance/> (accessed 11th August 2021)

¹¹⁷ <http://colinroche.com/lelivredesnombres>. The original French text reads: “la mise en forme poetique” (accessed 11th August 2021)

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* Original French text: “[L]’angoisse de la page blanche”.

and the observation of [it's] difficulty.”¹¹⁹ *Le Livre des Nombres* could be read as a kind of staging of the act of composition in its rawest, most unencumbered form; the immense task of creating musical material out of nothing, or, in this case, registering a musical tempo taking as its source the developing state of the body in real-time.

3.3 The Process Assemblage

The purpose of the above typologies is not explicitly to systematise the process-product approach, but rather to highlight artistic preoccupations of process in order to point towards certain similar conceptual configurations that exist in my own works. It is to me far more artistically valuable for any strictly controlled or faithfully enacted process to retain some elusiveness. My works achieve a strong quality of oneirism precisely because they place more linear audiovisual processes within, alongside or on top of other less linear, more chaotic or aesthetically ephemeral events.

The first work of the PhD (see Appendix), *Poet Mechanic: BUILD-A-POET*, attempted to stage the creative process of a solo performer in a 20-minute concert setting. Striving towards an aesthetic clarity similar to the minimalist works mentioned above, the piece featured a live-produced text score indicating the context and inspiration behind the piece, along with a task to build and activate one of my own hybrid sound sculptures. The work was unsuccessful on numerous levels, not least as the performer both failed to achieve the ultimate task of the work, this due to my failing to clearly articulate the finer details of the work and its core conceptual groundings. I intended for the audience to experience the work as a type of assemblage of real-time composition and performance. The result, however, was understood more as an absurd theatrical stage piece in which a disorientated performer struggled to follow a mass of scrolling text, subsequently failing to construct a DIY sound instrument that she had never encountered, finally ending by loudly (and for good reason) expressing total confusion as to how exactly the performance should have ended. The collapse of the work was entirely my fault. This led to the clear realisation that in staging any types of processes in my own work, simplicity and singularity were not the answer. Instead, leaning into the possible multiplicitous configurations, whilst more carefully handling and channelling sensations of confusion and disorientation were better suited to both my work and the involvement of any performer participant.

I began to take a more liberal approach to the staging of the creative process, preferring to leave audiences in states of wonder and curiosity, rather than impressing the clear sense that they have

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Original French text: “le récit de l'écriture et le constat de sa difficulté”.

witnessed a strict, linear process unfolding in time. Alongside gathering documentation of my own creative process over the course of the work, more compositional consideration began to be paid to the roles and activities of performers, along with the role of documentation as a form of blending both honest and fictitious audiovisual narratives. The resulting PhD works, both continuously formative and resultant of the above methods, can be understood as toying with methods of retelling facets of the creative process. The creative process behind each of the pieces consists of recomposing certain isolated stages of work into new, less clear sonic or visual narratives, presenting kinds of propositions for new virtual worlds, often set in carefully considered scenographies and stage settings.

This can be experienced in the noisy barrages of journalistic screenshots of typing out musical ideas in *Untitled 1*. The works audiovisual material is not meant to reveal, but rather to visually and sonically bombard the audience in a feeling of forced voyeurism, leading to a considerably abstracted and woozy experience in the concluding movement. An elusive sense of process persists throughout the projections of ongoing virtual world-building experiments in *Untitled 2* and *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0*. The ensemble piece *Untitled, Or, Thirty-Three Confessions*¹²⁰ attempted to turn the staging of the process onto the audience. It invites the listener to consider their own relationship to confession by confronting them with a speaking performer who reads out a list containing a series of admissions of guilt or regret, a few of which touch on utterly private confession. Confession is a universally understood act. The confessional in *Untitled 3* appears in the form of small 3d-printed maquettes of confessional boxes placed on a table by the speaking performer.¹²¹ By witnessing another's confessions in an artistic setting, the work aimed to create a reflective space in which the audience is drawn into enacting their own process of confession, or at least into a process of contemplation on the act and role of confession in their own lives.

The short audiovisual work, *Lot No. 1517*,¹²² invited any number of musicians to record themselves whilst exploring a discrete virtual world setting. The musicians are asked to navigate a simple virtual scene on their computer, alone in a quiet space, whilst narrating their own experience of the process. Each of the resulting audio recordings, along with a simple walkthrough film of the scene were later sent to an electronic musician, along with a request that he remix the materials in any way he wished. The final work blends each of the project's steps: a walkthrough film of the scene created by myself, both the unedited and remixed audiovisual materials layered on top of one another, along with an early screen capture film of the virtual caravan in the scene being constructed in CAD software. The short, yet abstract

¹²⁰ *Untitled 3*

¹²¹ See chapter 6: Worlding

¹²² Commissioned by the Strasbourg-based lovemusic collective in 2020 as part of the *Premieres in Private Places* series. The work features four members of the ensemble, whilst also featuring an audiovisual remix created by the Moscow-based electronic musician, Feliks Mikensky.

washed-out film piece offers an experience of multiple creative processes enacted by each of the work's participants. The resulting experience of this piece is perhaps akin to an almost completely incoherent, meandering dream or hallucination. *Lot No. 1517* does not explicitly stage or clearly narrate any of the participants' creative processes, but rather makes audible the curious retellings of each of the musicians encounter with the virtual scene. It does not foreground the creative process; however, the work is formed of each of the processual steps of its being composed and experimented upon. The work's final composition is authored equally by myself, the producer and each of the four musicians in the ensemble.

3.4 Conclusion to Chapter 3

Much of musical composition and art production takes place beyond the attentions of the audience. However, each of the works mentioned above sought, in unique ways, to more intimately connect the preoccupations of the maker with the receiver of the work. In these examples a new kind of temporal experience of the nature of artistic practice emerges during their being encountered, experiences that ultimately allow a more active engagement with finite artistic issues of labour, routine, struggle, persistence and experimentation.

The creation of music and art is a kind of grappling with time in a number of ways. The only immovable element of both artistic creation and experience is the framing of a shared temporal space, a space that is defined simultaneously by an artwork's creator, its interpreters and the willingness of its audience. Even the most dogmatic process works of Tehching Hsieh and Alvin Lucier limit an audience's experience of time simply by inviting them to co-exist with staged artistic process[es] within a specific temporal framework (set by the author or institution presenting the work[s]).

Live musical performance presents unfolding musical structures, phrases and sonic arrangements that are either composed beforehand, or that form in real-time through the attentive and responsive listening practices of improvisers. The experience of musical time is not necessarily the experience of daily life. To experience a strictly controlled unfolding process, however, is perhaps the closest a composer can get to recreating non-aesthetic or non-musical time. Reich's *Pendulum Music* does little to eschew a listener's natural sense of the flow of time. However, the work instead focuses a listener's attention on two other factors: the emergence of polyrhythm between a number of swaying objects in space, and the smooth deceleration of a system towards equilibrium (or stasis). The work ultimately can be read as metaphorizing the unfolding and expansion of temporal experience in the most conceptually rigorous of ways – to experience *Pendulum Music* is to experience time through the swaying of a pendulum.

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In my own work, the unfolding creative process has throughout the PhD accompanied a kind of persistent reflexive process of saving, storing and reforming sonic and visual by-products of the work being composed, to use as new compositional materials later on. In this context, the passing of time in my pieces could be experienced more as a multitude of different moments or periods in a recent past. The linear experience of the piece unfolding in time is perforated by other, less clearly linear audiovisual temporal elements – ambient electroacoustic musical soundscapes that neither develop nor decay; videos projecting virtual construction projects that loop or never end; performers carrying out extra musical activities often created to be read as either metaphors for creative work itself, or simply to add scenographic and aesthetic richness to a piece.



THE
CREATIVE
PROCESS IS
METAPHOR-
MAKING

4

4. The Creative Process is Metaphor-Making

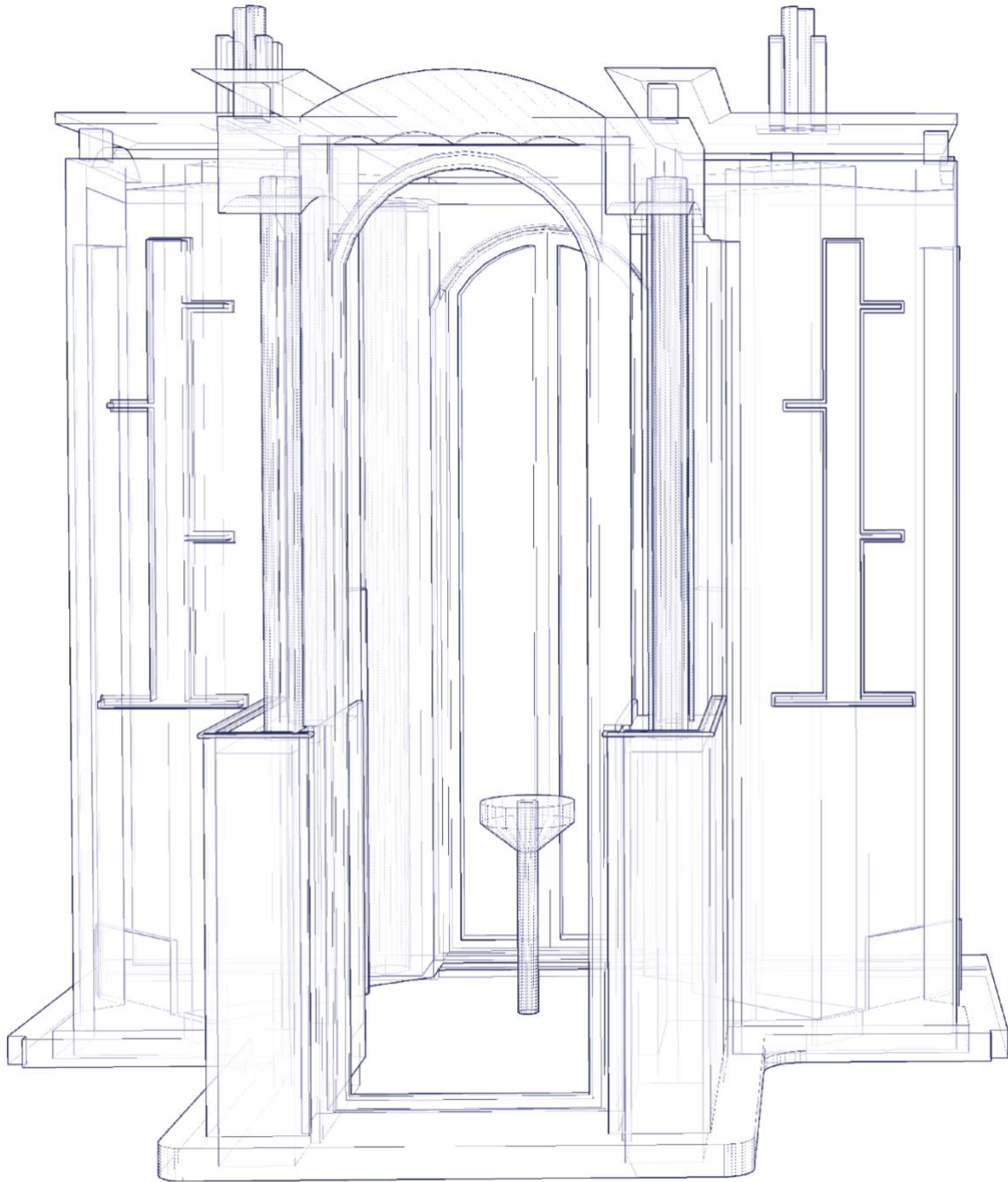


Fig 4.1: *Confessional No.2*, CAD render image

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the communicative and aesthetic function and importance of metaphor. It first identifies the metaphor's role as a communicative construct in language and communication. Two different typologies of metaphor are introduced: similarity-based and similarity-creating. These typologies serve to set examples of both well, and lesser-known metaphors, this in order to outline the aesthetic role of metaphor in generating new meaning and experience.

Whilst I acknowledge the evident pitfalls in addressing a topic of the scale presented by metaphor, for the purposes of this chapter the metaphor is understood as “a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.”¹²³ In translation to music, sounds or sonic entities are in essence able to be understood as types of figures applied to one another in the same fashion as figures of speech. It is important to note that the chapter remains within the focal bounds of the poetic and sensational qualities of the metaphor, qualities that enrich and at times frame the experiences of my own work.

The central section of the chapter introduces the sound art composition *Background Story*, by Japanese sound artist Tetsu Inoue. This piece acts as a case study for highlighting the more distant, slippery, challenging, yet I believe more aesthetically potent, metaphor type – similarity-creating. I am, in my work, interested in metaphors that create novel connections between entities, placing the audience into states of wonder, charm and bewilderment. As such, Inoue's work provides a useful bridge to discuss my own approach to metaphor creation.

Following this section, the chapter then proceeds to a broader discussion around metaphor. It introduces my own works in more detail, whilst also considering the 2018 film work, *Acceptance*, by composer Alexander Schubert as a more direct, perhaps didactic, example of metaphor use in art. The chapter concludes with a return to *Background Story*, arguing for the work's exemplary, though ambiguous use of the similarity-creating metaphor type.

4.2 Allusion and Metaphor

In alluding to something, we make a reference to an existing entity, idea, place or event. The allusion draws on our existing knowledge of this entity, allowing us to elaborate shared qualities between the source (allusion) and the target (subject). The allusion is casual, incidental, yet incomplete. The space opened up from indirectness is left to the audience to fill, to form the connection, and to ‘complete’ the

¹²³<https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100153175;jsessionid=23731FDD9A86CBD7B38DDC3233CA4B55> (Accessed 1st March 2023)

allusion based on an existing understanding of what exactly is being alluded to in the first place. To describe a person as a ‘good Samaritan’ is a commonly used allusion, whether the audience knows the biblical reference of the Samaritan as the only person to show mercy on a man robbed and stripped of his belongings, or not.¹²⁴ A good Samaritan is someone with honest intentions, an altruist who will readily assist and support those in need. We assimilate these kinds of allusions throughout our life. We engage them as appendages to the nuancing and enriching of everyday communication. The allusion allows us to understand one thing as having the qualities of another, without explicit reference. The allusion is a *socially embedded communicative construct* created from an indirect reference, hint, or covert indication to a known entity.

The metaphor, we can argue, is crucially a *creative communicative construct*, one that makes direct reference between two entities that may present no initial connection to each other whatsoever. In metaphorizing something, we create a direct connection between disparate entities or ideas. Connections are formed that did not exist before the metaphor was made. Metaphors, as with allusions, pair two entities or ideas in order that new ontological connections are formed through the imaginative intellectual involvement of the audience. However, a metaphor, although often framed as directly relational (the source *is* the target), simply demands a greater participation (intellectual and imaginative involvement) from its audience to ‘complete’, as shared qualities may not be immediately apparent. This structure – a didactic formation without didactic connection – leaves intentional space for creative interpretation. Metaphorical connections, we might say, must be established through the sheer creative invention on the part of the receiver.

Where an allusion directs a target (*the person*) towards a single relational source (*the Good Samaritan*), the metaphor assumes entirely new connections between two (or more) target entities that themselves often lead to additional conceptual entities.

“Conscience is a human being’s compass”; “Life is a journey”; “Love is war”; “Snow is a blanket”;
“His eyes are diamonds”; “She is the light of my life”.

Both allusion and metaphor establish similarities between entities that invite the audience to enact their own creative process to understand, relate to, and ultimately find meaning in. Metaphors however are far more complex, ephemeral and distant. Far more than allusions, metaphors pose a stimulating challenge to communicative clarity; they may leave the receiver having to work ‘from the ground up’¹²⁵

¹²⁴ The New Testament, *Jesus Sends out the Seventy-Two: The Parable of the Good Samaritan*, Luke 10:25-37, Biblica, 1978.

¹²⁵ ‘From the ground up’ is a complex yet commonly understood metaphor. To ‘work from the ground up’ is formed of two orientational or spatial concepts: [1] that the ‘ground’ is the lowest possible place from which to ‘work’; [2] the common assumption that ‘up[wards]’ is a ‘positive’ movement as opposed to ‘down[wards]’. If I was to ‘work from the ground down’,

in order to arrive at forming meanings that may not have even been intended by the creator of the metaphor.¹²⁶ I consider the metaphor a thematic artistic construct with great capacity for generating similarity through intrigue, a potent material through which to stimulate a shared creative experience between the maker and the audience.

4.3 Language and Metaphor

Metaphor creation is the drawing of connections between two or more entities, such that a novel expressive entity, or conceptual container, is created.¹²⁷ This container, in turn, triggers a further creative processual step for the receiver, who must unpack the received metaphor to internalise and understand it. The metaphor is packed, sent, received, unpacked and understood. Metaphors range in complexity and scope, from the likening of one object to another, to the layering of directional, spatial or temporal words or phrases. Metaphor is often used in order to describe even language itself.¹²⁸

Take the phrase “I might be wasting a lot of time getting my ideas across in this thesis”. In this phrase alone, there are two metaphors at work. The idea of wasting time proposes that time is a cultural commodity, and the idea of it being wasted proposes it as a commodity of great value. The notion of time as a commodity draws on the well-known metaphorical notion that “time is money.”¹²⁹ The idea of *getting* an idea *across* is a ‘conduit’ metaphor – a metaphorical construct that is formed by placing an idea (object) into a word (container) and transmitting both (along a conduit), for the idea to then be unpacked from its container and read by the receiver.¹³⁰

“Music is a carrier of meaning”; “I am buried in the process of making a new project”; “The sound of the violin doesn’t come through in the recording.”

If I was to ‘rise earlier and spend my time more wisely’, I would ‘sink into a more comfortable sleep at night’. The commodified nature of time is here again expressed, whilst the idea of sleep is filtered through simple, though highly elegant ‘orientational’ metaphors:¹³¹ *consciousness is up* [rise], *unconsciousness is*

the receiver would assume a negative, unproductive and ultimately antithetical result of my initial intention to ‘work’. The same applies to forward and backward: ‘moving forward’ is positive whilst ‘moving backward’ is negative. The ubiquity of both spatial and orientational concepts in metaphor construction is explored later. However, for a far more useful discussion on the subject, see Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (2013) *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press

¹²⁶ The two principal types of metaphor – *similarity-based* and *similarity-creating* – are discussed later. One of these metaphor types shares considerable similarities to the allusion.

¹²⁷ See Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (2013) *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* page 8

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

down [sink]. The receiver understands this metaphor as it is universally accepted that sleep is something which we *move into and out of*. Sleep is not something that happens immediately, unless one is rendered unconscious from an external agent:

“I was knocked out.”

Being rendered unconscious here is a forceful and unstoppable act. The experiencer of sudden unconsciousness has been pushed *out* of their state of consciousness, and *into* the state of unconsciousness. From sleep and consciousness, hunger to intoxication, emotional changes to developments in social status, expressing thought and action in the English language depends on an immensely complex network of metaphor-creation structures, most commonly orientational or conduit metaphors.¹³²

4.4 Similarity-Based, Similarity-Creating

Mary-Anne Mace, in her thesis *Modelling Creativity*, distinguishes between *similarity-creating* and *similarity-based* metaphors in language and, particularly, in how creative activity serves to generate novel meanings. With the *similarity-based* metaphor, the receiver easily recognises the nascent similarities between the source and the target. This is undoubtedly similar to the allusion, in which the recognition of what is being alluded to is key to its understanding. Similarity-based metaphors are, by design, unfailingly successful in connecting the two intended concepts. The similarity-based metaphor can be almost immediately understood, however distant the source and target concepts may have originally been.

SIMILARITY-BASED metaphor: *Life is a rollercoaster*.

Life is a journey, with unknown future outcomes. Life presents thrilling and challenging experiences that the subject cannot understand until they have been through those experiences and can recall them. This is similar to the experience of a rollercoaster (although, evidently, life presents this on a much larger scale). Both a rollercoaster and life contain immediately recognisable shared qualities, rendering the metaphor both successful and enjoyable to unpack. However, one does not need to have experienced a rollercoaster to understand the metaphor, as much as one also does not need to have experienced any particularly dramatic events over the course of their life to appreciate the two concepts

¹³² *Metaphors We Live By* provides *in-depth* studies of metaphor-creation structures.

as one and the same. It is difficult to experience a similarity-based metaphor as containing any novelty (and, by extension, beauty or intrigue) as its ubiquity in language renders the metaphor common, basic and ultimately lacking in creative and imaginative impact.

Similarity-creating metaphors, on the other hand, create connections between two concepts that previously may not have demonstrated any associations whatsoever.¹³³ The formation of a similarity-creating metaphor should be understood as a wholly creative act. Importantly, there are also considerable levels of success and failure in similarity-creating metaphors. As the similarity-based metaphor is universal, wrapped neatly into the complexities of everyday language, it is easily transmitted between and across ranges of social groups. Similarity-creating metaphors however are considerably more subjective, aesthetic and, crucially, creative.

NOT-SO-SUCCESSFUL SIMILARITY-CREATING metaphor: *Life is a caravan park.*

In what immediate ways might life be a caravan park? I could explain a connection, describing the caravan park as a space of anonymity, a kind of in-between site that could be understood as similar to life simply through sharing *some distant qualities of temporality*, or, as both sometimes moving, and sometimes not, for example. This connection is obscure, however you, the receiver of this metaphor, are already flirting with the connections. I could explain my own personal experience of the caravan park as a unique entity that nurtures changing cultural behaviours and identities, a kind of fluid social system creating its own temporal structure beyond the more banal or unnoticed structures of daily life. The connections are not evident, and they need a great deal of explanation and unpacking to *really* make sense. In short, this metaphor fails in communicating immediately graspable connections. It is formed from another's personal perspective and demands a particular understanding of an entity that the receiver doesn't associate with common experience. Perhaps only a person with a connection as immediate as my own to the caravan park may astutely understand and relate to this metaphor, however still with difficulty. The initial complexity, the disconnect between life and a caravan park render the metaphor difficult to hold on to.

But, even if life is – metaphorically – less of a caravan park than a rollercoaster, the differences between the source and the target in the caravan park metaphor are precisely what makes it more interesting, seductive and novel. It is simply a more aesthetically pleasing, collaborative relation to make; the metaphor is enriched through the creative participations of its receivers. The receiver of a never

¹³³ Kittay, E. F. (1997). *Of "men" and metaphors: Shakespeare, embodiment, and filing cabinets*. In T. B. Ward, S. M. Smith, & J. Vaid (Eds.), *Creative thought: An investigation of conceptual structures and processes* (p. 375–402). American Psychological Association.

before experienced metaphor can enjoy the task of elaborating on new relations between the entities expressed, leading to a far more enjoyable and worthwhile process of conceptual decoding and meaning-making than with the similarity-based metaphor.

MORE SUCCESSFUL SIMILARITY-CREATING metaphor: *Music is a world*.

Music is not immediately recognised as a world, but viewing music as a broad, self-contained universal phenomenon containing multiplicities of expressions, linguistic forms and schools of behaviour, results in a rich and understandable metaphor.¹³⁴ This is not dissimilar to the *life is a rollercoaster* metaphor, however *music is a world* is simply a lesser-known similarity-creating metaphor. *Music is a world* is less common than its similarity-based universal comparative, *life is a rollercoaster*. It is however less strange and, for its relational strengths is not as aesthetically rich as the *life is caravan park* metaphor.

Mace states that “creative ideas arise from the creation of similarities.”¹³⁵ Unlike in similarity-based metaphors, the aesthetic potential of the similarity-creating metaphor is ultimately located beyond mere reception; it is created, creates new association and, therefore, works as a vehicle for generating authentic, novel, aesthetic meaning.¹³⁶ The similarity-creating metaphor (and, by extension, the creative process) allows for the “represent[ation] [of] a concept from an entirely different ontological perspective, such as the concept or object is now understood in terms of the attributes of the new ontological perspective.”¹³⁷

Similarity-creating metaphors make new ontological representation through creative, imaginative, and experimental aesthetic meaning making. New entities produced in art lead the audience to new enquiries into the meaning and relations of these entities. These enquiries lead to newly assumed knowledge, and this new knowledge leads to an openness to new experiences. The similarity-creating metaphor, it could be argued, produces entirely new experiences of the world. Let us now consider a musical example.

¹³⁴ Music as a world is also discussed in chapter 6.

¹³⁵ Mace, M., *Modelling the Creative Process: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Creativity in the Domain of Artmaking*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Canterbury, 1998. Pp. 20

¹³⁶ The *Cremaster Cycle* (1994-2004) film series by American artist Matthew Barney makes great use of a mass of shrouded metaphors. *Cremaster Cycle* (1994-2002) Directed by Matthew Barney, Palm Pictures (USA)/ The Directors Label (USA)

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* Pp. 21

4.5 Tetsu Inoue, *Background Story*

In 1996, the enigmatic Japanese sound artist Tetsuo Inoue released *World Receiver*,¹³⁸ a 70-minute album of crisp, close field recordings swathed in electronic sound design.¹³⁹ Across the album, acoustic recordings and electronics pair together as raw materials with which Inoue smears, stains and patinates the ‘real’ world of the field with the ‘artificial’ world of synthesis. Recognizable sounds dissolve into fantastical soundscapes, the earthly swoons in the cosmic. The listener is drawn towards recognisable places and entities – a supermarket checkout, a screeching elevator, rain tapping on a window, distant birdsong – but, as each entity comes into focus it almost immediately melts away into a dreamy, warm wash of electronica.

Across the album, the wash of electronics, synthesisers and ebbing drones give way to intimate field recorded sources, before eating them up again and swelling into ambience. The album is fastidious in its marrying of two musical traditions, field recording and pure acousmatis, producing delicate but immersive sound collages brimming with allusion and, in one of the tracks in particular, a potent musical metaphor.

Most tracks on *World Receiver* are defined by a singular unfolding, where field recorded sounds are placed within a growing swathe of synthesised glitches, drones and off-kilter melodies. Over time, the recorded materials disappear under the electronics towards entirely ambient electronic soundscapes that smoothly fade out to silence. The relationship between recognisable and abstract sonic entities is transparent: transformation cues a smooth breakdown in recognisable sources; ambient electronics saturate and subsume field recordings. *Background Story*, the album’s fourth track, is different, and contains what can be understood as a rich musical metaphor. Over the course of *Background Story*, the processes of transformation from recorded materials to ambient electronic soundscapes are folded back onto themselves and, in an especially potent moment in the work, opens up a window onto a new and distinct sonic environment that completely immerses the listener in a way unlike any other moment in the album.

In *Background Story*, a recording of cricket-like chirruping opens the piece, which is soon after joined by a pulsation of gloopy sine tones. These sine tones birth a distant and ruined hi-fi instrumental fanfare that fades in and out. This sound-world seems to texturally fold into itself, giving way to a bright droning electronic organ that is soon accompanied by loosely jittering echoes of itself. As the work approaches five minutes, it appears to be characteristically transforming into pure electronica as in each of the album’s other works. Out of fading electronic textures, the distant, wistful sound of a barrel organ playing a listless waltz appears. With the gradual emergence of the organ comes the sounds of revellers

¹³⁸ Tetsu Inoue.1996, *Background Story* [CD]. USA: Instinct Records

¹³⁹ The work can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PY1nRXBsEw> (accessed 8th October 2021)

laughing and talking. A new, and real environment has been conjured. We, the listeners, find ourselves in a funfair. The previous five minutes disappear from memory. This funfair is not an illusion. It is the background story, the literal groundwork, of the entire track. Almost as quickly as we settle and relax into the sonic charms of the funfair it begins to pixelate and break up into gently fluttering, airy synth arpeggios, before fading out entirely. A real space, a familiar sonic entity, once again melts into its artificial other. The funfair was never fully real but, as it is now clear, neither was anything else in the work – the appearance of something fully discernible out of something ambiguous seems to further induce a sense of imagistic hallucination. The entire track may have simply been reorganising itself from the ruined fragments of the funfair from the beginning, only finally revealing the source in its final moments.

I will return to this piece at the end of the chapter, after first returning to the metaphor and discussing its role in the creative process.

4.6 The Metaphor in Practice

We usually think of the metaphor as based in communication and conceptual interpretation, but we can also understand the metaphor in terms of the creative process. Thinking and making through metaphor in art leads to rich, meaningful, complex and challenging aesthetic experiences, not just for the receiver but also the maker – the audience and practitioner – alike. The substitutive and suggestive nature of metaphors engage the receiver (audience) in enacting their own creative process, this through an imaginative decoding of metaphorical structures that, in turn, lead them to create their own meaning of the artwork. In this way, we can consider the metaphor a unique type of collaborative artistic construct. Metaphors in art are less dependent on the passive receivership of the audience; they should be understood more as kinds of nuanced participatory phenomena built on the shared process of decoding unfolding aesthetic worlds – the worlds presented by the artist, rife with metaphor, vivifying audience receivership as they must ‘work from the ground up’ in order to find meaning in what they are experiencing.

In my work I am grappling with different ways to manifest and craft aspects of self-reflexivity into affective audiovisual experiences. In this equally revealing and open-ended process, I hope to successfully transmit the freshness of my own exploration and conceptual experimentation that runs from the first inklings of an idea through to its blooming, assembling and eventual formation into a self-contained piece.

My own creative practice is an ongoing crafting of reflexive, kaleidoscopic assemblages formed, in equal measure, of audiovisual homages to making, mixed references to the sites and spaces of making, and increasing manipulations of a performing participants' role from interpreter to role player, musician to mute actor, artist to untrained labourer. Nested metaphors for making, nested within higher-level metaphors, these nested within a sensual, worlded audiovisual experience, are presented to the audience to actively decode or recompose as they wish.

Some pieces do focus more directly on the development of my own creative processes, conceiving the staging of the process as a presentation of collected audiovisual traces of artistic activity. *Untitled 1*¹⁴⁰ makes explicit use of screenshot and real-time recordings that plunge the audience into a stream of ritualistic sketch-making. A fluttering and twitching textured mass of typing endless paragraphs of ideas can be understood as a voyeuristic glimpse of the piece—relatively untouched and unedited – as it was in the process of being formed. Scrolling typing is a metaphor for exploration.

At other times, similarly reflexive and intimate periods of the creative process are nested into more ambiguous (verging on obscure) groupings and configurations. Over the course of *Untitled 1*, for example, self-reference and reportage-like sound and image gradually break down to make way for wholly metaphorical materials that conjure the idea of creativity as fluid, unbarred, ludic and amorphous. The audience are led into territories of pure audiovisual poeticisms, invited into a state of vagueness and oneirism that can be reformed and given meaning through their engaged and imaginative involvement.

These instances present experiences of the dream-like and the substitutive, intentionally left open to each receiver's interpretation. They may only beguile and confuse without the ability to be resolved. They may initially elude meaningful critical or didactic interpretation. They might be experienced as floating somewhere between metaphor and allusion; as distantly suggestive and poetic whilst at the same time appearing to make direct reference to other elements visible or audible in the piece. I welcome this type of work not immediately being understood, as I welcome the inability of the audience to grasp the meaning or purpose of any metaphor. Rather, it is the sensual and affective experience of the work assemblage as a whole – the ways that it stimulates a sense of internality, reflexivity and curiosity on the part of the audience – that are of central interest to the composition of this section in the work.

¹⁴⁰ Cameron Graham, *Untitled, Or, Symphony of Red Bubbles* (2020)

4.7 The Creative Process and Metaphor

In chapter 2, the creative process was described as a multi-variable¹⁴¹ and socio-materialist¹⁴² phenomenon that develops through a complex calibration of cognitive and conceptual mechanisms in the generating of novel meanings and connections. In essence, the creative process is by far not a linear teleological process. It is non-hierarchical and multiplicitous, environmentally sensitive, and positively volatile. The creative process is also deeply dependent on the cognitive, social and imaginative capacities of the practitioner in ongoing engagements with materials. Creativity has also been defined as the cognitive and imaginative ability to consider something (an object, entity or situation) from a different frame of reference.¹⁴³ Creativity researcher Mary Anne-Mace considers a number of conceptual, cognitive procedures as being vital to informing the making and discovering of an artwork: *metaphor, analogy, polysemy, conceptual combination, and conceptual expansion*.¹⁴⁴

The metaphor, the focus of this chapter, allows for the drawing of novel connections between the otherwise disparate, to produce new aesthetic entities from ephemeral conceptual ideas, and to create a meaningful aesthetic experience for both practitioner (as receiver of metaphors) and audience (as maker of metaphors). In *Background Story* we engage in a more active listening experience that shifts constantly between recognisable locational sound and abstract electronica. The eventual appearance of a complete field recorded environment becomes, in context, more fictional and fantastical than anything else in the work.

In my work, the experience of sound and image are based similarly in fantasies and oneirisms. Often the appearance of an element is intended to reference another, although the reference is not made clear. My work is less concerned with immediacies of recognition, and more in unfolding revelations of other-worldly sensations. In this sense, my own creative process, and the artworks that result, should be understood as an incessant, experimental process of exploring, forming, and reforming metaphors in the construction of lucid and reflexive audiovisual assemblages.

¹⁴¹ Mace, M., *Modelling the Creative Process: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Creativity in the Domain of Artmaking*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Canterbury, 1998.

¹⁴² Manta, A. (2018), Demystifying Creativity: An Assemblage Perspective Towards Creativity. *Creativity Studies*. (11)(1). 85-101.

¹⁴³ Mace, M., *Modelling the Creative Process: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Creativity in the Domain of Artmaking*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Canterbury, 1998.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

4.8 Metaphors in my own work

Mace states that “new properties emerge from metaphorical combination.”¹⁴⁵ Metaphor in language may be crucial to creating credible and comprehensible combinations. In art however, metaphor is employed in a less clear fashion. Metaphors in art produce allusive and ephemeral amalgamations of concepts, these concepts leading to experiences beyond the direct and immediately understood communicative settings of written and spoken language. In communication (language) the dominance of metaphor lies not only in transmitting broader relational connection, but also in conveying qualities of language itself.¹⁴⁶ In art making, metaphor creation leads to entirely novel connections and, as such, can lead the experiencer towards revelations, and strange new meanings in disparate themes and subjects. Metaphor creation, as similarity-creating, can bring to life aesthetic worlds that contain their own unique languages, systems and rules, developed in part simply by an audience’s active engagement with them.

The metaphor can, further, act both as content and lens. We can experience metaphors as encouraging the formation of new connections or can be presented with a global metaphor without direct oppositions for us to gravitate towards. In the latter case, we may come to understand a work as a kind of total metaphor that initially alludes to initial meaningful decoding. However, its complexity may in this case be precisely the element that the artist wishes to explore and present. In particularly effective artworks, the metaphor is situated in the interstitial spaces between similarity and difference. The metaphor is not simply read, explained and accepted, but is a subject that welcomes further unpacking and reading.

It oscillates between the idea presented (*the work and its content*) and the manner in which it is received (*decoded and experienced by the audience*). It is speculative, and its demand for speculation is precisely what we as audiences love and hate in equal measure – to not understand fully, but to relish in the process of trying to. We, the audience, are creatively equal to the metaphor, being complex entities with endless potential for the generation of further complexity.

Metaphor creation is bridge-building; Metaphor creation is cookery; Metaphor creation is world-building.

An affection for new metaphor-creation runs throughout my current creative practice. My approach is concerned less with a metaphor’s success or failure, but more with its capacity to transmit allusory, absurd, even mystical connections. Projects instil previously non-existent metaphorical

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Lakoff and Johnson note that over 70% of the English language is used to describe language itself. Lakoff, G., Johnson, M., *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, 2013, page 10.

connections – music as confession and introspection in *Untitled 3*,¹⁴⁷ popping candy as glitch in TNAHCC,¹⁴⁸ an amplifier as a tuning fork in *Comfort Objects*, the static caravan as a gallery in *Untitled 2*, for example. Some connections may be understood immediately, others might remain ephemeral and poetic. Objects, stage scenes and electroacoustic soundworlds as new metaphorical homogeneities present the audience a transmissional mass of references and metaphors. Finally connected on stage, in the temporal framework of a performance presentation, I hope that these intermedia masses will keep a conceptual distance and elusiveness, whilst being able to produce a truly palpable sense of the substitutive – *in what way is this theme, activity, film, or object suggesting or representing something I'm not being shown explicitly? How do these sounds and images relate to me and my own life experience?*

It is important that my work be understood in large part as an assemblage of unresolved metaphors, be they collections of soundscapes, film scenes, object-instruments, exaggerated performer activities, or all simultaneously. Metaphor is crucial in my own process of making, a making which leads to discovery, and a discovery which in turn informs further making. An action research methodology ‘peppered’¹⁴⁹ with the open-endedness of similarity-creating metaphor construction.

Activities and materials both located within, and borne out of, my creative working processes, along with the roles and activities of performers, are together treated as types of elemental metaphors. Metaphors for themselves, for each other, or as an aesthetic connecting tissue between external elements that may have been pervasive in the composing of the work, but are not explicitly present in its final state. In this sense metaphors might be thought of as empty containers, or potentialities that are populated by listeners and audiences.

Through the metaphor I try to connect the personal creative process, the creative and domestic environment, and the immediate world around me – compositional tools are often treated as reflexive or metaphorical vehicles through which new connections between materials, spaces and sonic signs are forged. In *Untitled 1*, the recording of typed out sketches led me to explore how my own compositional presence might further manifest itself in sonic, filmic or gestural form beyond the recordings. Turning to one of the works performers and how they might be able to evocatively suggest my own presence, led to the creation of a movement in which the performer sifts through a stack of paper and selects which pages to keep and which to throw away. This performed act aimed to present the performer as administrator, or silently ruminating auteur, rather than their typical role as performing musical interpreter. The act of sorting through scraps of paper also connected my own wayward creative process to the ways in which emerging materials are at times so instinctively arranged and embedded into the final work assemblage.

¹⁴⁷ *Untitled, Or, Thirty-Three Confessionals* (2021) for quartet and objects.

¹⁴⁸ *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0* (2020) for ensemble, film, soundtrack, lights, objects and scenography.

¹⁴⁹ A metaphor linking the experience of food and reading.

Composing is sorting through [your own] scraps.

Composition is a trash pile.

Globally, *Untitled 1* is also loosely structured in ritual form. The three main sections of the work refer to the three stages of ritual and ceremony processes (as developed by anthropologist Victor Turner):

1. Separation/Inversion and Reversal
2. Transition/Liminality
3. Reaggregation/Incorporation¹⁵⁰

The first section is a type of temporal reversal, rushing through a flurry of biographical images from 2020 backwards to infancy. The second is a longer audiovisual process that reveals the months of sketching and experimenting with the potential materials that would make their way into the final work. The third is an incorporation and acceptance of my own creative process as a process of pure play. The audience will more easily immediately understand the initial metaphorical connections, sensing clear autobiographical qualities in the first section, following the growing the documentary mass of creative work/labour in the second, perhaps becoming more bemused by the works' final descent into a tonal sound world and close-up films of drooping magic sand and popping candy cocktails.

Composition is ritual; Composition is suspension; Composition is wooze.

In *Untitled 2*, the pianist is instructed to meander around the piano and prepare numerous strings with blu tac, carrying out this task with as much audible contact with the instrument as possible. Accompanying films offer a dreamy walkthrough of my own process of creating a virtual caravan park over the course of two months in CAD software. A stereo soundtrack projects field recordings of drunk revellers singing karaoke from small speakers inside the piano. Between and during these recordings, the pianist returns to his stool and plays a number of slow melodic lines intended to loosely recall these scrambled and hewn recordings. The work globally treats the static caravan and the piano in much the same way – the caravan site as an agential container for my own creative (and domestic) life; the piano as an agential container for the pianist's creative life.

¹⁵⁰ Turner, V., *From Ritual to Theatre; The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York. PAJ Publications. 1984. pp.43

The piano is a caravan; The caravan is a piano.

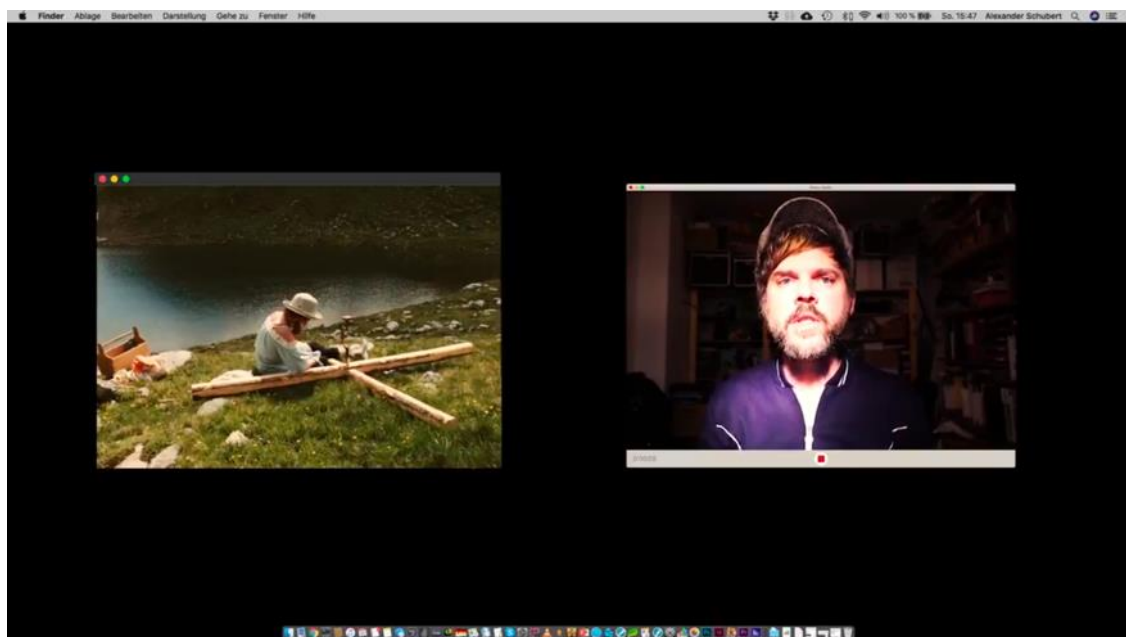
On reflection, *Untitled 2* created a more subtle and effective experience of metaphor. *Untitled 1* follows a clear three-part structure, however as it is cast within a more evident biographical narrative structure, the piece as a whole projects an immediately clearer message and leaves less space for the audience to wonder. *Untitled 2* however suspends the performer in a growing intermedial world that neither develops to climax, nor does it modulate (both sonically, and in scenographic dynamic) in any considerable sense. *Untitled 2* introduces a more carefully woven fabric of electronic sound, live musical material and video, one that stimulates a more persistent and engaged process of decoding and meaning making by the audience (primarily as crucial narrative connections between elements are not revealed or resolved in simple or direct terms).

4.9 Alexander Schubert, *Acceptance*

Whilst in my own work, I treat the metaphor as an aesthetic tool for creating direct, yet highly allusory connections for the audience to unpack (which, I argue, is a form of similarity-creating) other works use similarity-based metaphor to present metatextual, journalistic references to the act and struggle of artmaking more generally. *Acceptance* is a 30-minute film work made by the composer Alexander Schubert. The work was created for the clarinettist Carola Schaal, and is formed as a type of obscure, metareferential documentary. Rather than creating any musical or traditional performance instructions for the performer to carry out, the work follows Schaal, alone in the Austrian mountains, carrying out a simple but physically demanding task: building a number of wooden crucifixes around a lake in the mountains. Along with her own recorded personal commentary of this experience, the composer's own commentary retells the events, processes and personal experiences that informed his creative decisions and led to the work we are watching. Schubert describes Schaal's experience on-film as a direct metaphor for the trials of creative practice itself. The physically testing process of erecting a crucifix, beyond its glaring religious connotations, is, to Schubert, the strongest metaphor for the testing nature of creating artwork.

The end of *Acceptance* sees a digitally rendered glowing entity appearing above the lake, pulling the piece even deeper into the realm of pseudo-religious metaphor. The light, proclaims Schubert, is "an indifferent, still standing light (...)." Of another of his collaborators who is featured later in the work, helping him to render the digital object in the film, Schubert says "he is my symbol of failure, and accepting what it is".

Artmaking is accepting failure; Artmaking is tribulation; Artmaking is revelation.



Figs. 4.2 and 4.3: Stills from *Acceptance* (2018). With permission from the composer.

Schubert's use of metaphor differs from my own. *Acceptance* references known similarity-based metaphors, not to invite any extended creative engagement from the audience, but as immediately understood references that allow other, even more mystical and pseudo religious content, more prominence in the narrative. Schubert places unmistakable symbols in the service of a self-reflective, stylized art film with a singular, albeit incredibly effective, message about the 'impossibility of making a just artwork.'¹⁵¹ Carola Schall takes on the role of an aesthetic martyr, a struggling labourer erecting wooden crosses, all the while reflecting on her own pains as a performing artist. The metaphors are obvious, on-the-nose, reductive and primitive. However, this is clearly intentional. The work can be likened to richly imagistic Scandinavian-produced thrillers, and the darkly tinged reportage pieces of directors like Werner Herzog. Herzog's works are intentionally stylized as hard-hitting, revelatory documents focussed on a single cultural or social thematic. His works immediately focus the audience's attention on the struggles and personal experiences of the protagonists, this above any hidden meaning or messages. Schubert, similarly, focuses the lens of *Acceptance* entirely on Schaal's struggles, this as a poetic way to directly represent his own, using commonly understood metaphorical constructs to amplify the idea that art-making and disciplined performance are painful struggles to undertake. The work is concerned less with leaving the audience to decode unresolved meanings, spiritual revelations and abstract affirmations of the artist in making his work. Schubert exploits commonly understood metaphors and references to 'hit home'¹⁵² his message, using the container of a difficult durational performance intervened by self-reflection into a gripping filmic narrative about art and strife.

4.10 Back, to *Background Story*

In section 4.5 I considered whether the seventh track on Tetsu Inoue's *World Receiver* could be understood as a musical metaphor. Whatever the metaphor posed by the funfair section of the work may or may not have been – and crucially whether this section even presented a metaphor at all – is of great interest to my project. *Background Story* sets up an oneiric narrative that pulls us endlessly between imagined spaces, but these spaces are informed, guided and transformed by recognisable sonic entities. The key section of the work reveals an entirely real space, although in the wider context this space becomes equally, if not more oneiric, abstract and fantastical than the electroacoustic dream that came before it. *Background Story* to me exemplifies the capacity for music to allude and to metaphorize, to set up direct relations between the imagined and the recognizable – relations that the audience must ultimately figure out for themselves. Any meaningful connections may never be fully formed, and the

¹⁵¹ Composer's website programme note. See <http://www.alexanderschubert.net/works/Acceptance.php> (accessed 10th December 2021)

¹⁵² A metaphor linking sport with communication.

work may forever remain a type of secretive metaphor that is understood only by the composer. The work may be read by me as a metaphor but by another listener as a masterfully constructed fictional sound portrait, that simply has a unique form different to the other works on the album.

Whichever direction Inoue may have originally intended, the piece ultimately attunes us closely to the space between recorded and manipulated sound environments that are in flow between opposition and pairing. The work creates connections between the disparate, whilst demanding that the listener form their own meaning of a real sonic environment when it is presented in such an elusive and poetic context. The ‘real’ and the ‘artificial’, folding one into the other in constant obscurity, in constant revolve, could be read as a distant, perhaps tenuous, although undoubtedly fascinating metaphor. The composer is surely not attempting to say that ‘a cricket is a funfair’. To me, the work taken as a whole *is* the metaphor. *Background Story* achieves a masterful sense of the substitutive, reflexive potential of music as metaphor. Whilst earlier sound entities seem to naturally couple with each other, the finale emerges as if from a dream that has been taking place the whole time inside the work itself. The recognisable and the fantastical dissolve into one another with a subtle ‘pulling back of the curtain’¹⁵³ onto reality – reality is fantasy.

4.11 Conclusion to Chapter 4

Metaphors as similarity-creating are highly conducive to forming new connections between otherwise disparate, magnetically opposed concepts. Whilst in language, “metaphor is a figurative expression which involves understanding one concept in terms of another,”¹⁵⁴ in art metaphors allow the artist to liberally pair the figurative with the more conceptual, layering disparate references and unresolved connections together, confident that when presented in artistic contexts, they will induce new and enriching sensorial and aesthetic experiences for the audience. Assemblages of non-teleological materials and elements *lay the groundwork onto which* the artist can *build* new experiential worlds, *into which* audiences can *enter* and participate in a shared creative process of decoding and understanding.¹⁵⁵

As can be experienced in my work, the object or sound may not be immediately recognisable as a clear carrier of meaning. However, in the oneiric, wayward and even downright bemusing nature of my works, there is I hope an impulse to first accept the assemblage for its experiential richness and kiltered

¹⁵³ A beautiful orientational or movement metaphor treating reality as a physical object that can be viewed or accessed at will.

¹⁵⁴ Mace, M., *Modelling the Creative Process: A Grounded Theory Analysis of Creativity in the Domain of Artmaking*. Doctoral Thesis. University of Canterbury, 1998. Pp. 10

¹⁵⁵ Numerous metaphors in italics.

Chapter 4

atemporality. The works can be understood broadly as an invitation to consciously enter into a setting of compositional play and, whilst not foreseeing where you might be going, finding stimulation in having to actively decode the forest of nested activities appearing before you.



50

TECHNOLOGY,
MEDIA,
TRANSMEDIA

5. TECHNOLOGY, MEDIA, TRANSMEDIA

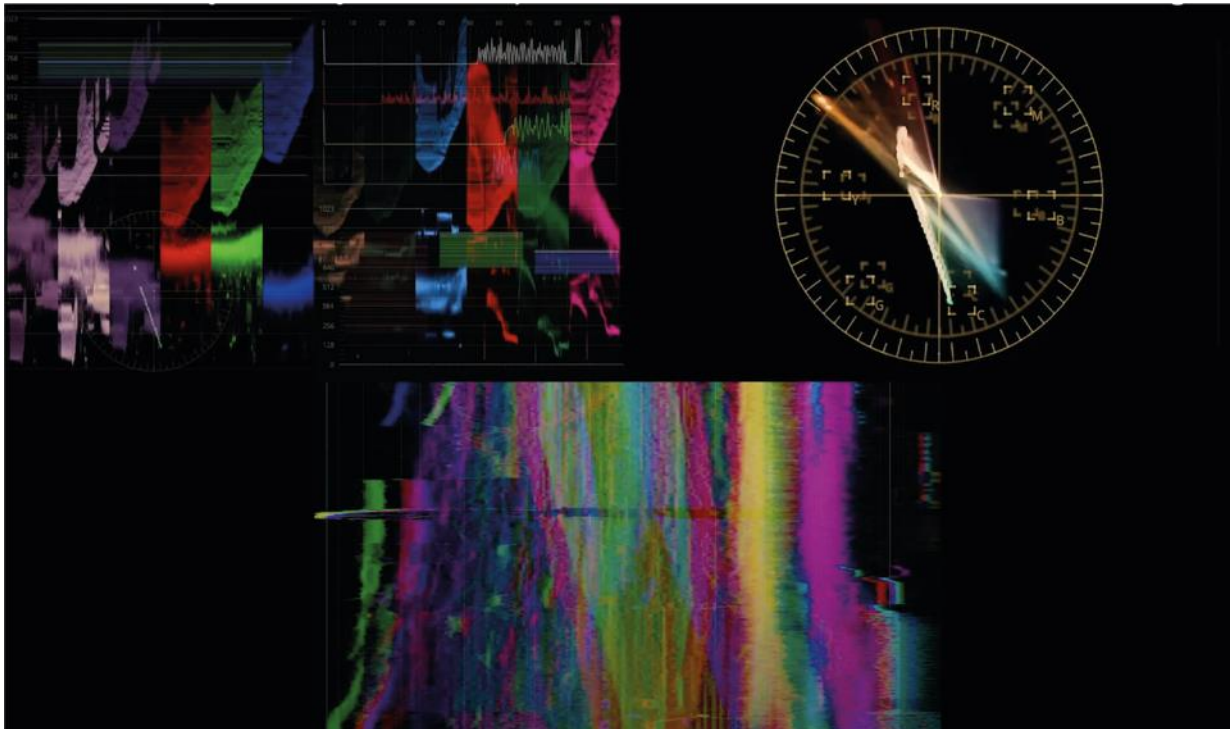


Fig. 5.1: Still of video screens 1-3 of *Untitled, or, 'the thing about shoegaze is it doesn't...'* (2021).

5.1 Introduction: Technology and Multimedia

The following discusses the use and affordance of technological media in my work. By technological media, I simply mean any tool (software, hardware, electromechanical device, film screen, speaker, light strip, for example) that makes its way into one of my projects. Technological media are here considered first for their agency in guiding the development of the creative process. They are also described as useful tools for amplifying an audience's experience (or contact) with themes of deceleration, digital worlding, metareference and self-reflexivity. The use of media, along with examples of its exploitation are also discussed in the works of other practitioners using technologies not just as tools in a linear production process, but as guiding principal agents in both the production process and final experience of a musical work, playing central roles in developing the work of new musical and artistic practitioners today.

Music is a multimedia artform drawing on a number of non-musical media technologies in the production and reception of sound.¹⁵⁶ New Music is a discrete musical arena that makes use of both analogue and digital technologies in the service of sound production and reception. In recent decades, New Music has increasingly become a multivalent multimedial artistic practice. Sound (as a complex, potent, natural acoustic phenomenon in itself) remains central, but where other elements such as dance, text, music technology and video are incorporated into works for the concert hall. This trend within New Music has been given a number of terms, such as Music in the Expanded Field¹⁵⁷ and The New Discipline.¹⁵⁸ The use of specific media to elaborate both sonic and visual ideas of a musical composition entails a drawing of methods and media from other, non-musical artistic practices into the compositional sphere. The media – digital and analogue technologies – are most simply an imperative accommodating agent to the creative compositional process in all forms of music today. Often (though less and less today) overlooked as silent, passive tools, the technologies that mediate the composer's practice impact the production and setting of a work before, during and beyond a work's performance, whilst all the while mediating (and thereby, leading) the listening, watching and overall aesthetic reception and readings of audiences.

Even with a multitude of technological media having been habitualised on the concert music stage,¹⁵⁹ it is still important to question the intended relationships (literal and/or allusory) between a technology and a resulting music, the technology and the musicians and, most crucially, the role of technological media in either propping up or ultimately impeding the core conceptual intentions of a composer's project.

What is the reason for the technology – a video screen or vinyl player, cassette tape, neon light strip or quadraphonic speaker setup – to have to be used in this work? Is this however so pertinent to ask now, given the already expanded multimedia and DIY-aesthetic languages in new music, or the mass of current and redundant analogue and digital technologies in contemporary,¹⁶⁰ not to mention the

¹⁵⁶ Nicholas Cook defines music as an exclusively multimedia artform, positing that it has always depended on some form of additional visual, physical media (the score, programme notes, the physical staging and gestures of the musicians, for example) for the successful and meaningful transmission of musical sound[s] (see Cook, N. (2001) *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, Oxford University Press. Further insightful studies around the multimedial nature of music include Sexton, J. (2007) *Music, Sound and Multimedia: From the Live to the Virtual*. Edinburgh University Press, and Manovich, L. (2002) *The Language of New Media*, MIT Press.

¹⁵⁷ Ciciliani, M., Music in the Expanded Field - On Recent Approaches to Interdisciplinary Composition. Rebhahn, Michael and Thomas Schäfer: Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik, Band 24, Mainz: Schott Verlag.

¹⁵⁸ Walshe, J. (2016), The New Discipline: A Compositional Manifesto. <https://www.borealisfestival.no/2016/the-new-discipline-4/> (accessed 18th November 2021)

¹⁵⁹ See the works of Stefan Prins, Marianthi Papalexandri-Alexandri, Sarah Nemtsov, Kelley Sheehan for recent examples.

¹⁶⁰ Also see the analogue-infused intermedia series, *Strange Loop* (2014 -) by composer Michael Cutting, the pairing of gramophones with electroacoustics in *the traces that remain* (2018), or the DIY-music boxes in *y o k o b i t* (2019), both by Nicholas Morrish, along with the electroacoustic and electromechanical hybridity in the works of Marianthi Papalexandri-Alexandri, the object-instrument projects of Sam Salem, as well as my own *Poet Mechanic* (2015 -) instrumental project and the upcoming concert installation *ALL THE WAYS WE LOVE EACHOTHER at the end of this world* (2022). John Cage's *Water*

inescapable mediation of almost all daily human activity through some form of technological system, network, infrastructure and transmissional media.¹⁶¹

Music as a multimedia form is neither a new topic in musical discourse, nor is it in fact novel to any form of music, from popular to academic, fringe to folk, to the “multi-layered (...) interdisciplinary (...) diverse” discursive qualities of what Marko Ciciliani described as “music in the expanded field.”¹⁶² A google search for ‘found objects in contemporary music’ gives 96-million search results,¹⁶³ whilst a search for ‘multimedia music’ gives over 550-million results.¹⁶⁴ Asking the internet ‘is music multimedia?’ gives over 650-million results,¹⁶⁵ the first of which is a ‘new’ undergraduate music module at Columbia University exploring “the reciprocal relationships created between music and other forms of artistic media.”¹⁶⁶

The main point here is that music is simply not an artform rooted solely in the phenomenon of sound, sound projection or sonic experience. It is important to note that music has always been inherently a multimedial form, long before the music was reconceived as (both theoretically and literally) located beyond the medium-limitations of sound.¹⁶⁷

In my work with media, from notation, film, sculpture, simulation, analogue electronic devices and sound makers, sound is one of many vehicles through which a concept or aesthetic is broadcasted. Sound is not intended to be isolated away from other media in the final work assemblage, however any perceived distance or disconnect between sound and non-sonic media is ultimately for the audience to judge. The works for the most part develop through a number of simultaneous creative activities that include, but do not focus solely on, the eventual production of sound. Some of the works also develop in sensitivity to the place in which they are being made (*Untitled 2* and *TNaHCC* being the most obvious

Walk, as far back as 1959, is to me one of the most obvious antecedents of such hybridity, found object-usage and DIY-instrumentalism in contemporary music.

¹⁶¹ See the following: P. Jandrić, J. Knox, T. Besley, T. Ryberg, J. Suoranta & S. Hayes (2018), Postdigital science and education, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 50:10, 893-899 ; Cramer, F. (2015) What Is ‘Post-digital’? In: Berry D.M., Dieter M. (eds) *Postdigital Aesthetics*. Palgrave Macmillan, London ; Cramer, F. “Post-Digital Writing”, *Electronic Book Review*, December 12, 2012

¹⁶² Ciciliani, M., *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ “found objects in contemporary music”, Google search (accessed 23rd February 2021).

¹⁶⁴ “multimedia music”, Google search (accessed 24th February 2021).

¹⁶⁵ “is music multimedia?”, Google search (accessed 4th April 2021).

¹⁶⁶ <https://music.columbia.edu/course/music-in-multimedia#:~:text=%E2%80%9CMultimedia%E2%80%9D%20is%20defined%20broadly%20here,well%20as%20dance%20and%20film.> [accessed 4th April 2021].

¹⁶⁷ See Barrett, G. D. (2016) *After Sound: Toward a Critical Music*, Bloomsbury

examples). For the most part, works grow out of encounters with immediately available media resources at my disposal, which in many cases are not connected to sound production at all.¹⁶⁸

I aim for configurations of disorderly media in my work to suggest, but not to impose, sensations of self-ethnography and reflections on creative processes – aiming towards projections of craft-like practices placing the hand-at-work in sharp focus, filmic portraits of a physical site as metaphors for downtime, meandering and cloud-glazing, amplified and manipulated field recordings as a type of scene/site-setting underneath live instrumental sound, an active bustling of a musician in the midst of other musical and non-musical objects. I wish for technological use to be understood as a joyful, immediate appendage to the daily artistic routines of making, listening, watching, reading, sounding, recording, sketching and sculpting.

5.2 Multimedia, Intermedia, Transmedia

Importantly, I consider my work to be intermedial or transmedial, rather than multimedial in nature. Artist Dick Higgins asserted over 50 years ago that a particular application of multiple media increasingly allows artists to break down the boundaries between art and life.¹⁶⁹ Higgins' text, as a way of thinking about art as an assemblage of media in multiplicity, informs two assertions.

Firstly, the work I strive to create is intermedial and transmedial (rather than multimedial). Technologies are never mere tools or limp artefacts in my practice. They are active creative prosthetics, connected to my body whilst at work,¹⁷⁰ retaining presence and connection to one another throughout the creation of an audiovisual scenography, keeping my creative focus on translating sensations of the ongoing haptic experimental nature of my own creative process.

Where multimedia can be understood as the setting of media alongside one another, intermedia is here understood as a kind of new material (or aesthetic) space or artistic typology that results from a direct merging and integration of media:

“When different forms merge, we see an intermedia form. The success of intermedia is seen in the coherence of mergers (or the convergence) that gives rise to new forms.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Adobe Premiere, Unity, Davinci and SketchUp are all visual design tools used both in the beginning and throughout many projects. 3D printing tools are the most recent inclusion into my artistic toolset.

¹⁶⁹ Higgins, D (1967). “Intermedia.” *Wormwood Review* 7/1: 15–22.

¹⁷⁰ See Spatz, B. (2015) *What a body can do: technique as knowledge, practice as research*. London ; New York: Routledge.

¹⁷¹ Diaz-Kommonen, L. (Ed.), Dragu, M. (Ed.), & Eilittä, L. (2018). *Adaptation and Convergence of Media: "High" Culture Intermediality vs Popular Culture Intermediality*. Aalto ARTS Books. pp. 33

We can also understand intermedia as a form that, if successful in its integration of medial multiplicity, can be seen to result in the creation of an entirely new artform:

“[T]he most successful intermedia forms eventually cease to be intermedia, developing characteristics of their own to become established media with names, histories, and contexts of their own.”¹⁷²



Fig. 5.2: Nam June Paik, *Elephant Cart*, still from *Intermedia Theatre exhibition*, Nam June Paik Art Centre (2015).

Transmedia is also a form of working between media. This term elsewhere is described as an expansion of intermedia, through which audiences can create connections beyond the ‘windows’ offered through a single or multiple media configuration.¹⁷³ The term intermedia was initially developed in the context of artistic examinations of broader social subjects related to emergent issues of technological

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Chapter 6: *Worlding*. Also see Wolf, M.J.P. (2013) *Building imaginary worlds: the theory and history of subcreation*. New York: Routledge.

information and communication, a model that continues to grow across the whole spectrum of artistic practices today.¹⁷⁴

The term *transmedia* has recently gained traction to articulate the spreading or dissemination of singly focussed narratives across multiple media forms. Media franchises such as Star Wars exemplify the transmedia narrative turn.¹⁷⁵ In the context of this thesis, both intermedia and transmedia are used at times interchangeably.¹⁷⁶

Whilst multimedia is in this thesis understood as an approach that presents disparate forms of media alongside one another, intermedia and transmedia are here understood as exploring ways of *working between multiple media* in pursuit of novel aesthetic experiences or conceptual formations that blur the boundaries between forms and media,¹⁷⁷ process and product, subject and object, truth and fantasy.

Successful historical intermedia/transmedia forms include the sculptural ontological investigations of Marcel Duchamp, Alan Kaprow's Happenings, the video projects of Nam-June Paik, the conceptual works of Joseph Kosuth, the scrappy installations of Jason Rhoades, Expanded Cinema and Fluxus. More recent intermedia forms might include the "live simulations" of Ian Cheng (2013-) the process orientation of composer Colin Roche's metamusical projects (2015-)¹⁷⁸ Peter Ablinger's *Weiss/Weisslich* series (1980), the audiovisual concert pieces of Joanna Bailie, and the hybrid performance projects of Alexander Schubert.

As part of the (aptly titled) *Intermedia Theatre* project, Nam June Paik's *Elephant Cart* sculpturally theatricalises the socially restrictive rituals of the emergent visual technology of the time, reimagining the analog television and loudspeaker as an animate, intermedial sculptural entity projecting out from a traditional delivery vehicle. The setting of an open ornate waggon carrying a pile of televisions and speaker cones creates harmony between otherwise disparate historical themes and references. The cargo vehicle traditionally used for transporting commercial goods becomes both a stage for media projection, and an absurd, futile technological delivery system. The portability of technological media also takes on a whole new, equally humorous meaning, especially given the ubiquity of mobile technologies today in culture. The media in *Elephant Cart* – wood, wheels, electronic devices and traditional carvings – fuse

¹⁷⁴ Diaz-Kommonen, L. (Ed.), Dragu, M. (Ed.), & Eilittä, L. (2018). *Adaptation and Convergence of Media: "High" Culture Intermediality vs Popular Culture Intermediality*. Aalto ARTS Books.

¹⁷⁵ Discussed in greater length in chapter 6: *Worlding*. Also, see Kalinov, K. (2017). Transmedia Narratives: Definition and Social Transformations in the Consumption of Media Content in the Globalized World. *Postmodernism Problems*, 7(1), 60-68.

¹⁷⁶ The terms are treated as equal in my own work, as they both intend to describe an art practice informed by acts or processes of fusing media forms, this in order to construct interwoven layers of narrative experience within the frame of a single work.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 32

¹⁷⁸ Colin Roche, *Le Registre, Le Livre des Nombres*, along with the collaborative project between myself and Roche, *Encounters* (2018-) (included in the Appendix).

together as an intermedia object that inspires a new ontological blend of sculpture, theatre, and media technological use.

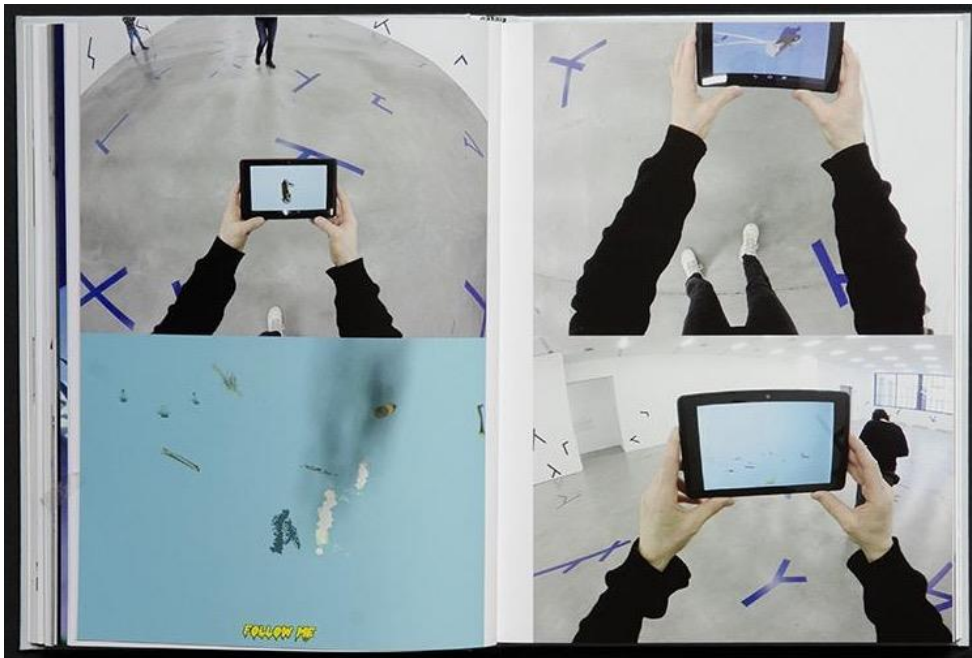


Fig. 5.3: Stills from Ian Cheng's *Emissary Forks for You*. Pages scanned from Cheng's publication *Forking at perfection*.¹⁷⁹

In contrast to *Elephant Cart*, Ian Cheng's participatory gallery project *Emissary Forks for You* (Fig. 5.3) explores the more recent social issues that have manifested through emerging technology. The audience of the work, presented on entry to the gallery with their own personal tablet, 'engage with' a virtual dog on-screen as they wander around the space. The gallery floors and walls are speckled with crosses of blue scotch tape which, once registered by the tablet's camera, appear to animate the on-screen avatar dog. The audience and the media seem to swap roles; the viewer/user becomes subservient to the agency of the technology – to aimlessly walk (or be walked by?) a virtual dog around an empty room. Continuing to 'feed' the primal desires of the 'dog' (in actuality, to fix their gaze on the screen in order to register new blue crosses) continues the experience of the exhibition, theoretically ad infinitum. The work communicates the exciting ability of new technology to transform or append the real world, whilst simultaneously stating the stark reality of how such technologies can so easily limit and diminish our sense of access to our immediate physical reality.

¹⁷⁹ Cheng, I., Gygax, R. and Bigger, F. (2016) *Ian Cheng - Forking at perfection*. Edited by H. Munder and Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst. Zurich: JRP Ringier. pp.30

My own work does not claim to directly examine any specific technological issues. Nor do I directly allude to any techno-futurist manifesto or specific critical trends within audiovisual interactivity, immersion, or machine learning. My work does however seek, through a broad range of experiments in intermedial and transmedial fusion, to create a positive density of media that create complex and questioning audiovisual experiences, ultimately allowing the audience to meander through almost atemporal environments of sonic and filmic metaphors, oscillating between states of journalism and fantasy, faithful documentation and evidently aestheticized fiction.

The intermedia approach provides a way of placing previously isolated media forms into larger, more immersive, communicative, exposed and multivalent sonic and visual experiences. Intermedia in my own work is as much a dedication to exposing novel interstices within and between the media forms I implement, as it is perhaps a more typical concert music practice that distends into increasingly saturated extra-musical, pseudo-journalistic aesthetic experiences (in which sound is for the most part central, at times approached distantly from an explicitly non-sonic perspective but, crucially, is rarely detachable from accompanying visual or physical entities woven into the work assemblage).

It is in the aesthetic broadness, scenographic blurriness and communicative multivalence of intermedia that I locate my own creative processes. In my own *Untitled* pieces, along with *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0* and [the upcoming] *ALL THE WAYS WE LOVE EACHOTHER at the end of this world*,¹⁸⁰ composed scenographies (will) house multiple media forms, some of which are immediately recognisable, others which remain as less foregrounded in the numerous narrative teleologies at work throughout the piece[s].

The aim of the larger projects is to place the audience into an experience closer to that of encountering a large-scale installation or audiovisual exhibition. Some elements may be misheard, overlooked, or not even noticed at all as the audiences' ears and eyes actively explore the work (space). There may be a pressing, almost imposing feeling of bewilderment stemming from the sheer number of materials, physical, visual and sonic. However, in these complex audiovisual scenographies, indistinct materials are intended to allure the audience, disorientation and metaphor serve to charm, in order that the whole assemblage will be understood as a dense multimodal space containing and connecting the non-hierarchical intermedial processes revealed within it.

Openly and experimentally investigating the creative richness offered by the intermedial, is what leads this commentary to propose the practice of staging the creative process as a kind of early stage of worldbuilding. Worldbuilding, beyond its traditional literary methods of articulating fantastical spaces or

¹⁸⁰ Briefly introduced in Chapter 7

sites with their own fictional languages, laws or narrative affordances,¹⁸¹ offers concrete artistic solutions to my desire to contain (*house*) and connect (*coordinate*) disparate intermedia processes and projects. *Worlding* (the creative process), as the final proposal of both this commentary and of the submitted projects, is a natural and sensible landing point in developing a self-contained intermedial macrocosm both around and out of contrasting artistic projects. A worlding of the process will, I hope, serve to both shelter and nurture an ongoing and ever-complexifying series of audiovisual experiments and intermedia projects stemming from differently formed divulgences of my own creative process. It will also provide a complex, challenging, yet rich experience for anyone encountering the project in parts or as a whole.

5.3 The Agency of Technological Media

Implementing something that functions mechanically, defines some kind of later use or direction for the user, this to then further implement or continue to explore later is, in my view, the most concrete definition of technological agency. Technology is not simply a technical, crude, cold and passive machine-matter.¹⁸² This is especially true of my own project, in which great value is placed on transmitting at least a palpable sense of the means, methods and processes inherent to the work's development as experienced audiovisual elements in the work's ecosystem.

The computer – its connected software and, more recently, hardware – contain and enact agency in my creative, compositional process. The computer is both a tool and a subject, a medium that smoothly translates concept and ideation into 'concrete' reality, whilst also an entity that is subject to equal treatment as a musical material.¹⁸³ I wish to bring these equally to the fore alongside the more orthodox concert music practices that are still prevalent in almost every project. I wish to render the technology and methods applied with it visible and/or audible, this in order to reveal rather than to conceal, to narrativize technological agency rather than to sterilise it.

The act of writing is deeply connected to practices of retracing and documenting. Writing has, as a result, is now increasingly present in my work, both for its acoustic instrumentality and for its evidently referential visual aesthetics/poetics. From the recording and manipulation of typing, to experiments with asemic writing and mechanical transcription, writing – whilst being an imperative act of documentation

¹⁸¹ Wolf, M. J. P., *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation*. Routledge. 2012

¹⁸² Schubert, A., "Switching Worlds", Wolfe Verlag (2021), pp. 13

¹⁸³ Allowing elements of the work to explore themes of mechanism, glitch, utopic virtuality, human and non-human dependencies, failure and voyeurism, to name a few. The computer is treated as similar to the tape player, vinyl player, light strip, film or any fixed media technologies, in that in some cases, its use can be theatricalised for its autonomy, or rendered a scenographic element of the work. As of 2018, I create the majority of my work on a computer. It is therefore blatantly obvious to me that the workings (along with the misgivings, failures and lacking) of this technology should be given a palpable and foregrounded place in the architecture of any one piece.

– has become a medium with and through which to draw audiences’ attention towards the processes of creating as ongoing processes in the work assemblage.

Taking a multiplicitous and interstitial approach to media – this as part of the longer-term goal of world-building, or worlding, around my own creative process, there has been a profound shift in how to include more of the creative affordances of technological media. As discussed at greater length in chapter 2,¹⁸⁴ the creative process is a phenomenon that ultimately evades concrete ontological definitions. The creative process is, in this thesis, defined as a multimodal framework in which music, video, digital simulation, electronic music and sound sculptural elements are both the ends and means to the aesthetic elaboration of lived and enacted creative acts. The creative process is an enmeshed and entangled relationship between myself and the media I am working on, through, with and from. The creative process is a socio-materialist¹⁸⁵ phenomenon of which the tools and physical matter underpinning a creative endeavour can be given greater attention (at least welcomed peripherally and sensorially, at most, sacrificially, given the utmost permission).

I have, over the course of the doctorate, turned towards a growing number of digital softwares to begin a project – grappling with 3D modelling softwares, mapping my local environment into video game engines, recording the typing of text that to generate a field of sonic glitch and sticky ambience – have passed. Only when a suitable framework of reference media has been formed does it seem the right time to turn my attention fully towards sketching and composing notated materials for instrumentalists to perform.

5.4 Magnifying Discrete Technologies

In the opening pages of her doctoral thesis, composer Joanna Bailie asks:

“How can an artwork both be aware and show awareness of the ways that media function? In what manner can thinking about and comparing audio and visual media result in a fresh perspective on intermedial work and how might this manifest itself artistically?”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Chapter 2: *The Creative Process*

¹⁸⁵ Manta, A. (2018), *Demystifying Creativity: An Assemblage Perspective Towards Creativity. Creativity Studies. (11)(1)*. 85-101

¹⁸⁶ Bailie, J. E. C. (2017). *Transcribing Reality: how the nature of audio and visual media have affected culture, perception, and the role of the artist.* (Doctoral thesis, City, University of London). pp. 15

Bailie's audiovisual pieces do not stage the *creative* process, but rather, they stage and foreground the finite processual mechanisms at work within audiovisual media technologies.¹⁸⁷ Placing focus on film and recording media in Bailie's work reveals an impregnated experiential space in which to reflect with more acuity on the inherent time and temporality of media technological function.

The audiovisual (film and recorded sonic media) are considered as "a contrivance where sound and image are put together in such a way as to appear a unity."¹⁸⁸ Sound and image are taken separately and recoupled in order to create a new audiovisual object that itself conjures a forced, but credible slowness. We can perhaps follow the inner mechanisms of image and audio as a series of massively expanded moments – the flickerings between frames become heavy steps into and out of focus. These of Bailie's works are kinds of woozy revelations of filmic liminality, whilst the drastic deceleration of sound expands the perceptual threshold of musical speed to the point where time could just as easily stop, disintegrate completely, and even begin to reverse. Mechanical technology micro-processes that typically afford us a seamless experience of technological use (deceiving us of their true mechanism) are filtered through a kind of delicate nebulizer, reconstructed and hung to sway slowly in front of us as eerie, luscious artefactual memories.

¹⁸⁷ This with a considerable focus on film, audio, and the potential to greatly magnify the phenomenal qualities of the two.

¹⁸⁸ Bailie. *Ibid.*



Figs. 5.4: Still from Joanna Bailie's *Dynamite Barrel/Balloon Anvil* (2018).¹⁸⁹



Figs. 5.5: Still from Joanna Bailie's *Dissolve* (2020).¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Video link: <https://joannabailie.com/music/134-2/> (accessed 17th November 2021)

¹⁹⁰ Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gh5j2ljinwE> (accessed 19th November 2021)

I align to Bailie's work, particularly in the positioning of the audiovisual as a mode for conveying, even narrativizing, technological process, than the purely sonic. I also employ techniques of deceleration (timestretching and sample manipulation) to draw attention to certain optic medial functions. However, where Bailie's focus on technological process reveals some of the self-reflective agencies *in the media themselves*, I aim in my work to explore ways to draw attention more directly to *actively working with media*. Where Bailie advocates an approach in which the artwork might "be aware and show awareness"¹⁹¹ of technological media function (through functional decline), my approach views technological media as providing suggestive ways to implement types of reflections on the creative process more globally.

5.5 Slowing down across (and beyond) pieces.

Much of Bailie's work expresses technological self-reflexive capacities by treating and rebuilding the media mechanisms that underlie audio and video recording and production. The composer pays a great deal of attention to the artefactual uncovering of slowing and/or freezing both the moving image and the sound sample, almost to states of total stasis.¹⁹²

In my own use of deceleration, less attention is paid to technical details of resultant frequency ranges, artefactual sonic transients, or the concrete musical qualities or destructive/constructive agencies of timestretching software, than in Bailie's work.¹⁹³ Such technical details are, in my work, on the most part secondary to the more immediate desire to create textural ambience, spatial and temporal expansion, and hazy wooziness.¹⁹⁴

In *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0*, film and audio are both time-stretched. The soundtrack is built out of two previously composed works, both of which dealt exclusively with timestretching.

The first work used, *Life in Pink*, from 2017, slows down two separate recordings of *La Vie en Rose*, the first of which is the English version of the song performed by Edith Piaf,¹⁹⁵ the second being

¹⁹¹ Bailie, J. E. C. (2017). *Transcribing Reality: how the nature of audio and visual media have affected culture, perception, and the role of the artist*. (Doctoral thesis, City, University of London)

¹⁹² Chapters 2 and 3 of Bailie's thesis focus in great detail on the role of deceleration in sound and image. Bailie, J. E. C. *Ibid*.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, pp. 75-77, for example.

¹⁹⁴ Algorithmic, generative and at times rigorous structuring methods are used in and between various pieces – *Untitled, or 'the thing about shoegaze'*, for example, is composed using an interlocking referential web of sine tones, carefully filtered field recordings, and precisely prepared piano harmonics as the sonic foundation of the piece. I do not however want these technicalities to make their way into the finally experienced piece. Simply, I want the work to sound harmonious and sensuous, regardless of how noisy or unpitched the materials.

¹⁹⁵ Piaf, E. (1947). *La Vie En Rose*. Audio recording. New York. Columbia Records

the cover version by Louis Armstrong.¹⁹⁶ Both are stretched between a factor of 6-10 in Ableton Live¹⁹⁷ (each reconstructed recording is built from three differently slowed down versions layered freely on top of each other). The resulting soundtracks are hard panned left and right in order to form a rich, smeared, grainy and sickly-sweet ambience around five musicians of the Luxembourg-based United Instruments of Lucilin – tasked with performing their own decelerated, sickly and listless musical materials. The work deals with reimagining a universally recognised love song, however presenting the result through a pair of orange-rose-tinted, inebriated musical goggles.

The second piece, *SLOW.BURN.FOOTWORK*, from 2018, uses the 2014 song *Pendulum*¹⁹⁸ by singer and producer FKA Twigs as source material. Similarly, to the treatment of *La Vie en Rose*, *Pendulum* was substantially slowed down – this time in PaulStretch software – in order to produce three reference recordings of different speeds. The recordings were then each transcribed and recomposed for symphony orchestra divided into individual instrumental desks in order that as many of the pitch artefacts composed could be played simultaneously. Similarly to *La Vie en Rose*, *SLOW.BURN.FOOTWORK* deals with slowing down a love song, extending it almost to the point of incomprehensibility, and mapping the newly created sound artefacts to instruments. *SLOW.BURN.FOOTWORK* however takes what are already bent and smeared sonic textures in the original production, tears them apart into discrete strands, and reconstructs the result into a type of blissful, listless, quivering ambient orchestration.

In *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0*, the live recordings of the two above mentioned pieces (already artefacts of timestretching in themselves) are both further timestretched and layered together to form the foundation of the works stereo soundtrack. The guitar, later in the work, meanders gently through the melody of *La Vie en Rose*, as a type of reflective acknowledgment of the creative work and processes in the years leading up to this piece, whilst in turn creating a newer material (once the work was recorded) that can then be used in later projects. *La Vie en Rose*, as a melodic motif running across pieces and projects, is, in my work, a material in a constant process of slowing and patination: the melody is being continuously smeared and rubbed deeper into the fabric of my creative process. It has become a self-reflexive melodic strand that could, eventually, literally slow, stretch and congeal into a single immovable musical object.

In Bailie's work, the otherwise veiled mechanisms of digital film and audio are transformed into quietly arresting musical experiences populated by sound that is warped and timestretched almost to

¹⁹⁶ Armstrong, L. (1950). *La Vie En Rose*. Audio Recording. JB Production CH

¹⁹⁷ This particular technology was used instead of the now notable *PaulStretch* software, for its lesser capabilities of sample calculation and, subsequently, clarity and precision. In *Life in Pink*, I was more focussed on how the transients of the recordings took on a more metallic, grainy and 'tinned' quality, aiding in giving the work a cheaper, more ruined, grainy and oneiric quality.

¹⁹⁸ Barnett, T. (2014). *Pendulum*. Audio Recording. Young Turks.

infinity. In my work, timestretching is a notable element in the ongoing intermedial project of staging, retelling (and shamelessly reusing parts of) my ongoing creative process. Slowed-down musical material is treated as a type of ever-degrading sonic carpet, less to highlight the technical mechanisms of sampling itself (as in Bailie’s work) but more to retain a sonic signal running freshly between, across and into new projects. Deceleration, in my work ultimately creates a rich sensual, allusory backdrop to more foregrounded sonic and visual elements.

5.6 Narrativizing Technological Agency

As has been discussed above, the inclusion of both ‘old’ and ‘new’ media in my work is less intended to foreground the materiality of the media. When a website, 3D software walkthrough video or screengrab film of a working session are placed on stage in a piece, nested alongside field recordings of typing or timestretched audio recordings, the aim is for the audience to be drawn towards the content of the film, not necessarily to question the medial vehicle through which it is being projected – “The medium is by far not the message.”¹⁹⁹

Composer Stefan Prins’ *Generation Kill* (2012), Sarah Nemtsov’s *Zimmer I-III* (2013), and Remy Siu’s *REVIVE* (2018) provide useful recent examples of how digital technological use becomes a central aesthetic, physical experiential element in a new musical work’s performance. Each takes a different approach to foregrounding physical technological elements, either through poetic readings of broader technological cultural issues, instrumentalization of typically non-musical devices, or through a kind of total audiovisual mediation of performance and audience experience through larger machine-learning networks. *Generation Kill* channels the tensions between reality and virtuality in the digital and surveillance age, centring the work around four seated performers armed with video-game controllers, each of whom face an imagined television screen at the back of the concert stage. Two musicians in Nemtsov’s *Zimmer* double on laptop computers, providing the composer with a way to more reductively treat the laptop as dry percussion material that is smacked, scratched and scraped. *REVIVE* sees three musicians tasked with producing “a live performance of electronic music, electroacoustic music, musique concrete, soundscape, through a structured improvisation.” The work explores the potential musical and sonic affordances between an artificially intelligent software agent and human performers, most obviously magnifying the troubling imposition of technological mediation.

¹⁹⁹ From the text of composer Peter Ablinger’s *Hörstücke / Listening Pieces*. Accessed at <https://ablinger.mur.at/engl.html> (April 2021)

The quote below, from composer Alexander Schubert, succinctly describes my own approach to implementing electronic technologies and, in a way, attempting to narrativize technological agency.

“In multi- media music, electronic content and processes are, by now, rarely an end unto themselves; rather, they are used representatively – i.e., exemplarily, descriptively or symbolically.”²⁰⁰

The audiovisual materials throughout my working process – when, and in whatever form they re-emerge in the final presentation – are used to reveal themselves for their usefulness and agentially guiding qualities in the ongoing processes of composing a metatextual assemblage of sound and image. Electronic technology and processes in my work are, in differing ways, at once exemplary, descriptive and symbolic both of the spaces and states in which I produce and create, and areas of the creative working process that may typically be hidden or concealed.

The mechanistic agency of technology in my process is certainly implicated, however this implication is by no means intended to suggest any serious theoretical or conceptual concerns with computerisation and digital networking, technical infrastructures and dependencies, or global markets and geopolitics built and resting upon technological frameworks.²⁰¹ Technological media are a concrete necessity to the process, however they are viewed more as collections of reusable materials that aid to set up different types of virtual, oneiric process-oriented multimedia narratives. I agree fully with Schubert’s claim that “the digital should always shimmer through, through a tangible, warm, human surface”²⁰² – even if the digital quality and character of both of our works share little in the resulting aesthetic feel and experiential effect.

In Schubert’s music, the role of digital technology is of paramount importance from concept through to development, serving what the composer describes as:

“(a) technique that actively addresses the penetration of the analogue and digital and their interplay and thus makes them palpable by positioning and contrasting different perspectives next to each other.”²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Schubert, A., “Switching Worlds”, Wolfe Verlag (2021), pp. 13

²⁰¹ Kramer, F., (2014), *What is 'Post-Digital'*, APRJA Journal Vol 3 [1]

²⁰² Schubert, Ibid. pp. 12

²⁰³ Ibid. pp. 12

The duality between the analogue and the digital here uncovers a crucial difference between Schubert's approach and my own. Where Schubert explores the contrast, or tensions between the analogue and the digital, technology and the performer and/or audience, my strategies focus less on exposing tensions or frictions between the digital and analogue. Instead, in many of the works in my portfolio, the foregrounding of technological media more subtly strives towards referencing the act of creating as it is or was happening; to situate the process of making with technology as a fluid and experimental process.²⁰⁴

Where Schubert's projects decouple the physical and virtual,²⁰⁵ through rigorously techno-driven experimental musical and theatricalised settings, my works propose a considerably softer, more poetic, affectionate view of technological media as a rich and limitless aesthetic agent in staging different creative processes and procedures.

In *Untitled 1*,²⁰⁶ *Untitled 2*²⁰⁷ and *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0*, audiovisual technologies serve as multimodal avenues for narrative self-reflexivity, metaphorical construct, and oneiric pseudo-documentary. These works are rife with screengrab documentation, from daily text-score typing exercises, to working sessions in 3D modelling programs and post-production referencing. It is possible to recognise here media as narrative agents revealing a type of virtual memory of the creative compositional process, audiovisual memories that have crept back into frame, morphed and manipulated, coagulated, and expanded. Attempting to more literally narrativize technological agency leads the listener/viewer both into a more direct encounter with creative and production processes, whilst shepherding them through an illusory aesthetic space tainted with flavours of artistic self-ethnography.

I have drawn connections between the central works in the portfolio with aspects of Joanna Bailie and Alexander Schubert's work. Timestretching to reveal self-reflexivity in or through the media, however, a self-reflexivity not focussing on authorial struggles or cultural uses and histories of technological media, but really only on the difference that media afford the aesthetically and productively limitless.

²⁰⁴ As discussed in earlier chapters, my work focuses less on faithfully rendering working processes audible and/or visible, but instead considers the documentation (and subsequent archiving) of these processes as rich materials with which to later recompose into meaningful aesthetic experiences that may only allude to the creative or compositional process.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 12

²⁰⁶ *Untitled, Or, Symphony of Red Bubbles*

²⁰⁷ *Untitled, Or, 'the thing about shoegaze is it doesn't'*

5.7 Conclusion to Chapter 5

In my own work, the principal aim for presenting a technological device or tool in the final work is for its connected sound, image or video to somehow carry reflections of its own qualities and production in the final experience. Defining the work as intermedia, rather than multimedia is important, principally as I want for the work to be felt more in more environmental, ambient and entrancing terms – technologies are treated as types of small sculptural elements to be nested within larger, prismatic audiovisual scenographies. Encountering these settings hopefully trigger a higher level of participation, questioning, doubting, decoding and meaning making in the audience (mentioned in a number of the preceding chapters of this thesis). As the staging of the creative process is intended to draw a more immediate connection between the receiver and the maker of the work, the staging of technological use in certain instances may break down the distance between the audience and the content of the work. In this way, technology is not treated as a commentary tool for critical response to its own use, or didactically resituated as a sound-making medium. Media are at once treated as sources of sonic and visual material, generators of raw compositional materials, suggestive of immediate scenographic settings, mappers of space, and tools for metaphorizing creative experience.



6. WORLDING



Figs. 6.1 and 6.2: Still images from *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club Ltd.* This work is described in detail in the conclusion chapter.

6.1 Introduction

Until this point, the thesis has discussed three principal subjects in the frame of one focal theme. The theme of staging the creative process draws together the subjects of creativity and the creative process, the metaphor and its role in artmaking, and the role of technological media in the production and reception of a work.

This penultimate chapter explores the second theme of the thesis – the creation and nurturing of worlds. In worldbuilding, mythopoeic settings, fictional landscapes and imagined geographies are sewn together to immerse and subsume audiences into the constructed world's setting. To create a world – to *world*²⁰⁸ – is to first construct a type of scalable conceptual container²⁰⁹ (see section 6.2.1) into which a range of media narratives, imagined iconographies, yet to be realised technical inventions are set together. All these elements can interweave and interconnect with one another, forging ever-growing aesthetic (and often, increasingly interactive) assemblages exploring different approaches to setting, staging and presentation. Worlding, when considered from a compositional perspective, creates aesthetic bridges across projects, producing a sense of succession and kindred connection between and across differing sonic and visual materials and pieces.

Each of the projects discussed in the following section are considered from the perspective of worlding. The chapter sets my own works in focus alongside works by the American artist Ian Cheng and composers Alexander Schubert and Marcus Kaiser to form an overview of how worlding and worldbuilding are effectuated in contemporary art and music.

The final chapter (chapter 7) includes a brief description of the most recently planned projects beyond the PhD. These projects are either unfinished or have only recently begun being composed and created.²¹⁰ This is an advantageous problem for the PhD, both as the last two years have led to a great deal of new projects not completable within the timeframe of the doctorate, but more importantly as the practice of worlding inherently celebrates and strives towards states of open-endedness and infinitude. The future-planned works beyond the PhD are planned to either have no fixed duration (designed to

²⁰⁸ See Haraway, D.J. (2008) *When species meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press (Posthumanities, 3), also Anderson, B. and Harrison, P. (eds) (2016) *Taking-place: non-representational theories and geography*. Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY: Routledge.

²⁰⁹ Cheng, I. (2018) *Emissary's Guide To Worlding*. Metis Suns. Kindle Edition.

²¹⁰ The projects, described in more detail in the concluding chapter, are:

- *The Apathy and Empathy Arcade*, a collection of digitally simulated, artificially intelligent musical arcade machines.
- *ALL THE WAYS WE LOVE EACHOTHER at the end of this world*, for the GBSR duo, an installed static caravan, 8mm film, digital film, light, electronic sound and digital simulation. The project is very much in progress, and is planned for a 2023 premiere in London.
- *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club Ltd.*, a digital platform project, is ongoing. This final work is submitted in crude sketch form as a practical element of the PhD submission.

change and develop over extended periods) or they are conceived in a way intended to diminish my authorial agency and shift the work's compositional development as much onto the shared, active engagements of both participants and audiences as possible.

As in the illustration of nested methodologies outlined in chapter 1, the creative process is here nested as a kind of material within a larger worldbuilding framework. One of the most recent and clearly illustrative world-building projects of my own is woven into the conclusion chapter,²¹¹ whilst in this chapter, the chamber pieces *Untitled, Or, 'the thing about shoegaze is it doesn't'*, *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0* and *Untitled, Or, Thirty-three Confessions* are discussed. This chapter also speculates on how the projects might be experienced by audiences.

6.2 What is a World?

What is a World? A World evokes a place. A World has borders. A World has laws. A World has values. A World has a language. A World can grow. A World can collapse. A World has mythic figures. A World has visitors. (...) A World undergoes reformations and disruptions. A World incentivizes its members to keep it alive. A World is a container for stories of itself.

– Ian Cheng²¹²

Worlding is the practice of creating a world or worlds. We exist in the real world, yet we actively partake in created worlds on a daily basis. A created world is typically an imagined, large-scale environment, simulated environment or entire conceptual universe presented through a literary, visual or audiovisual medium. Imaginary worlds have been much theorised, structured and developed by authors; writers, poets, directors, and artists in the last century.²¹³ Imaginary worlds range in size and scope. Worlds can be finite or potentially infinite. Finite worlds typically create simulated experiences of representations of real (recognisable) spaces or environments. These types of worlds can be freely explored by visitors, yet only within strict parameters defined by the world's maker[s]. At their most large-scale and ambitious, worlds completely immerse their visitors in a seemingly borderless totality of simulation that contains invented languages, developing historical mythologies, along with kiltered

²¹¹ *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club Ltd.* (2021-). Both video examples, along with a crudely built prototype of this project are included in the submission.

²¹² Cheng, Ian. *Emissary's Guide To Worlding* (pp. 14). Metis Suns. Kindle Edition.

²¹³ Wolf, M.J.P. (2013) *Building imaginary worlds: the theory and history of subcreation*. New York: Routledge. pp. 20

scientific and ethical principles that can change and adapt autonomously depending on the intersubjectivities of their visitors. These types of ‘potentially infinite’ worlds often grow beyond the agential control of their authors, whether through immediate growth beyond initial sets of conditional rules for participant interaction, or through nurturing the creative and directorial investment of audiences or fans seeking to advance one or more areas of a world according to their own lived or imagined experience, and desire for that world’s development.

A world is built through the structuring and interactivity between numerous media lenses and extra-narrative elements. The writer and researcher Mark J.P. Wolf defines world-building in this context as inherently, and necessarily, a transmedial practice. As mentioned in chapter 5, transmedia is the practice of creating narrative experience across and between different media. To Wolf, to experience a transmedia work is “[to] vicariously experience something which lies beyond the media windows through which we see and hear it.”²¹⁴ In worldbuilding, digital and physical media seamlessly interweave with one another, providing multiple ‘windows’ through which to experience elements of the created world. “Words, images, sounds and interactions” provide a world with the materials for growing complexity and richness.²¹⁵ The more media and media windows that are put to use in the experience of a world, the more “ontological weight” that world has, and, thereby, the more the experience of a worlding project becomes a “mediated experience of the Primary World.”²¹⁶ The more effective and seamless the processes of mediation, the more we engage ‘between’ or ‘beyond’ media elements, and, in turn, the more real a world will appear to us.

For a created world to stand on its own and ultimately exist beyond author agency, it must exhibit potential for self-generation, autonomy and interactivity.²¹⁷ Wolf defines the process of setting up active interrelations between media elements as ‘interactivation.’²¹⁸ Media must naturally interact with one another (as well as with newly emerging, or previously unplanned, external media elements) if a world is to provide as seamless an experience as possible. In the sonic context, the notion of auralization is also coined by Wolf in describing the procedural interactions a world can use to immerse and convince visitors of its authenticity.^{219 220}

²¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 254

²¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 255

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Equally, for a world to feel convincingly alive, must also contain and enact states and processes of degradation and entropy. See Cheng, Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Auralization connects to the practice of procedural audio, sound that is created for interactive settings such as video games. In procedural audio settings, the sonic environment will change depending on how it is explored and interacted with. For extensive reference to procedural audio design, see Collins, K., Kapralos, B. and Tessler, H. (eds) (2014) *The Oxford handbook of interactive audio*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; DeLoura, M.A. (ed.) (20) *Game programming gems*. Nachdr. Boston, Mass: Charles River Media; Farnell, A. (2010) *Designing sound*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

6.2.1 Containers and Icons for Worlds

Filmmakers have movies to contain their ideas. Writers have novels. Musicians have albums. But a World can express itself in anything. This is its freedom. But this freedom doesn't mean freedom from containers. It means freedom to choose a container.

– Ian Cheng²²¹

The 'container' is the object or conceptual vehicle through, or with which an audience will immediately encounter, enter, explore and later recognise a world. The container provides the first explicit statement of the thematic nature of the world that has been created. Cheng defines three simple typologies of containers for worlds – “declarative (a novel, a movie, a sermon), interactive (a car, a restaurant, a baby) or something in between (a video game, a ritual, a theme park, AI).”²²²

Take the symphony, for example. The symphony could easily be understood as a kind of primal, declarative or interactive container for a recent historical musical worlding. The form and broader musicological context of a symphony conjures a multitude of social references, historical narratives, along with persons that – shifted slightly out of the context of high cultural historical development, could easily be perceived as fictional characters in a novel. The symphony opens the door to a world of infamous composer figures, royalty, aristocratic patrons, conductors, soloists, along with considerable developments of the symphonic orchestra itself, acoustics and audition, architecture and interior design, socioeconomic development and ongoing class division and class democratisation. In this sense, it is possible to also view almost any historical musical construct (the string quartet, the opera, jazz, the electric guitar or streaming platforms) as definitive – either declarative or interactive – containers for different, though deeply connected musical worlds within worlds, within the overarching universe of music (or the sonic arts, even more broadly).

The container, whilst described by Cheng as a vehicle to a created world, also might provide an immediate iconographic vehicle of a known entity in the lived (real) world, an immediately referenceable symbol for a large created world. These types of icons often serve to signify an already formed and ever-growing created world (as Mickey Mouse does for Disney, the lightsabre does for Star Wars, or the half-eaten apple does for the Apple corporation).

²²¹ Cheng, Ian. *Emissary's Guide To Worlding* (pp. 56). Metis Suns. Kindle Edition.

²²² *Ibid.* pp. 58

In my own *Untitled, Or, Thirty-three Confessions*,²²³ the liturgical confessional is used as a type of iconographic container for the metaphor – ‘music is an act of confession’. In an ideal performance of the piece, videos project screen-captured creation of a series of imagined confessionals in CAD software, creating a silent, voyeuristic accompaniment to the performers on stage.

The principal performer’s role is as a kind of performing confessor. They are accompanied by a quartet of cello, electric guitar, keyboard and soundtrack. The principal performer, reading through a personally prepared list of confessional phrases, also places 3D-printed models of the designed confessional boxes on a table in front of them over the course of the work. The limp, almost inconsequential repetition of the music intends to amplify (or, paradoxically, to stoically ignore) the spoken phrases, whilst conjuring a space of unresolving, gently ritualistic keening. The global form of the piece intends to create the sense of a manipulated sermon, in which the leading orator figure reads out their own confessions solely in order for the audience to gradually, and silently, consider their own relationship to confession.

Whether explicitly religious or not, the intended thematic of the work is I hope almost immediately apparent – the title, the speaking performer, the intoxicated and troubling sonic materials, and the ephemeral video materials make clear the references to the act of confession, yet the audience do not need to understand or personally connect to Judeo-Christian history, the complex transformative purpose of confessions and penance, or the architectural schematic details of churches and confessional boxes.

²²³ Later referred to as *Thirty-three Confessions*.



Fig. 6.3 and 6.4: Michael Kenna, *Confessional Studies 36 and 49*²²⁴

²²⁴ www.anothermag.com/art-photography/9988/unexpectedly-beautiful-photographs-of-catholic-confessionals (Accessed 19 January 2022)

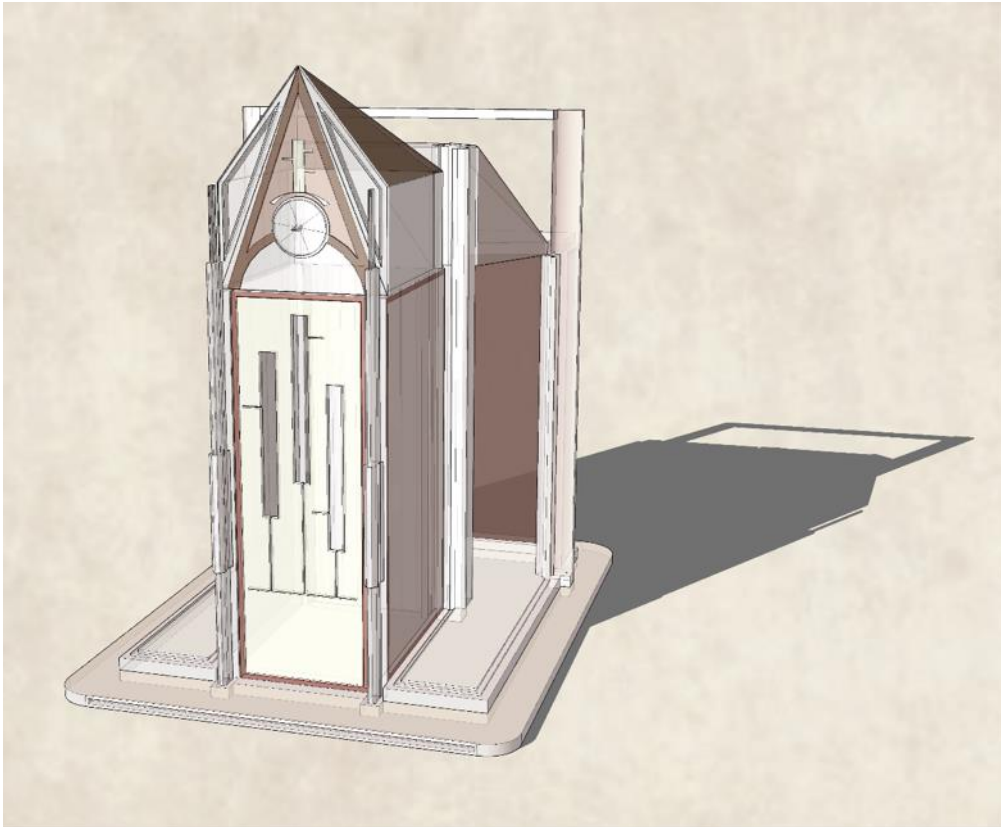


Fig. 6.5 and 6.6: My own *Confessional No. 7*, 3D-modelled above, 3D-printed below.

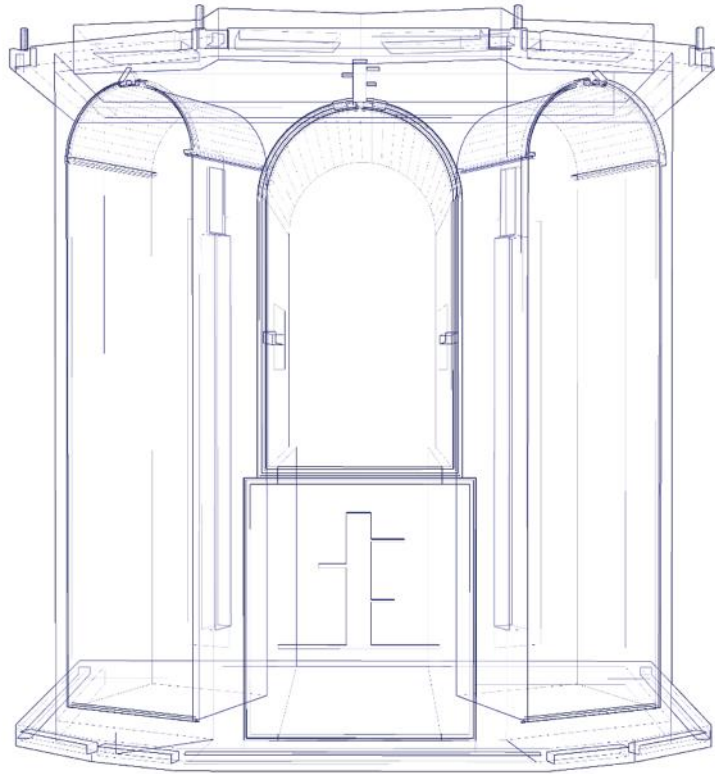


Fig. 6.7 and 6.8: My own *Confessional No. 2*, transparent 3D render above, 3D-printed below.



Fig. 6.9 and 6.10: Video stills of the premiere performance of *Thirty-three Confessions*. Above: the post-production video overlay above the speaking performer placing confessions. Below: The confessions, rendered in a virtual world setting, created in the Unity game engine.

The design of my own confessionals takes inspiration from photographer Michael Kenna's *Confessional* series from 2015-16, in which the photographer captures stark portraits of the objects whilst visiting several churches in Italy. My confessional designs use Kenna's series to reimagine and redesign typical confessional architectural form. The eight confessionals are also each inscribed with the iconography of another of my own projects, *The Poet Mechanic*.²²⁵ The confessional can be considered a relatively recognisable entity (in a number of societies around the world) but is emblazoned with a fictional iconography (also inadvertently suggestive of a crucifix).

Thirty-three Confessions is ultimately a light spiritual, discrete worlding concert experience with flashes of an ongoing virtual building process, taking the iconography of the confessional box as a container (an aesthetic vehicle) for the transformative act of confession. Surrounded by a repetitive, languorous and bent tonal soundworld and the confessions of the performer, the audience are invited to enact their inner reflective process and, thereby, charge their own creative process through imagining personal memories or experiences of feelings such as guilt or regret, nostalgia or indignity.

6.2.2 The Caravan Container

Many of my works now feature the static caravan as a type of iconic worlding container (see figures 6.1 and 6.2). As made clear in the worlding methodology,²²⁶ the caravan is the principal aesthetic container providing a continuity to the development of the worlding media-narrative of my creative universe. The caravan is a literal iconic vehicle through which I explore persistent notions and experiences of impermanence and heterotopia, escape and oneirism, nostalgia and joy, within a growing number of audiovisual media forms.²²⁷

*Untitled, or, the thing about shoegaze is it doesn't*²²⁸ is the first of my works to feature the static caravan to present the audience with images of a world.^{229 230} As outlined in chapter 4, the caravan in *Untitled 2* is at once a metaphor and container for my own creative process and creative environment, whilst the piano

²²⁵ See Appendix: *Poet Mechanic*

²²⁶ Chapter 1: WORLDS. METAPHORS. ICONS. Introduction

²²⁷ These terms describe my own personal experiences of living and interacting with the caravan and caravan site for over five years. They are not intended to describe others' experiences of such a site.

²²⁸ Later referred to as *Untitled 2*.

²²⁹ This piece was composed concurrently with *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0*. Although the former work was technically finished before the latter, the premiere of the latter took place half a year before the former (in August 2020). As can be seen in the latter piece, my abilities with both CAD and video game engine software developed to include more detailed rendering and first-person programming, along with a more confident grasp of blending real-world with virtual-world elements on screen.

²³⁰ *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0* is discussed in a later section.

becomes a metaphorical container for the creative process of the pianist. Pitting the two together in an audiovisual concert piece might fail to transmit the intended metaphorical connections immediately to an audience. However, the collection of media and physical performance pushes the audience to create connections between elements of a fuzzy assemblage of dream-like videos, dirty soundtracks of drunken karaoke, and a performer silently preparing piano strings, stopping only to perform sparse and gentle snippets of melody. As the work never settles to truly bring the three main elements together, the audience are left suspended in a cloud of metaphorical accumulation. Free to also ignore any complexity of metaphor, the audience will most likely experience the piece as a dreamy and absurd homage to the static caravan accompanied in a more traditional fashion by a live pianist playing their instrument. A more discerning audience may form some of the intended connections, perhaps understanding the work as a kind of autobiographical,²³¹ journalistic *reworlding* of the artist's environment created whilst in the act of composing the work.

The pianist's role may be experienced as an entirely separate compositional entity in the work's assemblage – less interestingly, as a performer carrying out their typical practice in spite (and in relative contrast) to the video materials, simply going about their business around and inside the piano, activating the instrument's delicate harmonics in a 'world of their own'. The pianist may however be read (in a more typical new music context) as a necessary nested accompaniment to an electrified audiovisual homogeneity, as the instrument audibly latches on to moments in the field recording, whilst on careful listening the strings are also attuned to a surrounding cloud of ghostly sine tones.

Whatever the reading of the work and the distinctions that the audience make between the media and the performer, *Untitled 2* is intended as a shrouded duality of aesthetic metaphor, eventually instigating the genesis of a possible new world. The performer labours over the limitations of the piano's potential for extended techniques with very much the same attentiveness that guided my step-by-step remodelling of the surrounding caravan site. The piano is a finite container for creative action and exploration, much as the caravan park is a type of open-ended container for aesthetic experimentation and refinement – *the piano is a caravan*.²³² *Untitled 2* is a musical attempt to immerse the audience in the processual creation and reproduction of a self-referencing modelled environment. This, whilst the layers of field recordings, harmonics and sine tones poetically reconstruct the sonic environment that persisted in my world over the course of the work's composition.

²³¹ I have lived in a static caravan for the duration of the PhD. The autobiographical nature of the work in this context highlights my lived experience, both of the everyday and of artmaking.

²³² Chapter 4: The Creative Process is Metaphor-Making

6.3 Discrete-world art: digital and analogue

I here categorise worlds in two ways – discrete and open.²³³ The first type, the more finite, limited type of created world can be described as ‘discrete-world’.²³⁴ An offline video game environment explored by a single user at a time exemplifies a digital discrete world. In the simulated setting of a digital discrete-world, a player or players will traverse new, yet almost recognisable landscape environments, often exploring buildings modelled to simulate recognisable architectures in the real world. Crucially, this type of world contains fixed boundaries that can neither be expanded beyond, nor can they be extended or modified by either their author or participating audiences without terminal impacts to the real-time flow of the world’s experience. Any changes to a digital discrete world’s boundaries or parameters would see the world being temporarily shut off from access, ceasing any user experience or interaction whilst the world’s author[s] privately carry out updates, expansions or reiterations.

Digital discrete-world settings are at times created to house durational task-based activities of their creators or audiences.²³⁵ The maker of a digital discrete world may inhabit that world as its host, performing, orating, or carrying out actions or creative tasks. The audience of a digital discrete-world are also often able to take part in an assortment of activities. In a digital discrete-world (most commonly a video game), these range from the base violence of killing or destroying avatars with digital weaponry, to building or developing architectural spaces or natural environments, collecting and developing resources into typologies or collectibles to share with other players/users, controlling and/or racing virtual vehicles, or surviving or thriving in a pseudo-apocalyptic simulated environment populated by hostile entities or characters, for example.

An analogue (physical) discrete world often presents a similar task or experience-based format. The overly stylized artificial environments of funfairs or theme parks exemplify analogue discrete worlds. Thrill-based physical simulations, rides, collaborative games or task-based adventure spaces are built together to create a labyrinthine world into which paying audiences enter, explore and engage with at their own pace. The funfair or theme park, although in many cases boasting a physical footprint as large as a village or small town, is discrete for the principal reason that it does not welcome refiguration, reformation or disruption. As with its digital counterpart, any pronounced changes of an analogue discrete world occur outside of the experience of the audience. These forms of physical worlds ultimately

²³³ See section 6.5, which discusses James Carse’s use of similar terms in describing finite and infinite games. See Carse, J.P. (1989) *Finite and infinite games: the chance of a lifetime*. 6. print. New York: Ballantine Books.

²³⁴ The term is here intended to suggest qualities of limitedness and finitude. A discrete world describes a created world that is unable to spread or grow beyond its preconstructed borders or boundaries.

²³⁵ Caitlin Rowley’s *Haydn Space Opera* (2021-) is a recent example of digital discrete worlding in contemporary music. See <https://caitlinrowley.com/music/haydn-space-opera/> (accessed 10th March 2022). Unsurprisingly, the number of similar online-based arts projects grew massively during the pandemic.

contain a limited experience of an artificial world pre-designed and controlled entirely by the decisions and abilities of their designer[s] and owner[s].

Concert halls, black box theatres and art galleries offer spaces in which to produce and present analogue, digital, or analogue/digital discrete worlds in a more exclusively artistic context. The creator of an analogue discrete world might inhabit their created environment, carrying out activities within the boundaries of the world in order to endow it with a sense of organicism or aliveness.

The work of cellist and composer Marcus Kaiser provides one such example. *opernfraktal* is a long running overarching multimedia project conceived by Kaiser to contain and house numerous nested durational, performance and installation projects. Many of the composer's works under the *opernfraktal* project invite audiences into varying encounters with audiovisual assemblages, experiences that suggest fragments of larger worlds cut into differently sized segments, finite multimedia appendages pulled out of a far larger entity. As part of *opernfraktal*, the 2014 project *feindtönung* features a “brightly lit, transparent cube”²³⁶ containing plants and living fauna, accompanied by strands of video and audio materials arranged in overlapping, looped sequences. The installation provided a “rhizomatic assemblage”²³⁷ in which the composer lived and worked over many months, into which he embedded strands of sound and video. The accompanying strands of audiovisual materials were composed entirely out of accumulated recordings of previous musical and audiovisual works.²³⁸

²³⁶ https://www.opernfraktal.de/_feindtoenung/index.htm (accessed 17 January 2022)

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Gottschalk, J. (2016) *Experimental music since 1970*. New York ; London: Bloomsbury Academic. pp 265



Fig. 6.11: *feindtönung* (2014), installation view. Still from the composer's website.²³⁹

feindtönung can be read as a discrete world installation for numerous reasons. It is a physically immersive, sculptural environment that welcomes limited forms of audience exploration. It creates an experiential threshold between the perceived real (world) of its external industrial setting and the artificially simulated world of the central enclosure. The work is built, sustained and can only exist through the creative decisions and supervisions of its author – it is not open to change, beyond the growth of plants or the disparate musical activities of Kaiser whilst residing in the work.

The installation is, as mentioned, populated by strands of previously realised audio and video works. These materials suggest a kind of aesthetic palimpsest of the composer's life in and through composition – a drawing of historical experience into the present. The audio and video materials form what the composer describes as a type of ecosystemic staging of background and foreground.²⁴⁰ The background, or underlying support of the work is, quite literally, the manifestation of accumulation – processed sequences of previous works slowly ebbing around the work, almost as portable landscape elements forming a foundation to any new sonic or visual creative acts carried out during the installation. Although these sequences could be reprocessed or reorganised into endless novel configurations, they remain as fixed elements in this particular world. They are unable to grow or develop into new materials

²³⁹ https://www.opernfraktal.de/_feindtoenung/index.htm (accessed 11th December 2021)

²⁴⁰ Gottschalk, pp 279.

without the authorial supervision of their creator (which would lead to a new compositional act, and therefore, a perturbation of the present world) – all sounds and images are discrete world elements.

feindtönung could however also be considered a type of ‘living’ discrete world. It is a miniature simulation of a rainforest,²⁴¹ planted and grown inside a polythene box, set up in the centre of a stark factory space. As with the rectangular frame of a video screen (or the borders of a carefully tended garden), the aesthetic strength and impact of *feindtönung* is precisely in its being restrained within a carefully controlled environment. This world must be entered (breached), can be navigated, but does not offer more in terms of interactivity. This is a discrete world, yet in its finitude there is a demonstrative and direct experiential immediacy. Built into this project is a necessity for its elements to be strictly contained, along with its eventual dying out to perhaps become musical and aesthetic fauna in a new discrete world in the future.

feindtönung is a world in that it can welcome visitors, nurture change, and house the ongoing activities of its author.²⁴² It is not an open-world in that it does not welcome any reformation or reconfiguration from visitors, whilst it also is not designed to grow beyond Kaiser’s compositional authority. The piece, however immersive as a simulated environment, remains subservient to the control of its author, ultimately cementing its aesthetic status as a discrete world installation project.

My own ensemble project *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0*²⁴³ presents a different type of hybrid digital/analogue discrete worlding. The work is structured as a concert installation for a theatre stage or gallery floor, containing a busy arrangement of performers, video screens, stage props, lighting strips and objects.

²⁴¹ Kaiser refers to this and many other works as “jungle thicket[s]”, explaining, “(composition) is for me something like creating a garden (...) where things can happen”. See Gottschalk, pp 268.

²⁴² Cheng, Ian. *Emissary's Guide To Worlding*. Metis Suns. Kindle Edition.

²⁴³ Later referred to as *NaHCC1.0*.

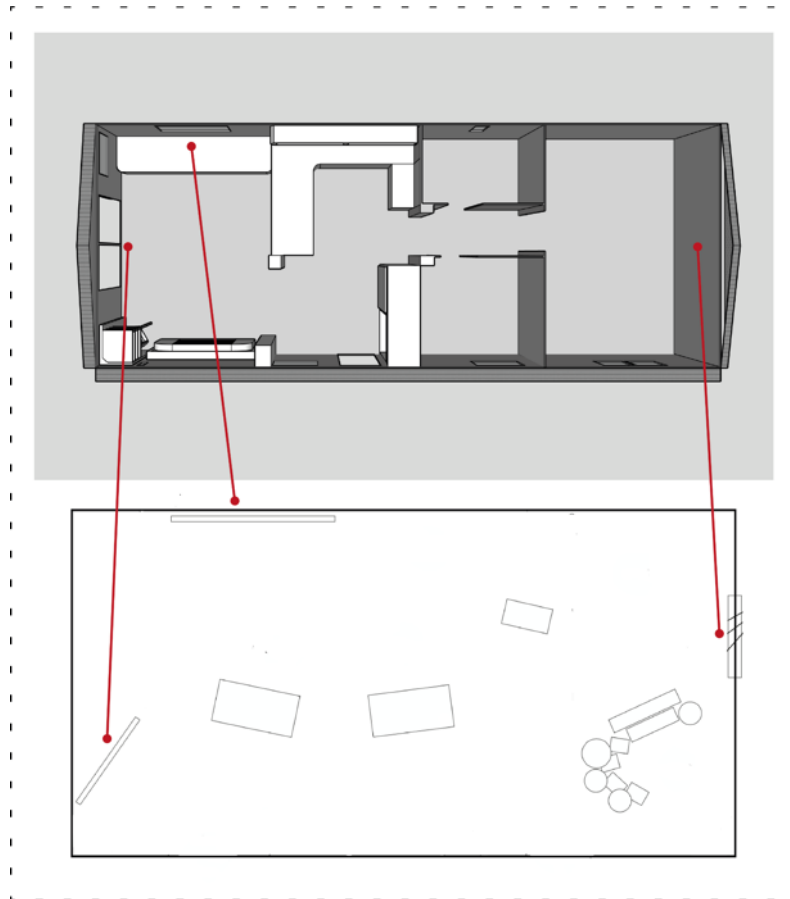


Fig 6.12: Above: Floorplan of a designed caravan. Below: The floorplan of *NaHCC1.0*. The front-left screen plays a long-duration video capturing a 24-hour view through my caravan's living room window. The far-right doorway of the stage projects bright pink light out onto the stage.

Floorplans are central to my creative infatuation with designing digital static caravans. The layout of a static caravan is built to house all the usual domestic necessities of a small house or apartment. However, its panelled walls are a few inches thick and plastic, and its furniture elements are almost all fixed into place as they are necessary for holding the entire structure together. It is a relatively portable structure, with immovable internal elements. Ascribing an inherent modularity to the static caravan, *NaHCC1.0* reimagines my own caravan home as a fragmented stage set replete with a fish tank, tables and chairs, windows (video screens), light strips and lighting elements, along with plastic jerry cans and paper trash; the former as a poetic take on the large cylinders used to provide gas to the static caravan, the latter as a cheap poetic reference to the term 'trailer trash.'²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ See Kusenbach, M. (2020), "Trailer Trash" Stigma and Belonging in the Florida Mobile Home Parks", *Social Inclusion*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, pp. 66-75

The two video screens allude to two of the caravan's main windows that each look out onto the labyrinth of over a thousand other caravans.²⁴⁵ Bright pink light floods the stage from one side, poetically referencing the morning sunlight that streams through the bedroom window. The lighting and video materials together suspend the work between the recognizable and the intensely dream-like; the incessant pairing of true images with digital renderings results in a saturated video world that blurs and melts between the real and the virtual, the natural and the synthetic.

The idea of reuse, repetition and recycling was a strong guiding thematic in the *NaHCC1.0* world. The liberal use and reuse of my own previous musical works (similarly to works of Marcus Kaiser) intends to form a kind of crude, referential sonic web that seems to have sewn elements of the past into the audiovisual world's present. Reuse conjures notions of a step-by-step fading of presence. Along with the oneiric otherness of the caravan quite literally fading into its virtual other, the work treats past, remembered sounds and sonic objects as faded entities woven into the present musical soundworld.

Three tin cans project field recordings of seagulls and the rough sea breeze, metaphorically 'trapping' the memory of the caravan's external environment into objects that the audience will, on first glance perceive (and subsequently ignore) as redundant, throw-away trash. Junk (paper scraps, jerry cans and large tin cans) is transformed into foregrounded sounding material. Handheld tape players – a potent form of faded and forgotten musical technology – become leading voices in a live mechanical hocketus of ruined recordings of both my own previous works, along with immediately recognisable key sounds from the streets of Graz, Austria, where the work was written during the 2020 St.A.iR fellowship.²⁴⁶ A section of the work features the guitar gently swooning over the stretched melody of *La Vie en Rose*, a central compositional material in my previous composition, *Life in Pink*, from 2017-18.²⁴⁷

Perhaps the work would only be experienced as a messy yet charmed 25-minute theatrical scene depicting something of a homage to British caravan culture, scenographically accompanied by various quotidian material elements. However discrete (limited by the borders of the concert floor and the gallery building), the intermedial saturation achieved in the project could, for a short period, more actively engage the creative and perceptual faculties of an audience navigating the assemblage of performers, dreamy portraits of site, virtual renderings, and first-person digital meanderings around a caravan site. The work may achieve its aim of magnifying the feeling of temporal and locational suspension between the recognisable and the fantastical, the real and the imagined. This sensation of suspension is, I believe,

²⁴⁵ Also featured in *Untitled 2*.

²⁴⁶ The bell of the Domkirche zum Heiligen Ägydius church. The building is situated in the centre of the old city. It rings incredibly loudly and intermittently throughout the day. The ensemble informed me later that almost every musical work made for them in the fellowship scheme featured some kind of bell recording.

²⁴⁷ Originally written for the United Instruments of Lucilin. Available at: <https://youtu.be/UeOuCOmx2KQ>. The work received its U.S premiere more recently by the International Contemporary Ensemble in Roulette, New York in Spring 2022.

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crucial to a discrete world's ability to suspend the audience's belief (even if only for a short time) allowing them to more actively engage in the presented environment and, ultimately, experience sound, image and physical space as a new world unfolding in front of them.

The work ends with a projection of a virtual simulation of the concert space itself. This is intended as both an experiential landing point (resolution), whilst further providing a meta-referential spark, as the imagined world of the fictional caravan park folds back onto itself, melts into a miniature simulacrum, and finally fades to black in front of the very people who witnessed it come to life.



Fig 6.13: Video stills from *NaHCC1.0*. Above: Screen 2. Scene view out of the real window, edited in Adobe Premiere Pro. Below: Screen 1. Scene view out of the window, created in the Unity game engine.



Fig 6.14: Video stills from *NaHCC1.0*. Above: The live stage setting. Below: Screen 1. The stage created and rendered in the Unity game engine, projected in the final scene of the piece.

6.4 Open-world Art

A large-scale intermedial world plunges and immerses audiences into an open-ended setting that often contains and nurtures its own created languages, complex and interwoven character narratives, expansive landscapes, along with auditory signs, laws and ethical rules specific only to the universe in which they are set.²⁴⁸ Open-ended worlds can exist across multiple media forms, typically expanding beyond their original media setting (a book or film, for example) and, in doing so, far exceeding a world's initial experiential limitations, growing to allow an audience involvement beyond mere passive receivership, into a kind of totally immersive participatory engagement.

The Star Wars franchise exemplifies open-ended worlding practice. Begun in 1977, the project is today a globally recognised, mammoth-scale worlding project that has amassed a devotional global audience spanning generations. What began as a single feature film²⁴⁹ led, within less than ten years, to a vision beyond just subsequent feature films. Today, Star Wars has spawned a truly immense, ever-growing, interdisciplinary and intertextual universe that contains and connects numerous video games, comic books, language resource books, a range of encyclopaedias, a continuing episodic series of feature films, television adaptations, fan conventions and festivals, theme park attractions and additional discrete multimedia projects, almost all of which have little to no connection to the world's original instigator, the director George Lucas.²⁵⁰

When a worlding project develops to this scale, the ability of any one audience member to experience the universe in its entirety becomes almost impossible. This creates a useful problem for the growing world – whilst an audience member can passively experience any isolated elements of the world presented, they must become an active participant in order to engage more fully with the details of the world. Worlding, at this most ambitious level, is therefore not simply the creation and artistic presentation of a fictional world, but an open invitation to an audience member to both explore and to append (by creating their own additional elements), to experience and to create experience, simultaneously. A successful worlding, then, is a type of hyper participatory artform. Where participatory art demands the active agency of its participants to be completed, a world can exist both beyond the involvement of its audiences, yet will only benefit from their creative addition to it.

²⁴⁸ Wolf, M.J.P. (2013) *Building imaginary worlds: the theory and history of subcreation*. New York: Routledge. pp. 15

²⁴⁹ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Star Wars". *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 8 Dec. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Star-Wars-film-series>. (Accessed 2 January 2022)

²⁵⁰ Derhy Kurtz, B.W.L. and Bourdaa, M. (2017) *The rise of transtexts: challenges and opportunities*. Routledge

6.5 The Finite, the Infinite, Aliveness and Autonomy

Religious scholar James Carse, in discussing the form of games and gameplay, offers a useful parallel to the discrete/open-ended dichotomy in worlds. Games, Carse states, are essentially either finite or infinite:

“A finite game is played for the purpose of winning, an infinite game for the purpose of continuing play.”²⁵¹

In a finite game, the rules do not change. The parameters in which any action or activity takes place are set from the beginning. A finite game is structured to allow one or more players to compete either against each other, or to play alone against the parameters of the game. Both forms ultimately mean that the game will be completed by the player[s], resulting in either victory or defeat. A finite game will always end, and it functions through a motivation towards a goal (typically to complete or the win the game, and often to also defeat one or more opponents). On ending, a finite game can be reset and played again, repeated ad infinitum without any of its parameters changing. The discrete world parallels the finite game – once all the parameters of the world have been met and completed, the ability to explore or participate beyond those parameters ceases, and the world will reset back to its initial state.

In an infinite game, the rules change during play. This is because an infinite game does not contain the same goal-orientation structure as a finite game. Parameters may be set from the beginning; however, they must change in order to avoid the game coming to an end. A change of the rules of an infinite game occurs when the players agree that the game is on course to some sort of completion. Rules will also change through a complex set of inbuilt conditional parameters inside the game structure that are triggered through particular types or series of player actions. Once the rules change, new sets of parameters will be introduced, shifting the direction of gameplay and thereby extending the game (theoretically beyond any potential conclusion or completion). An open-ended world is an infinite game – as players or participants explore the world, it will continue to change and develop around them, endlessly generating change and never resetting to its original state.

An open-ended world, unlike a discrete world, invites and nurtures participation in order to continue to grow. An open-ended world simulates aliveness:

“A World is an artificial living thing, but a living thing nonetheless. It is ongoing, absorbs change, and attracts players to help perpetuate it.”²⁵²

²⁵¹ Carse, J.P. (1989) *Finite and infinite games: the chance of a lifetime*. 6. print. New York: Ballantine Books.

²⁵² Cheng, I. (2018) *Emissary's Guide To Worlding* (p. 18). Metis Suns. Kindle Edition.

The ‘aliveness’ of an open-ended world is, according to Ian Cheng, what in turn inspires its participants to invest time, energy and belief into it.²⁵³ An open-ended world that is, in the basest sense of the word, alive, will withstand interactions both within any artificially created boundaries, whilst also being receptive to the external influences of its author[s] or participants. A world, if it is to be effective in drawing its audience between its original media windows, must provide both a narrative history and depth (developments, mythologies, storyline shifts, resolutions and revelations):

“A world requires a past that is complex enough to feel lived in by other players.”²⁵⁴

Autonomy, specifically in the context of worlding, is described as the conditions achieved when the impression of a fixed destiny is replaced by a sense of having and being able to enact a choice.²⁵⁵ When the ability to act on choice takes over, any future act in a world is an act of agency on the part of its participant[s]. An open-ended world is therefore an infinite game that allows for autonomous acts of its participants to continue to grow.

A discrete world, by design, lacks the ability to evolve beyond the set limits of its author (equally imposing those boundaries on the abilities of its audiences or participants). A discrete world can, in this sense, never become autonomous. An open-ended world however will become autonomous through the active and continued participation and agency of its audiences or participants to continue to develop. Once an open world demonstrates the ability to continue to develop beyond the control of its author[s], it could be considered to be truly alive.

Worlding, once achieving a state of total interactivity, or, moves beyond its discrete state and into an immense alternative to the lived experience of the real world. Effective worldings offer an alternate space in which participants enter into, and actively take part in, with the same feeling of agency as in their daily lives.

6.3 Emissaries, iPhones, Arcades, Caravans

Ian Cheng’s *Emissaries* (2012-2017)²⁵⁶ is a video project involving the interactive complexities of entirely created participants. The project is conceived as an epic trilogy of video simulations,²⁵⁷ using

²⁵³ Ibid. pp.23

²⁵⁴ Ibid. pp.18

²⁵⁵ Ibid. pp.23

²⁵⁶ More details and a video extract can be found at <https://museum.stanford.edu/exhibitions/ian-cheng-emissary-sunsets-self> (Accessed 10th November 2021).

²⁵⁷ *Emissary in the Squat of Gods* (2015), *Emissary Forks at Perfection* (2016), *Emissary Sunsets the Self* (2017)

the naturalistic structuring capabilities of complex machine learning programming to create an open-ended and ever-changing narrative viewing experience for a passive audience.

Each of the work's three episodes centres around the emergent activities and interactions of an artificially intelligent agent – 'Emissary'²⁵⁸ – rendered in the three parts as a 'Young Ancient' character, a 'Canine Superpet' and an 'AI Puddle', respectively.²⁵⁹



Fig. 6.15: Still of *Emissary: Sunsets the Self* (2017).²⁶⁰ The 'AI puddle' can be seen in the centre of the image.

Humanoid and animal characters meander around volcanic, sandy or grassy landscapes. Plants and fauna writhe and wriggle around and off the screen. A pasty globular atoll character shuffles across the gamified landscape, nested amongst packs of dogs chasing, licking, or occasionally attacking their

²⁵⁸ Cheng, I. (2018) *Emissaries: guide to worlding: how to navigate the unnatural art of creating an infinite game by choosing a present, storytelling its past, simulating its futures, and nurturing its changes*. Edited by J. Constable, R. Lewin, and V. So. London: Koenig Books.

²⁵⁹ Synopsis of *Emissaries*, see <http://iancheng.com/emissaries> (Accessed 10th November 2021).

²⁶⁰ Available at <https://www.pilarcorrias.com/exhibitions/175-ian-cheng-emissaries/> (Accessed 26 January 2022)

humanoid companions. The project plays out complex social dramas and interactions of cognitive organic characters. The world is only limited by the borders of the video frame.

The Emissary is not a narrative character project in the typical sense, but as a meticulously coded guiding media ‘ruleset’ built from machine reinforcement learning parameters.²⁶¹ The work is described as a “live simulation and story”²⁶² and in this sense can be understood as an endless video game entity that *plays itself* with no teleological intentions or goals. It is a simulation of the primal functions of existence and evolution – to exist, to develop and to thrive. The complexity of intertwined narrative elements (the characters and their governing rules) has, and continues to lead to outcomes that even the artist himself has not foreseen.²⁶³ As an art entity, the project is a non-deterministic and non-hierarchical audiovisual worlding that lives and grows, nurtures changes and micro-evolutions between nested elements, whilst also absorbing and transforming new information with no end-goal. It is an artificially created, yet very real world that contains autonomy beyond the control of its artist creator. It is a living virtual environment generating activity beyond its core algorithms; activity that can only be understood as a faithful simulation of a novel living environment.



Fig 6.16: *Emissary Forks at Perfection*, installation view. Carnegie Museum of Art, 2017. Photo: Bryan Conley.²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Vickers, B. (2016). *Hermetic Engineering: The Art of Ian Cheng*. Artforum. Vol. 54, No. 7

²⁶² Available at <http://iancheng.com/emissaries> (Accessed 10 December 2020)

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Available at <http://magazine.art21.org/2018/03/02/in-plain-view-ian-chengs-live-simulations/#.YfDo9vVBw0o> (Accessed 26 January 2022)

As a container, *Emissaries* spews out a stream of complex evolutionary thematics, from cognitive evolution, emergence, animalism, ‘slippery DNA’ and the simulative potentials of machine reinforcement learning.²⁶⁵ It does this through the more traditional medium of a video game simulation. The audience are observers to the unfolding lives of a multitude of entities enacting, following and, crucially, adapting to and beyond the core ethical, social and evolutionary rules set by the simulation. Perhaps more than any other contemporary digital simulation work of its kind, the *Emissary* exemplifies art’s ability to demonstrate infinitude, self-generation and self-sustenance, this packed into the traditional container of a passively experienced artwork.

In unveiling the first iPhone in 2007, entrepreneur Steve Jobs and the Apple corporation ‘programmed’ a worlding project with somewhat more immediate ramifications in the real world. The iPhone is, in essence, an open-ended technological platform on which software developers and passive users can both participate in and experience the growth of the world simultaneously. It is a physical device onto which products of creative agency and experimentation are uploaded, sold and developed in real-time, in response to the demands of the user. The iPhone is ultimately an open-ended worlding platform. Similarly, to both *Star Wars* and *Emissaries*, the iPhone immediately diminished its author agency, replacing the control of a single creative entity with the autonomy of participants, allowing the world around the device – its language[s] and philosophy to develop endlessly for future participants.

In both the art of Ian Cheng and the product lines of the Apple corporation, open worlds offer different views of world platforms that are open to change and refiguration, whilst crucially, depend on the activities of those who live or take part in them. In Cheng’s work, those populating the world are programmed entities, whilst the iPhone treats the real world as a platform for seeding new approaches to programming. Both the video simulation and the digital device are limited by the frame of their video screen, whilst both treat the experiential engagement with the screen and its contents in different ways.

6.4 Conclusion to Chapter 6

In this chapter, two forms of worlds have been identified. Finite worlds limit the agency and freedom of audiences and participants, often containing fixed borders within which elements may be able to develop through interaction, however to a point that is set by the world’s creator[s]. Finite worlds can be found both in the digital and analogue realism – the analogue setting of a theatre or art space can house a finite worlding project designed to simulate entities or environments from the real world. In this

²⁶⁵ Vickers, B. (2016). *Hermetic Engineering: The Art of Ian Cheng*. Artforum. Vol. 54, No. 7

setting, audiences may be able physically enter an installed work, however any audience interaction is either limited or prevented. The analogue finite world, however, presents stimulating possibilities for exploiting the perceived threshold between the real and the artificial. Theme parks and funfairs exemplify analogue finite worlding, in that a fixed number of attractions allow for maximal audience involvement without any risk of change or perturbation of the world's architecture. Digital finite worlds find their roots in video game design, similarly, setting fixed borders around environments that can be explored and engaged with by players. In both analogue and virtual finite worlds, any fundamental change made to the world by its author[s] means that the world must be temporarily closed, with audience access being severed until the world can open again.

Open-worlds permit maximal involvement and participation from audiences in service of the world's development beyond its author's agency. *Star Wars*, as an exemplary open-world project, represents an ongoing worlding project whose content and architecture has developed far beyond its initial state set by its creator, George Lucas. Artist Ian Cheng's *Emissaries* project presents a digital open-world in which the artist sets initial coded conditions, runs a virtual simulation but enacts little to no intervention once the simulation has begun running. Open worlds, as with infinite games, invite active engagement and development not in the aim of finishing gameplay or world exploration, but in order for play, or world exploration and interaction, to continue as long as possible. The real world contains rules, languages, ethics, technologies, births and deaths. The real world is open in as much as the stability and development of each of these elements depends on how it is used, experimented upon, tested and pushed by those participating in it. The real world is open; however, the real world contains numerous finite worlds, finite games, and finite simulations.²⁶⁶ Open worlds can simultaneously contain finite worlds, whilst at the same time nurturing numerous other, nested open world structures. The experiential, metatextual and simulative possibility with such a level of openness in design is astounding.

In my work, worlding is explored principally through the frame of virtual, gamified audiovisual environments created in CAD and game design softwares. The created worlds in my works are presented not in their entirety, but as worlds-in-the-making – they are proposals for new worlds based on the immediate world around me. To plunge audiences into this type of setting is to invite into a kind of voyeuristic journey of watching a world being formed on the one hand, whilst also actively reflecting on the process of the work being made, moving through alluring audiovisual narratives that they must engage more actively with in order to try to form meaning. Worlding, in this sense then, is a container for the creative process, albeit a poetic container used to set up and explore metaphorical connections between the real, and virtual worlds.

²⁶⁶ Carse, J. Ibid.

A large, stylized number '7' composed of thick purple lines. The top bar is horizontal, and the stem curves downwards and to the left. The number is positioned on the left side of the page, partially overlapping a vertical purple bar.

7

The word 'CONCLUSION' in a bold, purple, sans-serif font, centered horizontally at the bottom of the page. It is partially overlaid by a vertical purple bar and a horizontal purple bar at the very bottom.

CONCLUSION

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Conclusion: Project Summary

This practice-based research project, *WORLDS. METAPHORS. ICONS.* has explored five main areas of enquiry:

- The implementation of the creative process as a compositional material, and palpable element in the final work;
- The ways to obfuscate the process–product relationship, through creative interventions into revealing and foregrounding process, along with renderings process-led narratives more poetic, ambiguous;
- The role of metaphor both as a communicative construct, and as a rich artistic tool creating and nurturing more engaged audience processes of meaning-making
- Intermedia and technological use as both an informative/agential and affective/resultant method in composition and intermedia art;
- Worlding and worldbuilding as a novel route to containing/housing and nurturing the above topics.

The first area of enquiry, the creative process, has been identified not as merely a private, shrouded or hidden phenomenon that cultivates the making of an artwork behind the scenes of the finally experienced work. The creative impulse, and by extension, the processes of creativity and creative activity, are considered a prevalent and pervasive necessity not only to art, but to new meaning-making. In chapter 2, the creative process is identified not as a rare phenomenon exclusive to creative practitioners working in the arts. It is rather articulated as a nascent and natural impulse that is universally experienced and in need of careful nurturing and development beyond its roots in infancy and childhood. The thesis argues that creativity is a phenomenologically necessary human trait, even in the most routine experiences of daily life.²⁶⁷ My creative work attempts in different ways to pedestalize the processual experiences of creative exploration and experimentation with compositional media – from found sounds, captured images, visual rendering and editing softwares – this way allowing process to have a more prominent experiential position in a final work. In chapter 3, my own approach is identified as similar, although less didactic than the *process-over-product* approach developed in art and music practices of recent decades. In

²⁶⁷ See Chapter 2

my own work the line between process and product is deliberately obscured, leading to the creation of audiovisual scenographies that blur the line between truth and fiction, metatextuality and journalism, autobiography and oneiric self-reference. This results in affective, probing and at times revelatory self-reflexive artworks (both for myself and for the audience) that, in different ways, reflect and amplify the open-ended nature of my own creative work and experience.

The metaphor, identified in chapter 4 for its role as a creative communicative construct, is used a great deal as a way of recharging the interpretative space between the maker and receiver of the artwork. The space created by metaphor – similarly to the space created by mystery, kilter, oneirism or bemusement – seeds a more aesthetically rich artistic experience for the audience, as they are encouraged to enact their own creative process in order to decode and attach meaning to the audiovisual world they are plunged into. I argue that encounters with metaphor, framed within reflexive audiovisual scenes and scenographies, invites the audience to reflect on the nature of their own creativity and creative agency, thereby further enhancing the aesthetic experience of my work. Through forging a more open and charged reflective space, I have strived to create a more immediate experiential connection between myself (the artist) and the receiver (the audience). The audience, actively questioning the meaning of the work as they are experiencing it, attune to their own interpretative faculties and, bringing new meaning onto the work only possible through their individual experience, ultimately provide the work with more aesthetic and shared cultural value.

Technology and the intermedial use of technological media (over that of multimedia), allow for the creation of large-scale multimodal assemblages of sound, image, sculpture and physical performance. The intermedia assemblage outlined in chapter 5 describes the creation of a dynamic environment of interwoven audiovisual media, one that creates an experience more akin to exploring or wandering through a theatrical space, densely populated site, or world-in-construction.

Worlding, as a recent trend in contemporary art and topic in critical artistic discourse, is situated as the culminating stage of the project. Using James Carse's theoretical framework of the finite and infinite in game creation suggests a method of composition in which ongoing, active participant engagement replaces any teleological end to an artistic experience. Responding to the work of artist Ian Cheng and researcher Mark Wolf, Chapter 6 begins to explore the nature of an artwork more in terms of a creative space in which to nurture open-ended narrative experience, inviting different forms of participant interaction, and embedding non-linear sonic and visual materials into 3-dimensional environments that, in many ways, break down the distinction between the composed and the installed.

The three *Untitled* projects, along with *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0*, form the central compositional output of the doctorate, around which are three other informative projects. The three

Untitled works present each of the PhD's central topics in different compositional configurations. *Untitled 1* explores a narrative centred around the compositional process, one that leads gradually towards a more dream-like, abstract and metaphorical audiovisual texture. This piece also implements semi-open materials for three musicians, and a more theatrical role for one performer who acts to metaphorize my own creative process as an act of sorting through endless paper sketches. *Untitled 2* introduces a worlded scene between piano, field recorded sound and video screens. This work attempts to more directly metaphorize both my own and the performer's role. *Untitled 3* similarly introduces traces of the beginnings of a possible world, however this piece more directly explores the metaphor of confession in order to flip the creative process onto the audience and push them to enact their own act or reflection on confession whilst immersed in woozy, ambient sound and performance. *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0* explodes my own physical compositional space – the static caravan – into a large concert scenography. In this piece, a document of an ongoing virtual world building accompanies a dense sonic ambience made up of previous works, all intended to drown the audience.

The three additional pieces in the submission, *Poet Mechanic: BUILD-A-POET*, *Comfort Objects* and *Lot No.1517* represent more finite attempts at staging the creative processes of the works' performers. Each of these works was formative to my understanding that staging the creative process is less immediately affective if carried out in a purely didactic fashion, without further compositional intervention on my part.

7.2 Future Work and Final Thoughts

Two projects are being planned, with both illustrating the future of my work beyond the PhD.

1. *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club Ltd.*

The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club Ltd. is a virtually rendered static caravan park, implementing the static caravan as a container for a fully interactive, artistic digital worlding platform. Exploring the notion that worlding is a natural resultant step to staging the creative process, this project is imagined as an underlying worlding infrastructure for nurturing and showcasing digital creative activity and exploration.

I hope that this project will achieve a kind of neutral audiovisual worldbuilding project that will be populated exclusively by the work of artists, committed audience members and creative organisations. Like the level of digital accessibility proposed in open world video games like Minecraft or Decentraland,

The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club Ltd. will offer a novel creative sandbox intended solely to explore how a digital world can nurture a host of creative activities of a globally connected participatory community.

Below is a brief description of how the project might be understood. I include this only as an accompaniment to the short initial video example of the work in my submission.

You sit at your computer and click on the icon. The game window opens. You seem to have been dropped into a bright, outdoor scene. An orange sun glows brightly in a blue sky above. Moving the mouse, you begin to see around you a maze of virtually rendered static caravans, arranged in a grid-like neighbourhood as far as the simulation view allows. There don't seem to be any other users in the scene. You hear cries of invisible seagulls flying overhead, along with a gently oscillating white-noise (wind, perhaps) and a smooth murmuring of what sounds like the sea quietly lapping a beach somewhere beyond the game's view. On closer listening to the soundscape, there is a dense musical ambience humming somewhere around the scene. It is a tightly woven, disordered layer of disparate instrumental and electronic musical works all playing simultaneously, from somewhere. There is music in this virtual caravan park. The scene is simple, almost empty, yet it's bright and positively inviting. It is a virtual space, yet, it's not real. Yet it feels welcoming, homely.

You are inside a digital, beachside caravan park. At first view, there is very little activity; nothing seems to be moving either in or outside of the caravans. What are the caravans for? Is there anything inside them? The user may be wondering what they can do in this simulation. Is this an interactive experience? What is the goal of this game? Is it even a game?

You begin to move through the scene using the buttons on your computer keyboard. Advancing slowly between the nearest two caravans, the soundworld suddenly mutates. The first already distant texture dissipates under another, more electronic, yet sticky and dreamy choir of bending pitches.

This sound is coming from inside a caravan. Climbing three small steps onto a cheap looking white veranda, a small sign next to the door reads 'Life in Pink: NaHCC'. Crossing through the doorway, the music immediately swells in dynamic and spreads everywhere around the user's stereo field. A rich, saturated music fills the space. The music is resounding, almost on the verge of total distortion. An absurd, exaggerated reverberation creates a cathedral-like, eerie wash of architectural acoustics. The melody is familiar, but both the temporal spread, and textural density of the whole is too stodgy, distorted and reverberant to clearly make out any words. You move deeper into the interior space of the caravan – the music is emanating from everywhere. It's a kind of non-localised muzak playing from the walls of this digital caravan. Down a narrow corridor, there are several other small rooms. The rooms are all empty beyond simple furnishings – a chair, an empty table, a kettle, a footstool. The music persists, it seems to adapt to a pre-designed acoustic in each of the different rooms. Is this a kind of digital concert house, a music streaming space visually skinned as a cheap static caravan? Is the music intended to aesthetically enhance

this disembodied virtual tour of an empty space? What is in the other caravans? Are they simply all different types of digital listening rooms? Can the user affect anything in this simulation? Are there any other users in this place to interact with?

2. *ALL THE WAYS WE LOVE EACHOTHER at the end of this world.*

A live performance installation is also planned for the coming years. This long-duration piece will last up to a month in duration, exploring two thematic and conceptual containers as frameworks within which to embed the unfolding activities of resident performers, along with a growing collection of audiovisual media. This work will explore the process of ongoing documentation as a springboard for a fictional discrete worlding installation. Performers may be invited to enter the caravan at set times to perform open-scored musical works, build sound sculptural objects and assemblages, and perform tasks ranging from domestic chores, arranging the space, playing board games, and acting out choreographed theatrical routines created in collaboration with myself over the course of the project. The installation could ultimately house and nurture a set of key autonomous media elements intended to activate the space when the performers are not present.

I am also interested in creating a programmed virtual element to the project. Accessible online, a virtual open-world scene connected to a kind of recording setup could form a natural prosthetic to the physical installation, capturing audio for use later, either by myself or audience participants. This pairing of the digital and the analogue, the virtual and the physical into a single project, will I hope allow for a more cohesive balance between open and discrete forms. It will also allow me to explore forms of audience participation and engagement as materials for nurturing unfolding worlding between myself, performers and active audience members.

Ultimately, this kind of project would allow me to create a more immersive and immediate experience of simulation, of a theatrical scene bound only by the limits of its stage yet extending into the virtual realm through audience participation and activity (bounds of discrete worlding within open-world parameters).

Over the course of this PhD, my practice has developed considerably. What began as small-scale experiments with performers in concert settings, has developed into a media art practice exploiting web design, 3D printing, architecture and engineering design, long-form installation and large-scale participation. This development represents a shift – a heterogenous compositional language that expands beyond the creation and production of sonic experience, whilst I believe still achieving a tangible musical impact regardless of its increasingly extra-musical groundings. The day-to-day activities fuelling my work include unearthing new dispositions of virtual simulation, film, experimental approaches to media, and a

persistent imagining of the physical staging and sonography that will frame a final work. All of this, however, remains in the broader context of an expanded new musical arena.

I have solidified an aesthetic, worlded container out of the static caravan. What initially symbolised a difficult move away from the city became an endless material for what I believe will be a lifelong project – a grand homage to site, an architectural, sculptural object, and a culture rich with aesthetic narrative possibilities that I am now truly grateful for being thrown into. I have gained an acuity in *not knowing* what the full details of the audience's aesthetic experience will be at the end of creating a work, however, remain sure in the discursive and, ultimately, experiential strength of the works. This assuredness has come directly out of the research and creative activities that pursuing a practice-based PhD enabled for the last four years.

Questions around the topic of simulation are becoming more important in the work. What does it feel like to enter into a physical simulation? What are the borders of a simulated space and a real space? Over the coming years, I will explore these questions through completing an already planned number of physical, digital and intermedia projects. Larger-scale physical intermedia installations will allow me to further magnify the theoretical and aesthetic themes covered in this thesis. These include the embedding of digital audiovisual technologies into carefully scenographed installations; constructing increasingly open artistic frameworks that allow space for the agencies of participants and audience members to take part in open settings of play and reflection; further refining a sonic language characterised by wooze, listlessness and temporal expanse; drawing out the more subtle gestures, emotional incentives and willingness of the performers I work with.

The title of this project has, I believe, been made manifest in the submitted projects. Icons, seeding creative frameworks for rich aesthetic metaphors, that are woven into the fabric of new intermedial worlds.

APPENDIX

Poet Mechanic V: BUILD–A–POET

Poet Mechanic V:BUILD–A–POET is a task-based performance incorporating the production of an instructional, text score in real-time. The piece was composed throughout January 2019, and was first performed at Southampton University on 27th February 2019 by the Soprano Juliet Fraser. Unfortunately, no video or audio documentation of the performance was made. A description of the project accompanied by relevant figures follows.

Poet Mechanic V is constructed in four parts:

1. An email is sent to the performer when she is in the performance space, ready to begin the piece (fig. A.1).
2. The performer navigates to a website link embedded in the email, reaching a dedicated page leading her to a google document file (figs A.2, 3 and 4).
3. In this document, a text score is created in real-time. The performer's computer screen is projected on the wall behind her.
4. The performer carries out the central task of the piece: constructing and switching on a small sound-making sculptural object (see APPENDIX B: *The Poet Mechanic*).

(open to start the piece) ▷

Cameron Graham <camerongraham1@googlemail.com>

to Juliet ▾

Good morning Juliet!

The link to start the piece is below.

Please click the link, and begin to explore the website. Navigate around, get a sense of what this is about.

When you feel you are finished navigating the website, please click the NEXT tab at the top right of the website.

LINK : www.poetmechanics.com

Also, please remember to document this experience as much as you can and want to.

All best,

Cameron

↩ Reply

➦ Forward

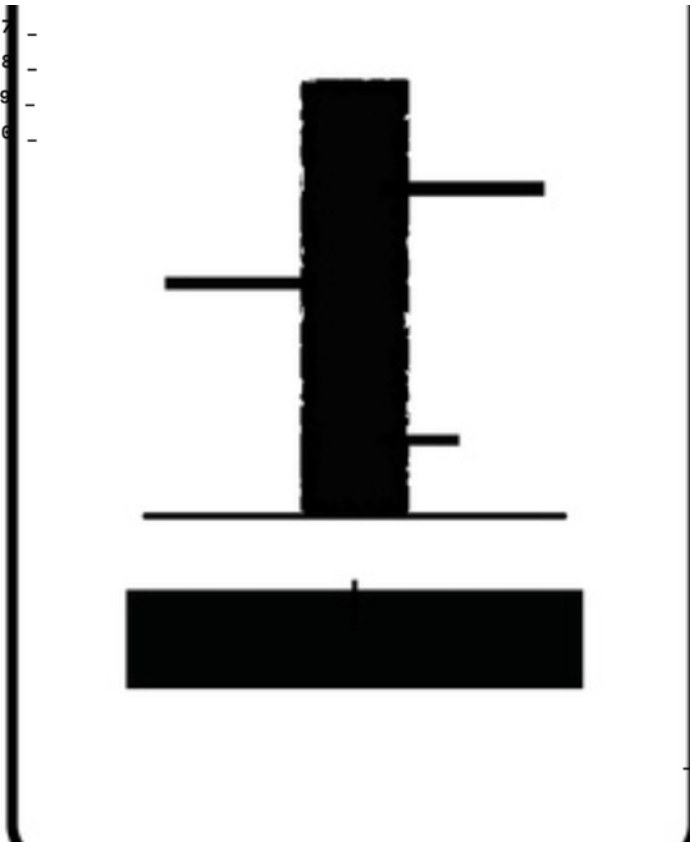
Fig. A.1: The email sent to Juliet on the morning of the performance.

· 2017 _ >08 · 2017 _
 · 2018 _ >11 · 2018 _
 · 2019 _ >05 · 2019 _
 · 2020 _ >08 · 2020 _
 9.8.15.16 {0} _
 .w _ >



_ 6.21.20.21
 _ 2.18.15.20.8.5.
 _ 6.1.20.8.
 _ 22.9.4.

>XX · 2017 _ >08 · 2017 _
 >10 · 2018 _ >11 · 2018 _
 >02 · 2019 _ >05 · 2019 _
 >01 · 2020 _ >08 · 2020 _
 >! 19.8.15.16 {0} _
 >£.\$.w _ >



_ 6.21.20.21.18.5 >
 2.18.15.20.8.5.18.19 >
 _ 6.1.20.8.5.18 >
 _ 22.9.4.5.15 >

Figs A.2 and A.3: Screenshots of the *Poet Mechanic* website.

· 2017 _ > 08 · 2017 _
· 2018 _ > 11 · 2018 _
· 2019 _ > 05 · 2019 _
· 2020 _ > 08 · 2020 _
.9.8.15.16 {0} _
i. * _ >

POET MECHANIC V : BUILD-A-POET [PART 1]

Juliet, the following page will take you to the score.

Please, before clicking on the link, remember that you are documenting this process, live.

[CLICK HERE](#)

_ 6.21.20.21.18.5
_ 2.18.15.20.8.5.18.19
_ 6.1.20.8.5.18
00 0 1 5 15

Fig A.4: The landing page for the next part of the performance. The link navigates to an empty google document file (see below).

The original score created during the performance:

Start of score

Juliet.

You are being asked to construct the 5th Poet Mechanic.

WHAT IS THE POET MECHANIC?

The Poet Mechanics are live animated instruments built from classic vinyl players. They are refashioned into interacting sculptures that perform themselves. The Poet Mechanic project explores new ways of working with traditional mediums and, in doing so, transforms the vinyl player into a mechanical nonhuman performer that loops sound whilst interacting with objects placed around it.

WHAT IS THIS PROJECT FOR YOU?

This Poet Mechanic project takes initial inspiration from two artists: Joseph Kosuth and Mike Nelson.

Kosuth's *ONE AND THREE CHAIRS*, from 1965, consists of a physical chair, a photograph of the chair, and an enlarged xerox image of the dictionary definition of the word 'chair'.

Nelson's work is formed of labyrinths of corridors and rooms built inside gallery complexes. The rooms often contain seemingly disconnected masses of material media strewn throughout the spaces.

Kosuth's work presents stimulating questions around how we perceive and define the material nature of physical objects. It challenges the notion of what exactly is 'material'. What are the connections between an object, a representation of the object, and a written definition/description of that object? What is the real chair in this assemblage?

Nelson's built and prepared spaces house a ghostly collection of materials, both recognisable and abstracted. A strong presence of the hand of the maker penetrates the works.

Can the identity of the creator be translated directly through inanimate materials? Can the building or composing of assemblages of materials, in any way, allow for some kind of direct transmission of intention between the maker and the receiver?

In what ways could these questions relate to performance? To composition?

This Poet Mechanic project, for you, is a relatively simple task-based performance. It is a kind of soft ritual ceremony of making and reflection on that making. It is also the first part in a live installation performance that focuses on the relationship between a maker (you, me), the making, the made object, and your presence inside the time and space of an atelier, a studio environment, and this room.

Begin to think about the soon to be constructed Poet Mechanic. Return to the website briefly if you want to look at more images.

STRUCTURING THIS PERFORMANCE

1. You are on stage. You are currently reading this page of instructions. You are documenting yourself, the space, the audience, the experience.
2. The contents of your screen are being projected onto the back wall for the room of people, so that they can *watch you view and share your view*.
3. You are following these instructions in order to build the hybrid instrumental sound sculpture, the Poet Mechanic.
4. The Poet Mechanic can be plugged in and switched on whenever you begin the building process.
5. When you have activated the Poet Mechanic, *you can decide in what way[s] to continue, to end this stage of the process*. You may choose to sit down, to return to this desk, to sing, to dance, to interact further in any way. Or, you may simply wish to document more and end the project there.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the 'arm' (the vinyl sculpture) on the base (the vinyl player). From this point on, you *may* wish to turn on the vinyl player. You can turn it on by simply moving the needle arm over the vinyl disk.
2. Select and place objects around the Poet Mechanic. As you wish. They have been prepared before this performance to make it easier for you. The stands, each object, is there to be used, if you wish.
3. Set, place, reset, move, reorder, rearrange. As you wish.
4. Begin to form a rhythmic palette with the objects that are being struck, scraped...
5. At this point, you will have made the 5th Poet Mechanic. Your Poet Mechanic.

end of score

Life in Pink

Score: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Nr03uLUfj4M3byhy7S-wI-6MAOJjtiQ4/view?usp=sharing>

Video:

<https://youtu.be/UeOuCOmx2KQ>

Life in Pink is a 6-minute chamber quintet originally written for the United Instruments of Lucilin in 2017 as part of the Luxembourg Composition Academy. It was first performed in November 2018 in the concert hall of the Neumünster Abbey, Luxembourg. The work was most recently performed in May 2022 by the International Contemporary Ensemble in Roulette, New York as part of the MATA festival. Although the work was not composed during the doctorate, the work is briefly discussed in chapter 5 as an indicative musical example of deceleration and slowness in my practice. The piece is built from two extremely decelerated recordings of *La Vie en Rose*, with each being hard panned in a stereo soundtrack. The material for the chamber ensemble was derived from auditory analysis of the tape parts. Listless, non-directional, limply melodic phrases were generated that were then composed into a type of time-space score. The material is intended to be performed by each musician as if they are playing alone, only listening to the rest of the group in order to balance their sound into a global dynamic homogeneity. A secondary, slowed-down recording of the first performance of *Life in Pink* is used as one of two central materials of the soundtrack in *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0*.

SLOW.BURN.FOOTWORK

Score:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/11dCCUunMyKnif6A8JiKS_peU1hfJtnH2/view?usp=sharing

Audio:

https://soundcloud.com/cameronmichaelgraham/s-l-o-w-b-u-r-n-f-o-o-t-w-o-r-k-2018?in=cameronmichaelgraham/sets/large-groups&si=18bc5f47ab0646b7817855e1b876999f&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing

SLOW.BURN.FOOTWORK is a 5-minute work for orchestra. It was written for the L'Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France on request by the director of Ircam, Frank Madelener. The piece premiered in June 2018 at the Manifeste festival, conducted by Peter Rundel. A revised version of the work was subsequently commissioned by conductor Peter Tilling and performed by the Mozarteum Orchestra at the opening concert of the Dialogues festival in November 2018. The work is a homage to

Pendulum, by the singer and songwriter FKA Twigs. The piece was composed through an initial analysis of a decelerated recording of the original song, the frequencies of which are loosely mapped onto individual instruments of the orchestra.

The work imagines a kind of light yet immersive orchestral ambience in which individual pitch sources (instruments) are near-impossible to locate within a more homogenous orchestral mass. Over three short movements, *SLOW.BURN.FOOTWORK* moves through purely textural, non-rhythmic phasings of individual pitches. The piece eventually established a developing rhythmic or pulse texture at the end of the second movement that results in a bright, fortissimo major progression contained within a relentless two-beat repeated pattern adapted from the musical roots of Chicago Footwork. A slowed-down recording of the first performance of this work is used as one of the two central materials of the soundtrack to *The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club 1.0*.

A score of the piece is included in the submission. A recording of the work can be found at:

<https://soundcloud.com/cameronmichaelgraham/s-l-o-w-b-u-r-n-f-o-o-t-w-o-r-k-2018>

The Poet Mechanic

The Poet Mechanic project centres on transforming a vinyl disk into a kind of totemic sound making instrument. Thin metal rods are drilled along the length of a piece of 4x4 (or similar lumber) which is then attached to the centre of the vinyl disk to create rotating arms that can interact with any objects placed around the vinyl disk and vinyl player (see Figs. A.5, A.6 and A.7). *The Poet Mechanic* can be understood as a kind of live remixing instrument, poetically exploring ideas of non-human performance and absurd light ritual.

Each physical Poet Mechanic that is created is numbered. To date, twenty Poet Mechanics have been made, each of which was constructed for a specific film, concert, installation or exhibition project.



Fig. A.5: Poet Mechanic XX: *Poet Mechanic meets Lovemusic* (2020). Commissioned by the Strasbourg-based Lovemusic Collective and presented as part of a concert at the BSU Strasbourg in January 2020.



Fig. A.6: Poet Mechanics I and II (2016/17). Installed in the Orange Tree Gallery, Seillans France in the summer of 2018.



Fig. A.7: Poet Mechanic III (2017). Commissioned by Trombonist Jon Roskily. In preparing the piece, Jon recorded material to be cut to the vinyl disk. In the concert, Jon built and installed the Poet Mechanic and performed in accompaniment with his own remixed recording live on stage. Video link is below.

Since 2020, the Poet Mechanic project has developed beyond physical installation and sound sculpture, developing into new digital iconography and worlding. The Poet Mechanic is now considered a flexible conceptual container for numerous audiovisual and digital projects ranging from sculpture to architecture, mock branding to spiritual iconography.

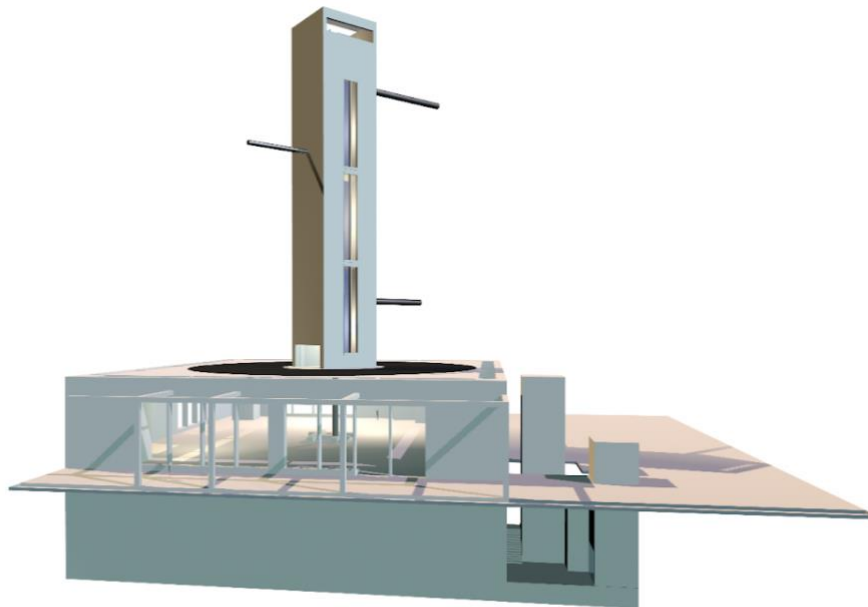
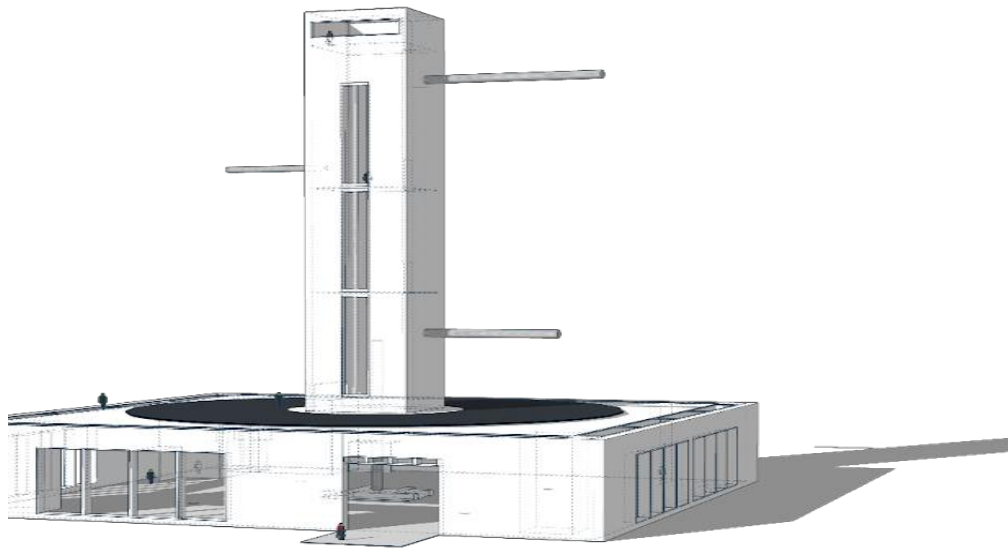


Fig. A.8 and A.9: Poet Mechanic Visitor Centre (2021). Initial concept stage.
3D-renders for a large arts building project.

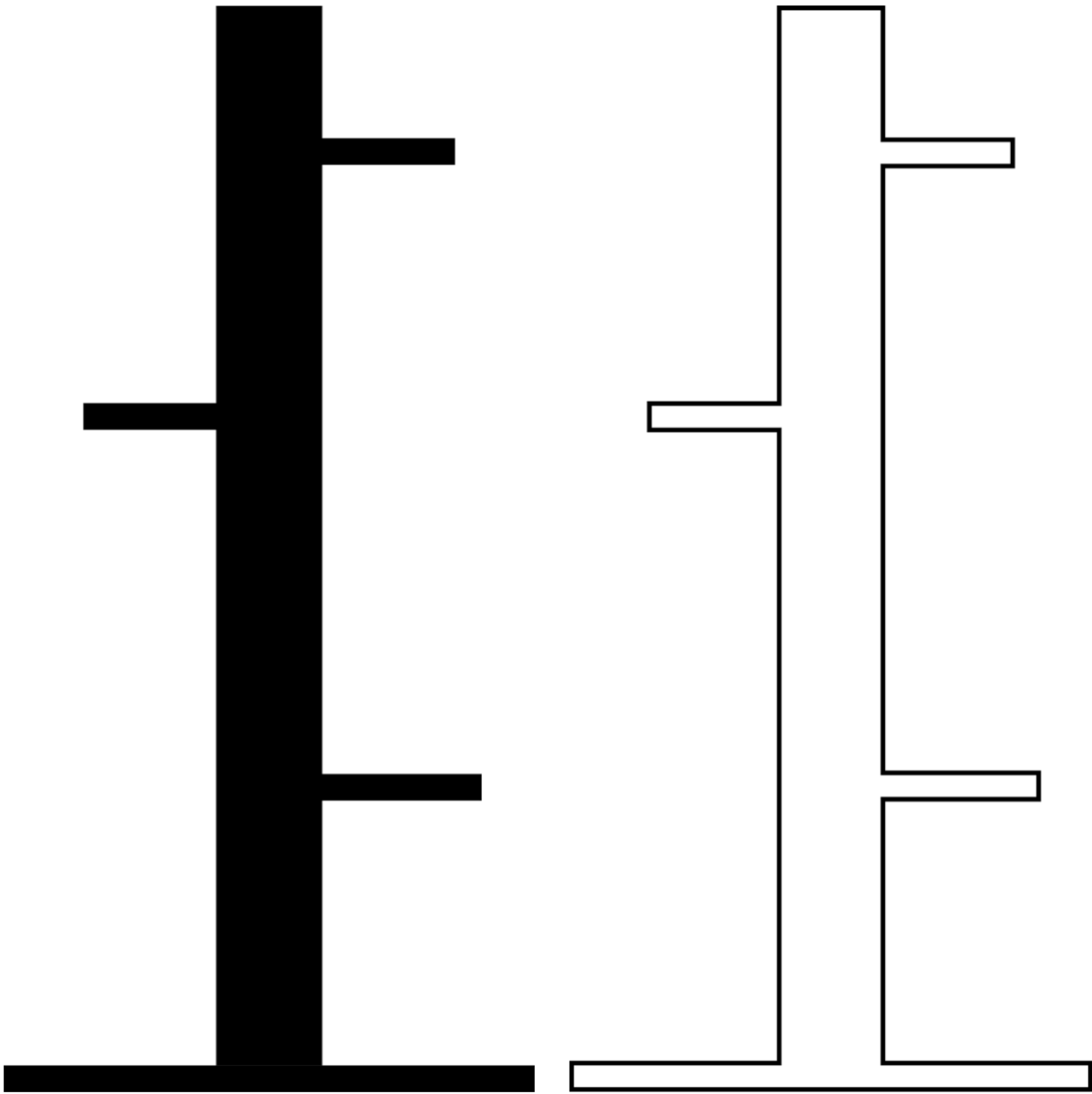


Fig. A.10: Poet Mechanic logo (2021). Logo for print or branding.

Each Poet Mechanic projects to date is listed below.

– **Poet Mechanics I + II (2016 – 2017)**

<https://youtu.be/JIN9Ttfyb58>

– **Poet Mechanic III (2017)**. For Jon Roskily.

<https://youtu.be/CZQrwXPQKZQ>

– **Poet Mechanic IV: ‘Bleak Poet’ for Peter Ablinger and John Cage (2018)**.

<https://youtu.be/5Ws2Ntv8biY>

– **Poet Mechanic V: BUILD-A-POET (2018-19)**. For Juliet Fraser

– **Poet Mechanic: Contact Results in Contagion (2019)**. Two-week solo exhibition featuring Poet Mechanic numbers VI to XVII

Website link to exhibition:

<https://camerongrahammusic.com/CONTACT-RESULTS-IN-CONTAGION>

Exhibition walkthrough:

<https://youtu.be/o9mO9Exfq5U>

– **Poet Mechanic XVII: For Richard Anthony (2019)**.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyAvTAokgv4&t>

– **Poet Mechanic XVIII: Kodak Poet (2019)**.

<https://youtu.be/FyyRryAvXZg>

– **Poet Mechanic XIX SUN KING POET(2019)**.

https://youtu.be/E4Oha_8ED7k

– **Poet Mechanic XX: *Poet Mechanic meets Lovemusic* (2020)**.

– **Poet Mechanic Instagram Page:**

www.instagram.com/poetmechanic

Encounters

Encounters is a collaborative audiovisual project with the French composer and artist, Colin Roche. The project is formed as a process-led exhibition. Over the course of an exhibition, the daily routines and activities of both myself and Roche are set inside the gallery space. The project is a process of gathering, collecting, building and tracing as much of the actions, experiences and responses to the space and larger site in which the exhibition takes place. The project is a raw approach to staging the creative process of two composer-artists. Throughout any single exhibition, the gallery space[s] are open to the public to enter and engage with both us and the work as it grows and develops.



Fig. A.11: Day six of *Encounters* at Les Limbes gallery, France.

Links to previous *Encounters* projects:

– **Les Limbes Gallery, St, Etiennes, France. April 2019.**

<https://readymag.com/sae/encounters-saint-etienne/3/?fbclid=IwAR1CXFZl6RQ-D7A6xtZBWC5y5nMjhFCCC5aapqW6n-cCKtvDc42VOj1-Ers>

– **ISSMAG Gallery, Moscow. 5-20th August 2019.**

<https://issmag.gallery/camerongraham/colinroche>

– **Aponia Gallery, Paris. November 2019.** Part of the exhibition, *L'Horizon des Evenements*

<http://caap-gagny.com/2019/11/centre-dart-contemporain-aponia/>

The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club Ltd.

The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club Ltd. is both a registered limited company and a digital worlding project. The project is a simulated caravan site designed as a labyrinth of beach-side static caravans, with each caravan purposed as a vacant art, design or performance pavilion. The project is conceived as both an oneiric virtual metawork, (potentially existing in the ever developing metaverse) and a novel platform for intermedia. It jacks into the biennale, concert and event series, festival, design platform and the digital social enterprise.

The intention of the project is to connect individual artist participants, organisations and audiences from around the world into a participatory world populated by a broad spectrum of digitised art and new digital technologies. In future, the project will act as a host of commissioned and invited artists and organisations, opening up different festival settings over the year in order to curate different collections of digital aesthetic experience. The Noise and Hardware Caravan Club Ltd. is a traditional open world project in which the work of active participants define the experience for audiences and visitors.

Video examples of the project can be found in the following two links:

– 3-minute trailer:

https://youtu.be/j3ts0_j2r2M

– 6-minute walkthrough:

<https://youtu.be/oSWpu1j8teE>

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