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*Unfolding: A multisensorial
dialogue in 'material time'*

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ABSTRACT

This essay investigates the multisensorial encounter between people, things and place, through the analysis of a shared experience in a museum store room. In the to-and-fro of dialogue, its co-authors discuss the visceral bodily response both experienced in the simple act of unfolding a piece of cloth in the attic room of a house. Theories of emplacement, flow, resonance and intimacy are explored across the co-authors' home disciplines of craft and making, material culture, history, pedagogy and museology, but are also followed into less familiar territory including biology and neuroscience. The essay makes the case for a particular quality of time and

space, found by both authors in the maker's workshop and the museum store; a quality they describe as 'material time'. In 'material time', being slows down, the body takes over and boundaries between self and other begin to dissolve. As a maker-educator and a curator-historian, both located within the art school, the co-authors consider the implications of these findings for learning and creative practice.

KEY WORDS

Encounter, unfolding, dialogue, material, time, museum store, workshop, flow, being, intimacy, body, emplacement, senses, visceral, resonance

INTRODUCTION

This essay considers the sensorial encounter with material from the perspectives of a curator-historian and a maker-educator, both situated within the art school. It explores our growing recognition of a shared sensibility, facilitated by time spent in environments that manifest a heightened material presence—the maker’s workshop and the museum storeroom. Both are places in which materials and material things hold sway. Places of preservation and transformation, they hold the raw matter out of which something may be made, whether a painting, a pot or an exhibition. Both are places in which, in our respective professional practices, we spend long periods of time alone, places where we feel ‘at home’. As such, they are places where time seems to slow down—and as the urgency of its forward trajectory diminishes, so it appears somehow to ‘spread’, laterally, acquiring an almost viscous consistency. This in turn fosters a heightened sensorial awareness in which the body—the self—also seems to ‘spread’, resulting in moments of apparent ‘oneness’ where boundaries temporarily dissolve. This sense of slowing and spreading in the emplaced encounter with material things we are calling, for the purposes of this essay, ‘material time’.

Such encounters tend to be experienced in solitude. This essay takes the form of an investigation into one such moment that occurred in company, when the two of us were together. The apparently simple collaborative act of unfolding a piece of fabric, one afternoon, in the attic room of an old house, effected an unexpected and powerful bodily response in both of us simultaneously. A response that each recognised in the other, though no doubt each felt it slightly differently. We are interested in the implications of this

response—in its mutually inclusive nature and modes of knowing; in the role of place in facilitating it; and in the possibilities it might offer for the art school as a place of material thinking and learning.

We offer this essay in the form of a conversation as a way of reflecting the sense of ‘two-become-one-becomes-two’ experienced through this moment and its aftermath. We come to writing as separate individuals, reflecting on a temporary dissolution of boundaries between self and other that, after the event, reasserted themselves, though not necessarily in the same place. Writing an essay as conversation is fraught with risks; we do not know quite where it will ‘go’, as each brings to bear their own perspectives in response to the other. This has something in common with John Lutz’s account of slow scholarship as ‘the product of rumination—a kind of field testing against other ideas...on one’s own or as part of a dialogue’ (Lutz, n.d.). Slow scholarship offers a challenge to the ‘temporal regimes’ that currently dominate the academy: regimes that prioritise ‘fast-paced, metric-oriented’ study and ‘high productivity’ (Mountz et. al., 2011, p.2). Instead, it proposes collaborative approaches to research that evolve over time. Alison Mountz et al. go further, embedding this principle in what they describe as a ‘collective feminist ethics of care’ (2011, p.2) in order to resist the isolating effects of the neoliberal university. The concept (and ethics) of care, it seems to us, is fundamental to the notion of ‘material time’ that we are attempting to articulate. It requires a paying of quiet attention to things easily missed; a listening not only to others and the external world, but also to one’s own minute and multisensory responses, through which the most powerful realisations may, occasionally, occur.

UNFOLDING

A warm spring day. Two women, standing at a table, in the attic room of a one-time country house, now situated on the edge of an inner city park. On the table, a large cardboard box—grey, with green reinforcing tape along the edges. Box T2b. One of many such boxes, several hundred, that line the walls of the long narrow room. The box is heavy and cumbersome, tightly packed, but we know what we're looking for. A piece of white linen fabric, hemmed and folded, with a name written in one corner, a cursive script in black ink, fading to brown. Together, we gently lift out layers of fabric, interleaved with tissue, and place them on the table. It is a kind of excavation, working down through the levels. The one we want, inevitably, is at the bottom of the box. It is always at the bottom, pressed down by the weight of subsequent additions. Two women, in a room, at the top of a house. Curator, maker, teacher, writer; mother, daughter, sister, wife. A table, a box and a piece of cloth.

LM: It happened again. That gasp of unexpected familiarity. A connection deeply felt with something small, mundane, ordinary; that somehow evades words and instead draws forth an involuntary intake of breath. Of course, I had already found the cot sheet, some weeks previously, on my own in the store. I was excited to show it to you. But the thing I remember, as I remember it, is the way we each took two corners of the sheet and, without any prior discussion or agreement, enacted the making of a small child's bed, unfolding the cloth and laying it on the table. Actually, I think that was when the gasp happened. It wasn't the unearthing of it, the taking it out of the box. It was the unfolding—the instinctively collaborative gesture of



Figure 1: The attic storeroom, Platt Hall Gallery of Costume, Manchester City Galleries. Photograph by Liz Mitchell.



Figure 2: Folded linen cot sheet, accession number 1922.2190. Photograph by Liz Mitchell.

opening it out and laying it down. Of knowing what it wanted us to do. It was the body memory, the echoes it brought forth, and the knowledge that somehow you were experiencing the same thing.

SB: Yes I remember it this way too: silent, unwitting conspirators. Our unfolding acted out in ceremonial partnership guided by the creases in the cloth, navigating valley and ridge as a walker might follow a path. Open here, turn there, lay me down; the cloth directing our movements as clear as any instruction

Figure 3: Cot sheet, detail.
Photograph by Liz Mitchell.



manual. Laid out upon the table, the terrain of the cloth became a 'sense-scape' (Howes, 2006, p.167), acting as a mnemonic trigger sending encoded messages of childhood and motherhood; channelled voices of ingrained gendered actions (Rich, 2005 [1986], p.203). How many women across the eons have stood in our shoes, acting with such quiet and intimate 'housewifely

care' (Bachelard, 1994 [1964], p.69)? In that moment of unfolding, I was at my mother's bedside, watching intently as she instructed me in the art of making 'hospital corners', as her mother had instructed her. Autobiographical memory, embodied in my formative years (Markowitsch & Stanilou, 2011, pp.23-4), awakened through the handling of a cot sheet in the museum store. Time spent in the solitary company of material facilitates a flow into and out of oneself, enabling an internal 'time travel' between past and present events that fosters 'auto-noetic consciousness' (Gardiner, 2001, p.1351), an understanding of the self through emplacement within one's personal memory stores (Fernyhough, 2012, p.75).

The idea of emplacement is interesting I think. I'm wondering if the location of our handling, set within the attic store room, further contributed to our sensory perception of the cloth? Whilst embodiment suggests a coming together of mind and body, David Howes proposes that 'emplacement is the sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment' (Howes, 2005, p.7). Did our emplacement within the attic space further contribute to our sensory perception of the cloth? Under the eaves of the house was our shared bodily cognisance of intimate domestic action reinforced through an unconscious perception of place (Kelly, 2007, p.35); body in relation to cloth in relation to house? A sonorous bodily conversation conducted through our emplacement within a silent and caring act.

I'm immediately struck here with a parallel to acts of making within the workshop. Is it because of the familiar bodily sensation of being simultaneously here and elsewhere? Perhaps it is the silent introversion? Or is it the feeling of being engulfed within an intimate expansion of time? Emplaced in both store and workshop, I feel as if I climb inside time, that real time

carries on around me, while I am elsewhere. A kind of 'fast slow' state. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes this as 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992 [1988], p.33), where an altered perception of time is experienced when awareness and conduct converge. There is consciousness in doing, yet a lack of inhibition of the broader consequences of action: a sense of being on the edge of consciousness (Mitchell Jr., 1992 [1988], p.55). Makers refer to this meditative state as heightened (Harper, 2007, p.21) or contemplative (Harper, 2007, p.9) and talk of becoming lost in the making process (Harper, 2007, p.17). And it seems to me that we did experience this deep flow state through our unfolding of the cot sheet in the attic.

...cloth becomes tool, facilitating my making process.

This leads me to consider the idea of the store as an inherently creative place thronging with material on the brink of happening, and conversely, a thought of the workshop as a repository, where ideas are allowed to dwell at various stages on the way to becoming. Jeweller Lin Cheung describes her studio as 'unchanging while the rest of the world constantly shifts. It is always a blank page, full of potential' (Harper, 2007, p.9) and I think this is analogous with the store. Both are liminal spaces full of potentiality, yet also providing the 'attention boundaries' that Csikszentmihalyi argues facilitate the 'deep play' state (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 [1975], p.78). This is crucial to developing intrinsic motivation and autotelic behaviours, where the reward is in the doing rather

than the outcome of the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 [1975], p.14), a condition that many makers will identify with, but which is also a key trait of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p.121).

Of course, my personal memory stores are saturated with making time in the workshop, so it is no surprise that my body recollects such acts as my autozoetic consciousness is triggered. Within the context of my workshop, cloth becomes tool, facilitating my making process. Did my fingers hear this familiar call during my handling of the cot sheet? Robert McFarlane is insightful here:

*My legs preserved a ghost sense of stride, a muscle memory of repeated action...as if the terrain over which I had passed had imprinted its profile into my foot, like a mark knuckled into soft clay. How had Flann O'Brien put it in *The Third Policeman*? When you walk, 'the continual cracking of your feet on the road makes a certain quantity of road come up into you'. (McFarlane, 2013, p.53)*

So was my absorption in the unfolding process conditioned by deeply embedded operating behaviours learned in the workshop (Ferryhough, 2012, p.73)? Is that why, for me, the two places appear only a breath apart?

LM: Yes, I also prefer the notion of emplacement to embodiment. It suggests the physical places in which one's body dwells, but also how one dwells within one's own body—the body as a storehouse of memory, of both the autobiographical and muscular kinds, as you suggest. In houses, cellars and attics are places of storage, of material concentration where things become sedimented, no longer useful but not yet disposable

(Woodward, 2015, p.216). They are threshold places, both in terms of their position at the furthest reaches of the building, and in the liminal status of their content, negotiating boundaries of past/present, public/private, active/passive. Which renders that content strangely restless, despite its apparent obsolescence. It's no coincidence that museum stores are often located in cellars and attics, the furthest possible distance from the controlled and managed spaces of public display.

Figure 4: Cloth as tool in the workshop, detail. Photograph by Sharon Blakey.



Like their domestic equivalents, they are full of stuff that no-one knows quite what to do with.

You talk of material on the brink of happening, ideas on their way to becoming. Another kind of threshold tension, one that resonates with potential energy. I have often thought of the museum store as a place of unbecoming, where material things are released from their place in the momentum of human

narrative into a different register, the slow time of material settlement. Anthony Shelton discusses this in terms of melancholia and a de-temporalizing of objects 'allowed to return to their ruinous state' (2006, p.484). Conversely, in relation to the home, Gaston Bachelard describes not the loss of time, but the concentration of it 'in its countless alveoli, space contains compressed time' (1994 [1964], p.8). Both suggest a temporal elasticity, a matter of density rather than speed.

Compressed time is a good description of the attic room at Platt Hall, both museum and house co-existing in one place. In fact, it's a good description of the content of the box; so many layers pressed down. Introduce a living human body though, a storehouse of autozoetic consciousness, and unbecoming begets new becomings. Compression becomes the expansion you describe in the workshop. Perhaps this is the shiver we both felt. The material encounter in the museum store is a heightened experience. Regulated by rules of engagement, it is physically self-aware, spatially intimate, and slow. I must put on gloves, handle appropriately, take care. Is this a kind of emplacement within one's own body? The simple fact of the object in one's presence here is remarkably powerful. It's like a provocation. Here I am. You got this far. What are you going to do now? What else could we do with a folded sheet, but call on our own bodily cognisance in all its multiplicity? Unfold the cloth, make the bed, lay the table, roll the clay.

In that sense, did our unfolding, in the attic space of an old house/museum, re-animate both object and place in terms of the layering of memory, both theirs and ours? It was the enacting of a gesture called forth by the specificity of the material encounter within a particular kind of place. It set in motion a multitude of overlapping identities—the domestic, institutional,

familial, professional—through the smallest and most mundane of tasks, carried out not in course of one's daily duties, but within the heightened environment of a highly regulated place. It combined the spontaneity of response with self-awareness. An aspect of the 'fast slow' state you describe in the flow of making—a slow, attentive carefulness which opens up a space in which something instantaneous, electrifying even, might occur. It reminds me of an account, by writer Sarah Maitland, of a period of self-imposed solitude on the island of Skye. Out for a walk one day, she describes a moment when:

[Q]uite suddenly and unexpectedly, I slipped a gear, or something like that. There was not me and the landscape, but a kind of oneness: a connection as though my skin had been blown off. More than that, as though the molecules I am made of had reunited themselves with the molecules and atoms that the rest of the world is made of. (Maitland, 2008, p.63)

Like McFarlane's reference to Flann O'Brien, Maitland talks of molecular dissolution, a mixing of body and environment. But the way she describes it is explosive rather than gradual. All in a moment, like the gasp, the goosebumps, the shiver. Because we weren't actually making the bed—or rolling the clay. We were performing something that contained elements of those things, without explicitly articulating them or even knowing that we were doing it—the realisation came after the event. And it was the act, the gesture, rather than the result that mattered.

SB: I'm interested in your earlier suggestion of a 'threshold tension' and wonder if this idea can be

applied to thinking about bodily learning through intimate act, gesture, care. From an anthropological perspective, the Cashinahua tribe of Eastern Peru develop wisdom and understanding through Ichi una or 'skin knowledge' (Howes, 2005, p.27) acquired through close engagement with material and environment. As a maker, thinking through the skin is second nature and the notion of the skin as a permeable threshold through which knowledge is gained is a familiar concept. Diane Ackerman uses the phrase 'the skin has eyes' (1990, p.94), and through our handling our fingers did see the cot sheet from another perspective: its delicate fragility understood through sensing its weight; its contour and shape perceived through forefinger and thumb, its fine texture and stitching embodied through the lateral tracing of fingertips (Goldstein, 1999, p.423).

Through activation of the cutaneous senses (Goldstein, 1999, p.405) afferent messages are fed through kinaesthetic sensors in muscle, tendons and joints to the interior spaces of the body (Proske & Gandevia, 2012, p.1653); a slippage of the outside in, the crossing of a physical threshold. These external vibratory rhythms are felt deep within the viscera, in what Byron Robinson calls 'the abdominal brain' (2010 [1907], pp.123-4). As somatic information is received from the outside inwards, the abdominal brain is exerting its own presence from the inside out, inducing powerful and involuntary physical sensations; the goosebumps, the shiver and so on. Michael Gershon suggests that this 'second brain' is a maverick, a 'contrarian independent spirit', acting with complete visceral autonomy and operating beyond the authority of the cerebral brain (Gershon, 1998, p.17). On-going research into neural conditions such as autism, migraine and epilepsy suggests that the influence of

the abdominal brain on the cerebral brain may have been underestimated in our understanding of these conditions (McMillin et. al., 1999, p.583-4). The gut may exert more power on the brain than has previously been considered, an observation echoed by Gershon:

In every body, the brain is king. It is writ in law. At the top of the bowel, the rule of the king is acknowledged, but as one descends deeper and deeper into the depths of the gut, the rule of the king weakens. A new order emerges. (Gershon, 1998, p.113)

Emeran Mayer and David Geffen further suggest that we are not consciously aware of the full dialogue between the gut and the brain, that the brain has learned to switch off unnecessary visceral information, processing only that which is essential for immediate use or response (Mayer & Geffen, 1996, p.2). This makes sense, considering the sheer volume of sensory and neural information we are constantly exposed to, and the complexity of its transference from exterior to interior, across mind and body (Goldstein, 1999, pp.93-4).

But what happens to skin knowledge upon entering the body? How is it processed, where is it stored? In the brain, the bones, the muscles, tendons, nerves? Is it viscerally embedded without our being aware of it? Laid down as 'visceral memory' within the limbic system (Mayer & Geffen, 1996, p.3), the site of our recollection and sensation networks (Fernyhough, 2012, p.55), quietly dormant until aroused by sensorial cues and triggers, as we experienced in the attic?

LM: A bodily knowledge that operates on a different level to conceptual knowledge? A kind of knowing

brought to consciousness through spontaneous responsive gesture? That is felt rather than thought? This puts me in mind of historian Stephen Greenblatt's essay 'Resonance and Wonder'. His account of wonder describes acutely the sensation I have felt on my own in the store room. The sense of being alone and yet deeply connected, through absorption in tiny detail. He talks of it as a kind of 'exalted attention' (Greenblatt, 1990, p.20). This seems to chime with what you say about 'flow' and the loss of self in making. But your discussion of vibratory rhythms is more akin to his notion of resonance; 'the power of the object displayed to reach out beyond its formal properties to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged' (Greenblatt, 1990, p.19).

The dictionary definition of resonance is two-fold; both 'the ability to evoke or suggest images, memories and emotions' but also 'the quality in sound of being deep, full and reverberating' (Oxford *Living Dictionaries*, n.d.). This second meaning is suggestive of Gershon's 'depths of the gut'. I think it curious that Greenblatt uses the term resonance, with its connotations of sensory depth, to consider history. It conjures up a sense of the continuum of time, of the past reverberating through the present, rather than as some other place, that 'foreign country' where they do things differently. In which case, do our bodies pick up such reverberations through kinaesthetic sensors and hold them in the gut? Is the momentary consciousness of this, triggered by unexpected encounters, what we think of as haunting? For Greenblatt, resonance depends 'not upon visual stimulation but upon a felt intensity of names and, behind the names, as the very term resonance suggests, of voices' (1990, p.25). The cot sheet is inscribed with a name, one we both know, but

in the guise of an aged father, not a small child. So there was resonance in the simultaneous substantiation and disruption of prior knowledge. But I can't help thinking that, more than this, the resonance of voices was a chorus, engendered by the you-and-me-ness of the situation—a coming together of all the makers of beds, and folders and unfolders of bed linen, and pieces of cloth folded and unfolded, that there have ever been.

SB: I think there is something in what you say about sensing the presence of others through responsive gesture. Deidre Sklar uses the term 'kinesthetic empathy' (Sklar, 1994, cited in Hillerup Fogtmann, 2012, p.305) to describe the body-to-body call and answer that is felt through the signals of companions in action. Through our unfolding, my body was able to read and anticipate your movement, and your body mirrored mine. Empathetically resonant (Hillerup Fogtmann, 2012, p.306), we conversed in a fluid, rhythmic and physical dialogue; no words were necessary, one body knew what the other was thinking.

...the resonance of voices was a chorus...

The cloth facilitated our kinaesthetic conversation, acting as conduit and cipher, providing the 'back-talk' (Schön, 1983, cited in Tonkinwise, 2008, p.7). Although individually absorbed, we were at the same time viscerally connected, experiencing the overlapping identities and molecular dissolution that you spoke of earlier. Donald Carr suggests that animals have the capacity to be 'on speaking terms with...

molecules' (1972, p.128), to develop cognisance through instinct. The idea of developing knowledge through intimacy is also proposed by Tim Ingold:

'[t]o know things', he says, 'you have to grow into them, and let them grow into you, so that they become part of who you are' (2013, p.1). In that moment of unfolding, did 'I' become 'you' and 'you' become 'me'? Was it this haunting sensation, the silent cacophony of multitudinous voices, that rendered the encounter more sonorous and profound, forcing the body to shiver? And when the body shivers, is it laying down visceral and autozoetic memory; the bodily sedimentation of multi-sensorial encounters with material? All of this suggests complex and nuanced 'domain shifts' (Sennett, 2008, cited in Blakey & Mitchell, 2013, p.176); operative, sensory, physical, spatial and disciplinary.

LM: So we are talking of the fluidity of selves, others, things and places. Threshold tensions in terms of boundaries that dissolve and resolve perhaps. Feminist theorist Karen Barad's concept of 'intra-action' is relevant here (Barad, 2003). She rejects the idea that the world is made up of separate material entities. Instead, she proposes a continual process of 'becoming', by which the infinite continuity of the universe is knowable within encounters that set up localised and temporary sets of boundaries, so that 'I' may know 'you' and 'you' may know 'me'. In Barad's terms, surface is continually coming into being and dissolving away—which places being as a performative state. By this argument, did the surfaces of you, me, the sheet, the room, change as we moved through the unfolding? As you suggest, did you and I and the sheet become one continuous thing in that moment? Barad says:

This ongoing flow of agency through which 'part' of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another 'part' of the world and through which local causal structures, boundaries, and properties are stabilized and destabilized does not take place in space and time but in the making of spacetime itself...Relations of exteriority, connectivity, and exclusion are reconfigured. (Barad, 2003, p.817)

Did we experience spacetime in the attic at Platt Hall? What Barad describes is also a relationship of intimacy. And this has gendered implications, already present in the explicitly domestic nature of both task and environment, as you noted earlier in your reference to Bachelard's 'housewifely care'. Further in the same passage, Bachelard differentiates between the house built from the outside, by men, and the interiority of the house built by women (1994 [1964], p.67). In the 1950s, anthropologist Edward Hall identified four proxemic zones within which people operate, ranging from 'intimate' to 'public'. He noted that women tended to operate within significantly closer proximity to others than men. The intimate zone—18 inches from the body or less—is characterized by 'unmistakable involvement, tied to physical touch and sensory awareness. It is the emotional zone, detailed, fragmented, precluding rationality—too close to 'take it all in' (Gordon, 1997, p.251). But this rather depends on your understanding of what 'it all' is and how one might greet it. 'Taking it all in' in this context suggests a relationship of distanced observation in order to gain mastery; the antithesis of what you described earlier as being engulfed. But what if one's aim is not mastery but dialogue? To step both backwards and forwards in a

process of speaking and listening. Echoing Bachelard's 'housewifely care', Susan Stewart suggests that:

[T]he things we handle will always reciprocate the treatment we administer to them. When our gestures are caring, the Heideggerean contends, they receive back a deeper disclosure of their ontological truth and the same result follows from gestural involvements with others. (Stewart, 1999, p.32).

It seems to me that what happened in the attic might be described precisely as a moment of encounter with 'it all'—in Barad's terms, a glimpse of the universe and ourselves as an integral part of it. And that the necessary condition for this kind of encounter is the slowing and opening up of time. This takes us back to both the unbecoming/becoming of the store room, and your earlier description of being in the workshop—of feeling as though you 'climb inside' time. Which renders the quality of emplacement a key ingredient; maybe it is 'placetime' rather than 'spacetime'. And further, that in the attic, the resonance of this process was amplified by there being two of us. The companionship of the task was a bodily mutual consent that enabled an intersubjective exchange. But it is only through our discussion after the event, when individual boundaries have reasserted themselves, that I recognise a shift has taken place in my sense of self—like Flann O'Brien's 'quantity of road', I now have a little of you mixed in with me. Which is, perhaps, what enables me to sense the potential of the universe in the simple act of unfolding a cot sheet.

CONCLUSION

Can one conclude so very much from this small moment, in which two women unfolded a piece of cloth? We have done little more than observe our own observing, ‘drawing a chart of our own thinking, enjoying the privilege of being both audience and performer of our mental acts—holding as it were, our brain in our hands’ (Manguel, 2015, p.110). Yet, in paying attention to such moments, perhaps something is learned. In his differentiation of ‘withness-thinking’ and ‘aboutness-thinking’, John Shotter presses the reader ‘to enter into an intimate interplay with each uniquely new and particular object we encounter’ (Shotter, 2005, p. 136). Citing Goethe, he suggests that

Figure 5: The cot sheet half-unfolded. Photograph by Liz Mitchell.



if we do, ‘we will then find that “every new object, well contemplated, opens up a new organ of perception in us” (ibid.).

To engage in intimate interplay—to contemplate well—requires a particular relationship with time. Throughout this essay, we have described time as variously flowing and reverberating, both compressed and expanding, combining fast and slow states at the same time. Poet Anne Michaels expresses this duality in material terms when she asks ‘at what moment does wood become stone, peat become coal, limestone become marble? The gradual instant’ (Michaels, 1997, p.140). The maker’s workshop, the museum store, and the home are all places of material density and seepage; where our relationships with material are at their most intimate, our own sense of materiality most heightened. Thus the kind of time we are trying to articulate might best be described as ‘material time’. Material time as we have experienced it—both in the museum store and the workshop, in solitude and in company—is tensile, resonant, expansive. It can hold the universe in the crease of a bedsheet.

Central to this notion of material time is the development of relationships of care. The concept of care has gendered connotations, in its domestic, intimate and collaborative qualities. In contemporary society, the term ‘carer’ (and ‘housewife’ even more so) carries associations of low skill, low productivity and thus low value. It is, traditionally, ‘women’s work’. Yet, in making the case for a ‘feminist ethics of care’, Mountz et al. argue that care is a universal human need, and as such, a site of potentially radical innovation. Care focuses on both the self and others. Care is a relationship over time, in which past, present and future are interwoven. It embodies presence in the moment, in which the carer is attentive to the situation. And it depends on gut instinct, as much if not more than formal training (Bunting, 2016). But, as healthcare professionals argue, care is increasingly marginalised

in a society pre-occupied with self-reliance and short-term productivity. This analysis could equally be applied to learning and the education system. Mountz et al.'s account of the accelerated, metric-based structures of time in the neoliberal university is conducive to neither intimacy nor contemplation. As they argue, 'caring needs to come out of hiding in private times and spaces' (2011, p.11).

But what does the idea of care mean within the context of the art school? Art school has long been associated with the maverick creative spirit; it is a place where bodily learning is arguably at its most heightened. In its studios and workshops, in its facilitation of kinaesthetic learning, the art school provides an environment that does not just tolerate, but actively encourages, thinking through the body. In this way, the body becomes a workshop, forming and shaping a fast-slow dialogue between intellectual reasoning and visceral sensation, between cerebral and abdominal brain. However, as institutions nationally reduce opportunities for hands-on learning (Crafts Council, 2016), what are the consequences for bodily thinking? Making is not a collection of techniques and processes; it is a universal language, a material lexicon that enables us to convene with the world at a molecular level. Are we at risk of forgetting the profound impact of 'stuff'—in all its gloopy, caking, stickiness—on our sensory engagement with and bodily knowledge of the world?

As our physical intimacy with the world through contact with material diminishes, how does this affect our sense of self? Within the university the brain is king. However, as the rate of student mental health issues rises (Universities UK, 2015), should the institution pay more care and attention

to nurturing the body's second brain, considering ways of embedding 'viscerality' across its curricula? Neuroscientific and medical research suggests a strong link between the gut and mental state (Gershon, cited in Young, 2012, p.41), that the feel good factor is viscerally driven (Young, 2012, p.40). Bodily engagement with material opens up fissures in time facilitating deep flow, a mindful state where 'I' may begin to know 'myself'—the 'aha!' moment where profound and sudden insight is gained (Kounios & Beaman, 2009, pp.210-6).

Making is not a collection of techniques and processes; it is a universal language...

On a spring afternoon in the attic room of an old house, the unfolding of a cot sheet set up a multitude of relationships—interior/exterior, gut/brain, self/other, person/object/place, you/me/it—experienced not in opposition, but as oscillating potentialities. Similarly, in the back and forth of discussion, there is a coming together and standing apart, each of us recognising something of ourselves in the other, but differently. As we found through our unfolding, 'the paradox is that Slow does not always mean slow' (Honoré, 2005, cited in Mountz et. al., 2011, p.11). In fact, 'slow' can be lightning fast; spontaneous, improvisational, potent, gut-churning. It can blow your skin off.

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