

The found object and the presentation of everyday life.

Stephanie Bannister

A thesis submitted for the degree of MA by Dissertation in Art and Design

Design Programme Area, Writtle University College

Awarded by University of Essex

Date of submission March 2018



## Contents

Abstract	Page 5
Acknowledgments	Page 7
Preface	Page 9
Introduction	Page 15
Concepts:	
- Spolia	Page 31
- Appropriation	Page 37
- Categorisation	Page 43
- Endurance	Page 55
- Ritual	Page 61
Robert Rauschenberg	Page 69
Susan Hiller	Page 87
Literary Influence	Page 103
Exhibition findings	Page 113
Conclusions and future directions	Page 127
References	
- Image	Page 133
- Text	Page 136





## Abstract

Within these writings I explore the ways in which the everyday lives of ordinary people are depicted in art via the use of found objects, and how the findings have helped influence my own art practice.

I begin by discussing the concept of the everyday in relation to my own work, and identify the impact that my domestic life and past experiences have had on my own artistic compulsions. I also discuss the range of art concepts that I have found myself working within, including the practice of Spolia, Appropriation, Categorisation, Endurance and Ritual art, and how they became a natural element to my process of making. In addition to this, I seek out current artists whose works also fall within these concepts, and how they have used them to relate to the representation of the 'ordinary'. I intensively study the work of Robert Rauschenberg, the vast use of materials that span his whole career, and how seeing his work impacted my own decision making. I explore the practice of Susan Hiller and the ways in which she interprets found objects and adapts her skills to accurately depict the lives that they represent. I discuss pieces of text written on the everyday, and relate them to my own compulsions, from Georges Perec's work *Species of Spaces* to Alexander Masters and his book *A life discarded*. Finally, I begin to summarise the effectiveness of my own work following my exhibition, and indicate future avenues of exploration.



## Acknowledgments

Firstly, to Dr. Michael Szpakowski, I would like to thank you for all of the unfailing guidance, motivation, and questioning. Your encouragement and support have picked me up countless times, and I have accomplished things that I never believed I could. I shall cherish the memories of Monday morning drawing sessions and heated critical discussions for as long as I am able.

To my family for being absolute rock stars, thank you all from the bottom of my heart. My obsession with finding the beauty within human existence started with the blessing of having you all and experiencing the turbulence of life knowing that the safety of your love and the warmth of your laughter would lift me whenever I needed it. I love you all more than I will ever have the capability to express.

To my incredible friends, I honestly couldn't have completed the work that my ridiculous brain thought one person was capable of doing without you. Thank you for the sorting, the sewing, and the emotional support, I kept my sanity because of you and all the late nights we shared together. I hope you're all prepared for Box Fort War 2.0.

Most importantly, to my beautiful Son Jacob. Thank you for believing in me with every inch of your wondrous soul. It is the little smile you give me when I talk about my work, the handwritten messages on my desk, and the kisses once I'd finished each chapter that gave me the determination to complete. I love you more than anything else in human form.



## Preface

Ever since I began to reflect myself through my artwork, I have had concerns with the insignificant ordinary moments that make up the beauty of human life, and the portrayal of normal people and their stories that nevertheless, fail to be heard. I find myself encapsulated by the beauty of the simple but common interactions that masses of humans have with each other, and the traces of life left behind on the objects encountered along the way. It is this mutual unification of the human experience and the banalities along the way that I refer to when I mention 'The everyday' in the context of my own practice.

Following an extended period of self study, I realised that my concerns more than likely stem from my own experiences growing up on the poverty line, constantly being moved from rented and council accommodations and school catchment areas. I found myself moving house twelve times, changing schools on seven different occasions and repeatedly having to explain my story to new peer groups and social circles. I developed skills that children shouldn't need to develop, like how to perfectly adapt my own personality and opinions to fit in with a crowd, how to fabricate a life that you assumed would be socially acceptable in certain areas, or how to brush off endless taunts about my belongings, cleanliness, lack of experiences, or free school meals. On reflection my experiences of life as a child directly link to my current art practice, and this compulsion I have with celebrating the honest, ordinary, un-glamorous aspects of people's lives, via their personal collections or used objects.

Family has always been the key grounding of my soul, my beliefs, and my contentment. In a life of constant change and upheaval, my only invariable sense of stability was in those people that experienced it with me. I was raised knowing that above all things, life's importance lies within the experiences that you share with the one's you love, and cherishing the memories made along the way. One way that we made sure of this, as a family that uprooted so often, was with the objects we carried with us. Sentimentality is a strongly rooted theme within my work, and on thinking about my childhood, the reasons become clear. Buildings were never home to us as a family, yes we became attached to certain kitchen layouts, room sizes, or trees in the garden, but the external structure of the houses were never of much importance to any of us. My family and I developed an almost flawless ability to pack up our things, relocate them, and unpack them again in their new environment within a matter of days.

It is with this ability that we carried our sense of 'home' with us wherever we went. In the same sense that a person of military service will take key personal belongings and photographs with them on tour, or a prisoner will pack items with cherished stories attached when given long sentences. It was with my Granddad's endearing portrait of my Nan, my mum's beautiful paintings of her favourite scenery, my dad's car tools and overalls that smelt so sweetly of oil, my 'twin' sisters faded France 98 bedcover, my baby sisters over cuddled Simba teddy, my brother's cadet uniform and my biggest sisters creepy porcelain doll collection, that we were home.

It is because I don't have the ability to maintain attachments of memories and stories to certain parts of a building, that the sentimentality of an object is infinitely important. The emotive power of attaching a memory or story held close to my heart, to an object that I can carry with me, I feel, is the integral pulse that runs through every aspect of my creative decision making.

Just as my experiences and development of sentimentality towards the objects I owned now shape the way in which I see found objects and collections of items, film maker Jonas Mekas suggests that it is his past experiences that have constantly influenced the moments in which he chooses to film. In an interview with Jerome Sans in 2000, Mekas revealed "When you go through what I went through – then you don't understand human beings anymore. I have never understood them since then, and I just film, record everything, with no judgement, what I see. Not exactly everything, only the brief moments that I feel like filming. And what are those moments, what makes me choose those moments? I don't know. It's my whole past memory that makes me choose the moments that I film" (Johnstone, 2008). After fleeing war as a teenager, Mekas refers to himself as "an exile, displaced person". And after having lost so much in his life, he developed a "need to retain everything" from then on.

Mekas uses a Bolex camera and carries it with him all day, every day, in an attempt to build up a collection of "images to cling on to" (Johnstone, 2008).



Figure 1

**Jonas Mekas**

*The Beauty of Friends Being Together Quartet* (2007)

Comprised of films and film stills by the celebrated filmmaker. Mekas draws on thousands of hours of film footage, from spontaneous events and happenings of everyday life to the most intimate sequences of his personal relationships with friends from various times and places in New York City and beyond.



In an interview with Sean O'Hagan in 2012, Mekas reveals "It's the essence of those normal moments that I am exploring, the intensity of feeling in them. That is what I have been trying to do for all these years. Really, I am an anthropologist of the small meaningful moment" (O'Hagan, 2012). Ringing true of the themes and decisions made in my own subconscious before reacting to an object or making art. I seek out discarded objects that make me feel connected to fellow ordinary people, objects that call for their stories to be celebrated. I listen to my inner dialogue of habitual sentimentality and nurtured empathy as it shows me just how whole and human those found objects can be. Once found I begin to discover the ways in which the objects should be best re-worked/presented, in order to sympathetically tell the tales that they carry with them. I am a story teller. In the same way that Mekas is a story teller, as he continues to capture snippets of the lives of the people that surround him every day.



## Introduction

"A found object is a natural or man-made object or fragment of an object, that is found (or sometimes bought) by an artist and kept because of some intrinsic interest the artist sees in it." (Tate, 2018)

The use of real manmade objects in art is a direct way of pointing to human existence without the need for a meticulously taught skill. It celebrates the ordinary, the working class and the mundane, and the beauty of human interaction. Since the beginning uses of found objects, such as in Picasso's 1913 cubist collages and constructions (Figures 2 & 3), the physical use of objects has been pivotal in the way that art is accepted and understood. Essential questions were raised by Marcel Duchamp and his revolutionary work *Fountain* (Figure 4) which, made in 1917 was a bold intervention made to the classic skill of educated painters and sculptors at the time. "Duchamp invented the concept of the ready-made to describe works of art he made simply by selecting and so designating a series of everyday objects chosen precisely because of their familiarity" (Buskirk, 2005). It was this "flirtation with the banal [that] often acted as self-conscious counterpoise to the loftier aspirations of earlier generations of artists" (Borchardt-Hume, 2010) and began the questioning of the role that the artists had to play in their own work, questions that were extended by the likes of the surrealists and their assemblages (Figures 6 & 7), where interventions to the pieces were made, and as they were assembled with other objects, a new variation of sculpture was formed.

Further explorations into the interventional use of everyday items were carried out by those of the Arte Povera movement, which translated means literally 'poor art', artists began using items they had free access to on a daily basis, with the constraints of avoiding the use of traditional practices and the mediums associated with them. Originating in Italy in the sixties, the movement was less about lack of money, rather the innovative ways of creating that emerged from this lack of tradition (Figures 7 & 8).

A concept contrary to this was explored by the pop art movement, whereby items of mass culture and mass media were repeated and used to shift the appreciation of the everyday towards modernism. Pop artists like Warhol, Lichtenstein, and Oldenburg began using more traditional ways of creating their artworks, using painting, printing, and sculpture. However, their use of found commercial imagery and everyday items boldly demanded that popular culture and the banal be celebrated to the level of fine art (Figures 9, 10 & 11). More subtle interventions have been made to the found object by today's contemporaries, focusing their attention towards the way in which they are displayed. Using the exhibition space as a medium, the likes of Damien Hirst and Tony Cragg address their found objects sympathetically, displaying them unaltered as part of a collection, or in surroundings with minimal interventions that call for your attention to be brought to the object itself (Figures 12 & 13).

I began my own exploration of the use of found objects after sculpting representations of human organs from car parts (Figure 14). I went on to explore further using items from the domestic setting, being the objects that are readily available to me. As well as taking on the intentions of previous artists and their use of real items, I found myself entranced by the richness of studying an object, and reading the signs of human interaction that they have upon them, revealing a set of stories that manifest within the eyes of the viewer. I have always been an advocate for the mundane and the ordinary, and in the majority of my previous works, I have celebrated the everyday. This is something that has consumed my interests throughout the course of my practical exploration and the research behind this following text.

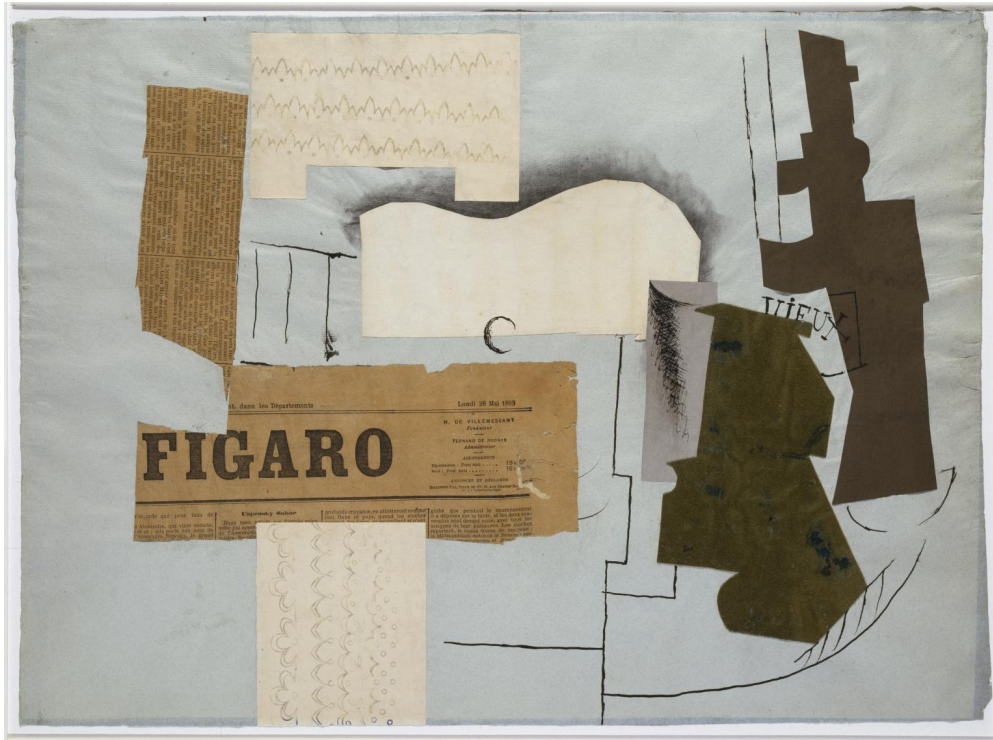


Figure 2  
**Picasso**  
*Bottle of Vieux Marc, Glass, Guitar and Newspaper* (1913)  
 Printed papers and ink on paper  
 73.2 x 59.4 cm

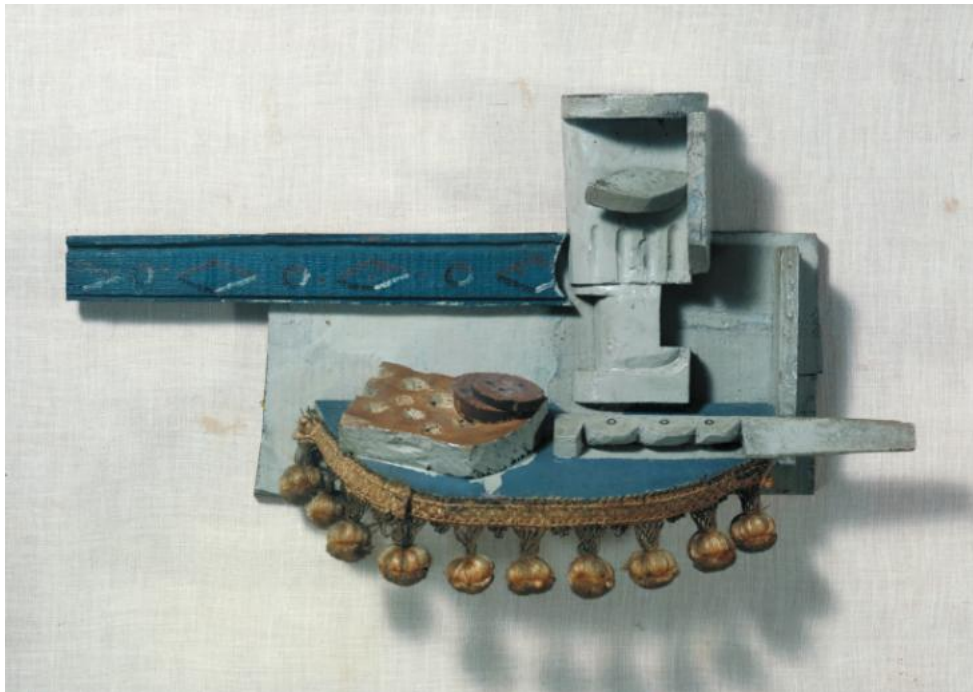


Figure 3  
**Picasso**  
*Still life* (1914)  
 Painted wood and upholstery fringe  
 25.4 x 45.7 x 9.2 cm



Figure 4  
**Marcel Duchamp**  
*Fountain* (1917 / 1964)  
Glaze cast ceramic urinal with black paint  
35.6 x 49.1 x 62.6 cm



Figure 5  
**Salvador Dalí**  
*Lobster Telephone* (1936)  
Steel, plaster, rubber, resin and paper  
17.8 x 33.0 x 17.8 cm





Figure 6  
**Man Ray**  
*Cadeau/Gift* (1921 / 1972)  
Iron and nails  
17.8 x 9.4 x 12.6 cm



Figure 7

**Michelangelo Pistoletto**

*Venus of the Rags* (1967 / 1974)

Marble and textiles

212.0 x 340.0 x 110.0 cm



Figure 8  
**Jannis Kounellis**  
*Untitled* (1968)  
Wood and wool  
250.0 x 281.0 x 45.0 cm





Figure 9  
**Andy Warhol**  
*Campbell's Soup* (1968)  
Screen print on Paper  
various



Figure 10  
**Roy Lichtenstein**  
*Sandwich and Soda* (1964)  
Screenprint on Polystyrene  
48.5 x 58.4 cm



Figure 11  
**Claes Oldenburg**  
*Giant 3-Way Plug Scale 2/3* (1970)  
Wood  
147.3 x 99.1 x 74.9 cm



Figure 12

**Damien Hirst**

*Nothing is a Problem for Me* (1992)

Glass, painted MDF, ramin, steel,  
aluminium and pharmaceutical packaging and step ladder  
182.9 x 274.3 x 30.5 cm



Figure 13  
**Tony Cragg**  
*Spectrum* (1979)  
Plastic  
55.0 x 24.0 cm



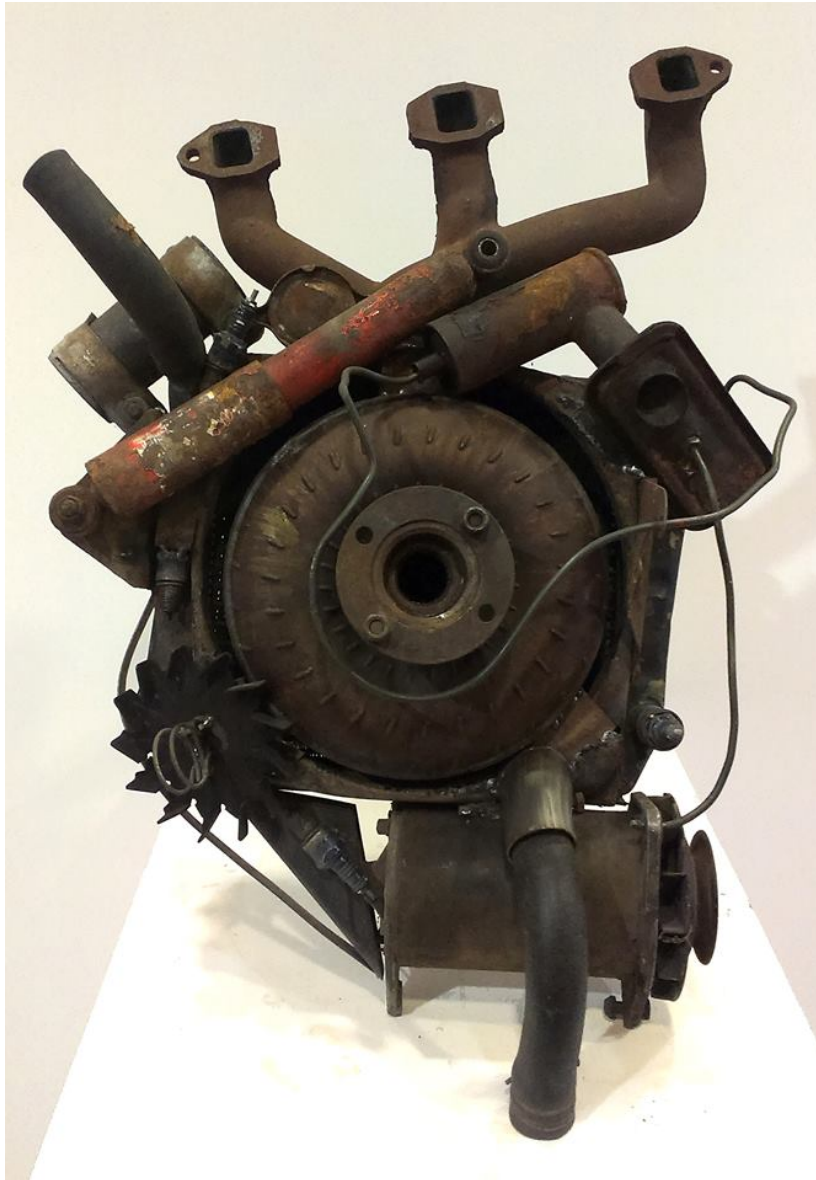


Figure 14

**Stephanie Bannister**

*Heavy Heart* (2013)

Metal car parts, Wire, rubber tubing

96.5 x 60.9 x 81.3 cm



*Figure 15*  
**The Arch of Constantine**  
Rome  
(312-315 CE)

## Concepts

### **Spolia**

During the course of my exploration into the use of found objects I have happened upon several key concepts that fall in line with my current practice, the first being the practice of spolia, the repurposing of old stonework and decorative sculpture for use in newer building work. Ideological interpretations of the use of spolia reflect the triumph and power of a ruler and the conquering of empires, declaring the renovation of newly claimed land. Where-as the pragmatic view is that of economic value, and the re-use of existing valuable materials. As in *The Arch of Constantine* (figure 15), the Roman ruler wanted to convey the ideology and philosophy of previous golden age emperors, by maintaining the long period of peace within the Roman Empire referred to as *Pax Romana*. Constantine assumed that by repurposing the decorative sculpture used in previous familiar monuments, that the Roman people would be reassured by this and his ability to rule over them (Brilliant and Kinney, 2011). This use of spolia, a visual representation of a historical event re-used later in history in order to maintain trust and belief in a new ruler, relates quite strongly to that of my own practice, in the sense that I make tales of the past known to viewers in the modern day, by sympathetically re-working the object's purpose and celebrating the human attachments that can be attributed to a physical craft. The word spolia is used in a looser sense by contemporary art historians, referring to an artefact that is used in a setting which differs from that of its creation, culturally or chronologically.



*Figure 16*  
**Stephanie Bannister**  
*Birthplace* (2016)  
Photographic series

When used as an art label, Spolia is used both metaphorically and anachronistically. Originating from the Latin word 'spoils' it means anything that is 'stripped' from something or someone.

During the creation of my piece *Birthplace* (figure 16), I began searching for the most effective use for a collection of discarded door hinges that I'd found during a visit to the old hospital in which I was born. My study of examples of spolia and of the installation *North-East Wis-Dom* by Susannah Stark (Figures 17 & 18), led me to the resolution of representing the found parts of the old building as a series of photographic images. Stark's piece, *North-East Wis-Dom* is a sound and video installation made up of a film about wisdom teeth set to a backing track of reggae music and disembodied voices. Over which she rhythmically lists extracts of emails. Displayed simultaneously are digitally printed vinyl replicas of stones found in ancient Romania. It is a process of remembering and the recollection of cultural memory. Stark attempts to link language and memory with the practice of spolia, by replicating encrypted stones. Talking to Izabella Scott in 2017 Stark explains that she "used the stones from Istria in my show partly because they have text inscribed on their surface, and that intrigued me, that those stones were public documents of their time; operating like the texts, tablets and emails we have today." (Scott, 2017).





Figure 17

**Susannah Stark.**

*North East Wis-Dom* (2016)

Installation view. Digital print, primed canvas, thread, foamboard, cotton, polystyrene, HD video, HD monitor, vinyl flooring.



Figure 18

**Susannah Stark.**

*North East Wis-Dom* (2016)

Installation view. Digital print, primed canvas, thread, foamboard, cotton, polystyrene, HD video, HD monitor, vinyl flooring

In a way that echo's the attraction I had to the door hinges of the hospital, it was the indentations and human interactions with the stones that Stark had found intriguing. Differing from the traditional aspects of the practice of spolia, I used the hinges in the same location that they were found, as a way of framing a photograph, only repurposing them compositionally and chronologically. The physical uses of the hinges are the focus of each of my photographs, demanding to be considered as the main importance, and read accordingly. By way of appropriation, they display their weathering and indentations as clues to their history, being an active piece of a building that was once so significantly in use.

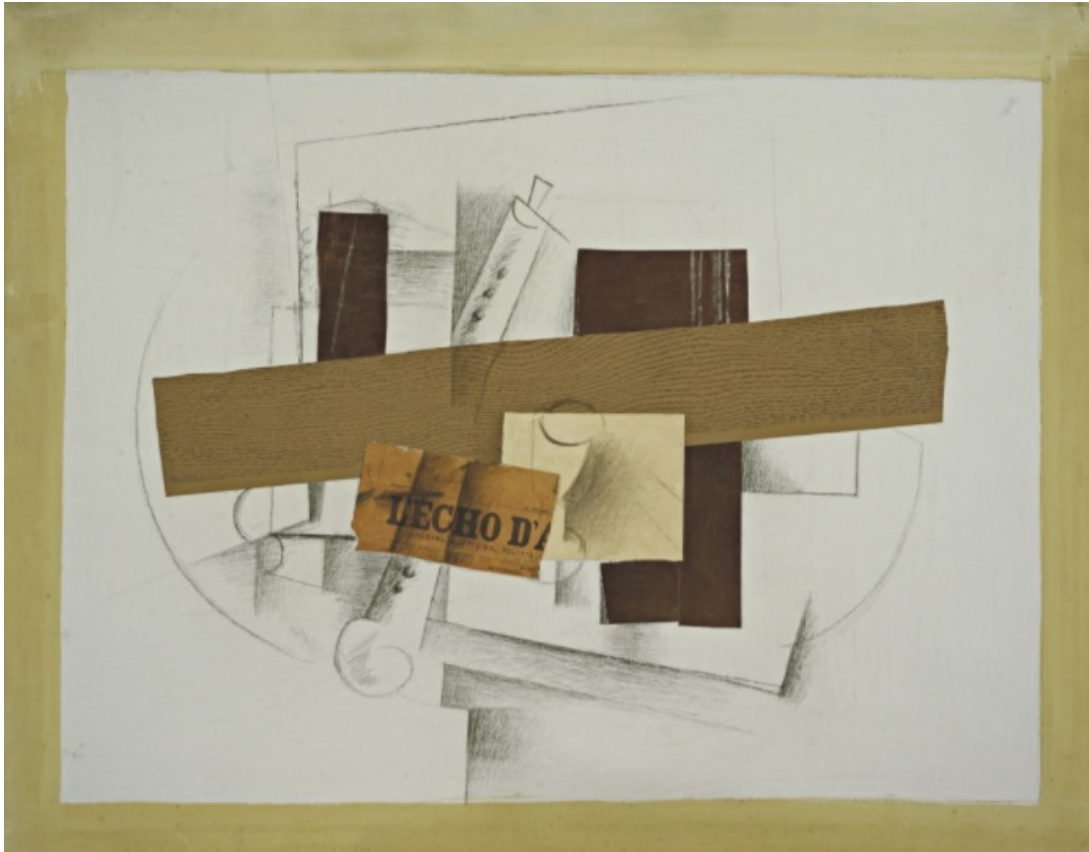


Figure 19

**Georges Braque**

Still life with tenora (1913)

Cut-and-pasted printed and painted paper, charcoal, chalk, and pencil on gessoed canvas

95.2 x 120.3 cm



## Appropriation

Similarly the practice of appropriation has played a large part in the way in which I source and re-work my found objects. Dating back to the use of real objects (such as newspapers) in the cubist collages and constructions of Picasso and Braque in 1913/4 (figure 19), appropriation was used as an immediate representation of the artist or of a specific time in human history. Perhaps the most influential piece of appropriation was that of Marcel Duchamp and his ready-mades. Beginning with *Fountain* in 1917, Duchamp began using common objects and submitting them to exhibitions. This invoked feelings of both horror at the questionable loss of monetary artistic value and that of relief amongst fellow artists that the burdens of academically taught naturalistic art skills were finally beginning to be lifted (Roberts, 2007). A potential function of appropriation and the ready-made could be to create a moment of paused contemplation. Coupled with the ideology of conceptual art the 'viewer' is met with a familiar object, of which they are to try to understand how to view it, somewhere between the realms of everyday use and artistic configuration.

It is with this paused moment of re-specification that the viewer can choose, based on their own engagement with the object in question, its purpose within the art world and significance in its exhibited state, thus contextualising it individually. Duchamp himself theorised this moment and referred to it as 'delay' before using it to explore the value of art (Faris, 2014). It is this moment of non-comprehension that philosopher Jaques Ranciere argues is responsible for the success of the readymade.



Figure 20  
**Stephanie Bannister**  
*Organ collection. 2013*  
Discarded car parts, rubber tubing, wire  
Sizes variable

He states that the pause in the perpetuation of an object and the consumption of an image is wholly reliant on first shifting it towards non-sense, an effective moment that he calls “dissensus” (Rancière, 2011).

It was this moment of contemplation that I strove to base my work around at the beginning of my exploration into appropriation and the use of found objects in 2013. I used the concept to create a series of sculptures from used car parts. Being instantly recognisable to the average person, the car parts were collected from the floors of my father’s workplace at the time. I repurposed them by welding them into the shapes of three essential human organs, the heart, brain and lungs (figure 20). I displayed them as a collection with no contextualisation other than the title’s of each. Initially my intended questions were that of the link between manmade machinery and the natural biological shapes of a human organ. However, looking back now, and allowing myself to move through the moment of delay or dissensus, I read the pieces as objects that the majority of modern human existence relies on, on an almost daily basis, like an essential bodily organ.

Correspondingly the artist Subodh Gupta creates sculptures and installations from everyday items, such as steel tiffin boxes, thali pans, milk pails and cow dung, all items that are ubiquitous throughout life in India. “All these things were part of the way I grew up. They are used in the rituals and ceremonies that were part of my childhood. Indians either remember them from their youth, or they want to remember them” (Petry, 2012). In his work titled *U.F.O*, Gupta uses hundreds of brass water utensils and soldered them together to imitate the shape of a typical flying saucer (figure 21)



Figure 21  
**Subodh Gupta**  
*U.F.O. (2007)*  
Brass Utensils  
114 x 305 x 305 cm

This mass repetition of practice is characteristic of his works, and is something I address later on my in own practice. By using these instantly recognisable readymade objects, Gupta addresses similar concerns to that of Duchamp, just within differing cultural universes. With manure patties being the source of kitchen fuel for millions of homes in India, Gupta's use of cow dung highlighted contrasting social and economic norms. Whereas Duchamp's *Fountain* displayed something that was newly of mass production at the time, and places it in a position of admiration, a prestigious art gallery. Both works celebrate their own social norms, or everyday experiences. Subsequently, the readings of these works would differ given their time and location. The period of dissensus or delay experienced would no doubt reap contrasting contextualisations by viewers from different locations or decades. Looking upon an everyday item or readymade from your own time and culture will ultimately read vastly different to a work made from something unfamiliar.





Figure 22  
**Stephanie Bannister**  
*...we used to tick (2017)*  
 Discarded clock pieces  
 Photographic series

## Categorisation

Gathering collections of items is typically how each of my works begin. Following this I tend to go through a process of investigation, I lay out the found objects in different orders, photographing them along the way. This process tends to bring to light their storytelling potential, revealing a process for their interventions, occasionally getting left as the photographic depiction of their ordered state. My piece *...we used to tick* (figure 22) is a series of photographs of clock pieces that were made in an attempt to wrangle a sculptural purpose to them. Visually similar to *Spectrum* (figure 13) by artist Tony Cragg, the photographs display every small detail and oil mark, laid out in a specific order on an equal level surface. Although Cragg's method of creation differed from mine, with him intending to end up with a flat sculpture as a resolution to his collected objects artistic state, the concerns with order and sorting remain the same. Tony Cragg produced sculptures that were of a reaction to the materials that immediately surrounded him. "Things that I found on the ground, things that I'd found as a boy, they moved me – And I knew that I didn't have to represent anything, I didn't have to mimic nature in any sense, and I stared for hours at things like a pile of bricks" (Cragg, 2018).

Craggs interest in materials lie in the way that they are made and the forms that they come in, repeated almost endlessly for the convenience of humanity, "Looking at manmade materials, looking at how they are used in our industry, and how we use the materials as an enormous expansion of our culture –



Figure 23

**Mark Dion**

*Thames dig (1999)*

Wooden cabinet, porcelain, earthenware, metal, animal bones, glass and 2 maps  
2660 x 3700 x 1260 cm



We build, we put clothes on, sit on furniture in buildings on roads, in cities. This enormous use of material to our culture - this utilitarian use of material, seems in the great part to be very simple and very repetitive.”

(Cragg, 2018) It is this repetition of material that makes up the foundations of our everyday existence that inspired the sorting and stacking arrangements of his early sculptures. My own engagement of materials is only realised after this period of studying and arranging the objects into groups without an intended contextualisation. Seeing the objects purely as shapes and a collection of materials in the way that Cragg does, helps me to realise how best to expose their human history. I find myself repeating the sorting and ordering processes in varying ways, replicating the manufacture of said materials in the first place.

Another artist collecting found objects and then sorting them into categories is Mark Dion, his piece *Thames Dig* (figures 23 & 24) is made up of a collection of objects, found by himself and a team of volunteers after they combed the banks of the river Thames. This consisted of clay pipes, decorative shards of Dutch pottery, oysters and plastic toys, each of them bearing significance to each part of the rivers history. The pieces were sorted and displayed loosely according to type, leaving the viewer perplexed as to the significance of the items, “the viewer finds them in seemingly unhistorical and largely uninterrupted arrangements.



Figure 24

**Mark Dion**

*Thames dig (1999)*

Wooden cabinet, porcelain, earthenware, metal, animal bones, glass and 2 maps

266.0 x 370.0 x 126.0 cm

Antique items sit alongside contemporary items, ephemera and detritus are next to objects of value. Each is a material witness, performing the same function as a historical proof" (Tate, 2018).

The found items were however, arranged geographically in this attempt to prevent historical linear groupings, keeping the two dig sites separate in their individual identities. The use of a large antique display cabinet is immediately reminiscent of Museum style exhibits, the piece places importance on the sorting and categorising of the objects and introduces a different way of looking at the history of the found objects inside. Dion explains how his use of museum tactics are assimilated into the piece, "to better understand the museum, I have at various times had to become the museum, taking on the duties of collection, archiving, classifying, arranging, conserving and displaying" (Putnam, 2009).

In 2016 I produced a piece called *...and in all these places we've lived, we've called home* (figure 25). In which I took every piece of formal correspondence I'd ever had with previous landlords and burnt them, one by one in order of time, in an almost sequential ritual. With the residual ash I made paintings of each of the 16 houses that I'd occupied throughout my life, on translucent paper. Starting as a recording of time, the task soon turned to that of fondness and memory, as I began to favour the recollection of an event to the appearance of the building itself, I closed my eyes and painted them almost by way of performance, or a sentimental exercise. I began recalling certain activities, cars, events, or snow ball fights. Once complete, after a series of ordering experiments and subsequent photographs, I chose to abandon the intended historical timeline of habitation.



Figure 25

**Stephanie Bannister**

*....and in all these places we've live, we called home. (2016/17)*

Ashes, acrylic medium, translucent paper, fluorescent light, MDF Box, Perspex sheet.

59.4 x 84.1 cm

Instead, I favored the impact and emotion of seeing all the houses in one composite image. I constructed a light box, and layered the illustrations according to my most vivid and fond memories. The title came to me after a long period of looking. The piece was no longer about the documents that I'd used, the order that they came into my life, or the chronological remembering of an address. It became about the moments that make a building a home, the relationships, the pure unadulterated facile joy felt with the people you love, as a result of having somewhere to be able to feel it. The piece has richness to it now that a typical historical ordering wouldn't have achieved. In much the same way as Dion, re-categorizing the way in which the found object initially unveils itself to me is an important consideration in realising the most effective ways of presenting my work.





Figure 26

**Stephanie Bannister**

*Lives in retrospect (2015)*

Discarded children's bicycles, bolts, metal stakes.

223.53 x 86.36 x 76.2 cm

In 2015 I created *Lives in retrospect* (figure 26) a 7ft high semi-figurative sculpture made up of discarded children's bicycles. It was the result of not having the heart to throw away my son's first bike, and finding that a lot of mothers felt the same way. These feelings of emotional attachment to an object captured my enthusiasm, and I began teasing out tales of the human connections behind household objects. A pivotal part of my research at the time was Mary Kelly's piece titled *Post-partum Document* (figure 27) a record of the relationship Kelly shared with her own son over the six years of his life. Consisting of documented speech development, feeding charts, and studies of fecal stains on nappy liners, the piece highlights the same sense of loss a parent feels as their child progresses with age, that I hoped would be effectively expressed through my own work. *Post-partum Document*, consisting of autobiographical objects, displayed in sequence within categorised groupings, achieves the feel it desires as a result of these systematic strategies. The overall aesthetic of the individually displayed items across a large open space gives the feel of a significant display of evidence, either historically or scientifically. For example, the study of faecal matter might be acknowledged as notable if it has been used by means of collecting or gathering historic/scientific data, rather than being negatively received at the time.





The cataloguing of each item and careful annotations reveal the attachment Kelly has to the exchanges she shares with her son. At this point in her life, the ordinary repetitiveness of domestic life and motherhood were of the utmost importance, and is reflected by her consideration into the display and categorizing of these personal objects. "The objects in the work - they're recognition points, particularly for mothers, but at some level for everyone in their relationship with their own mother" (Tate, 2018).



Figure 28  
**Stephanie Bannister**  
*Moving On* (2017)  
Clothing, Copper tubing, wire

## Endurance

My latest work, *Moving on...* (figure 28) is a large installation consisting of two lengths of sculpted fabric. Twenty meters long and 100-130cm wide, the fabric is attached to the walls at each side and stretches out into the open space to move freely, each side entwining itself around the other before reattaching to opposite surfaces. The expansive strips of fabric were made from clothing that was cut into panels and sewn together by hand, taking almost every waking hour of the day for almost 2 months. My hands became cracked and worn as the weeks went by, making it a physically painful, somewhat sempiternal task. Ultimately, this lead me to explore the concept of endurance art, and the ways in which certain artists put themselves through long periods of physical strain in order to produce or perform their works. Typically endurance art sees an artist challenge their own strength by performing a physically and/or mentally painful sequence, often over lengthy periods of time. This differs from my own period of endurance, which was in the timely and repetitive creation of a static piece of work, and not in a performance to be viewed.

Marina Abramovic has explored this concept in several of her works, pushing her body and stamina to its physical breaking point. For *The artist is present* (figure 29) Abramovic sat for the entire three months of her retrospective, silently at a table, facing an empty chair which visitors were invited to continuously occupy.





Figure 29.  
**Marina Abramovic**  
*The artist is present* (2010)  
Performance



Figure 30  
**Marina Abramovic**  
*Rhythm 0* (1974)  
Performance

The moment of being seen by another human, and being able to freely remain eye contact with them, created this feeling of human contact that regularly moved sitters to tears. The physical stamina to be able to sit in the same place for three whole months, concealing a chamber pot within the chair so as not to even require relief breaks, is a huge demand to ask of the human body.

Abramovic spoke of how her interests in the strength of the mind and body's physical limits were the basis of her inspiration, "I am interested in how far you can push the energy of the human body - our energy is almost limitless, it's not about the body, it's about the mind, who'll push you to the extremes that you never could imagine" (Marina Abramovic Institute, 2018). The artist uses her performances to test those limits within her own body voluntarily putting herself throughout these rituals of endurance in order to provoke a certain way of making visitors draw themselves towards their own conscious (Marina Abramovic Instiute, 2018). In terms of stamina and demands of the human body, Abramovic's work *Rhythm 0* (figure 30) was groundbreaking in terms of human vulnerability. Faced with a table of instruments, visitors to the show were allowed to use any item to interact with Abramovic's human body. She would remain passive for the full 6 hour performance as she was cut, drawn on, carried around the room and heavily groped, but considers herself lucky, as nobody used the loaded gun on the table (Marina Abramovic Institute, 2018). By removing all boundaries, Abramovic tested both her mental and physical endurance to the limits at the mercy of unpredictable stranger's compulsions.



Figure 31  
**Yoko Ono**  
*Cut Piece* (1964 / 2003)  
Performance



Artist Yoko Ono performed a similar artistic performance ten years prior to Abramovic in New York. Her 1965 work *Cut piece* (figure 31) was a performance-based social experiment, whereby Ono sat on a stage with a pair of scissors, and invited people to cut away at her clothing, leaving her more and more exposed and vulnerable as time went on.

As a result of the piece Ono was left on stage wearing nothing but remaining shreds of material. By creating the limitation, only asking visitors to cut her clothes, Ono added a boundary to the piece that *Rhythm 0* lacked, which although still daring and unpredictable, paved the way for women in performance art. Both pieces however, required an immeasurable strength of mental stamina to successfully endure the whole performance.



Figure 32

**Stephanie Bannister**

*Life before the object* (2017)

Glasses sourced from lost property, hanging filament bulbs

## Ritual

The majority of my works require the process of repetition in mass amounts in order to achieve my desired impact, being the commonalities found within the human experience. I found myself developing systematic ways of working, finding patterns in my methods and working almost rhythmically to complete such repetitive tasks. During the creation of my piece *Life before the object* (figure 32) I etched an image into each of the lenses of 200 pairs of glasses. During the arduous four week process, not only did my physical health start to feel strained due to operating a vibrating hand tool for up to 12 hours a day, but I started to develop different ways of thinking. My normal thought process had changed; the etching process became more important than my everyday routine. The repetition turned into obsession, and things like my daily hygiene and social needs were neglected.

It is this physical repetition and systematic process that brings me to the work of Sophie Calle. Artists generally put themselves through a lot to freely explore their creativity, as Ono and Abramovic have made clear, Calle however transforms her own life to evolve around her subjects. The record of each transformation and the things that she encounters or experiences are documented in varying ways, it is these documents that in turn become the art within exhibition walls. In a conversation with Bice Curiger in 1992 Calle reveals her obsessions behind several of her works.



Figure 33.  
**Sophie Calle**  
*Hotel room (1981)*  
 Works on Paper, photographs and ink  
 214.0 x 142.0 cm

To complete *Hotel room* (figure 33) Calle started a job as a chambermaid after following her new subject and “fantasising about knowing what was in his hotel room” (Searle, 1993). Calle found herself returning to the same hotel several times before she was hired for a period of three weeks. During which she carried out an abundance of observations on each room that she was employed to clean. It was the items that people carry with them that Calle was most interested in, the things that surround a person in order to make up their own ordinary lives. “I made the beds but also tried to imagine who the hotel guests were, a resume of their lives, based on the personal belongings which they bought with them to their temporary home in the hotel room.” (Searle, 1993).

In another piece, Calle finds an address book and proceeds to visit every address written within it, building up a picture of the man that lost it. Calle became obsessed, and confesses to falling in love with the mystery owner. Her life became of secondary importance as she developed this habit of stalking the environments that the man had built his life within, “I lost control - in the address book piece. I completely fell in love with that man, I changed my life for him. I stopped living in my house so as not to have reference to my own house, and I went to live in his neighbourhood, only saw his friends, went to eat in the places in he went to eat, went on holidays where he liked to go” (Calle, 1992). It is with this transformation of self that Calle explores various themes within her work such as human absence, beauty, pain, memory, and identity. All of which revolve around the question of life, and its seemingly endless complexities, realised after this systematic process of adapting her own life.



Figure 34  
**Hollis Frampton**  
*Nostalgia* (1971)  
Fixed camera film



Hollis Frampton addresses some similar questions of life, namely his own, in his film *Nostalgia* (figures 34 & 35) made in 1971. At 38 minutes long the piece is made up of a continuous film, shot from a fixed camera, of a hot plate. On which Frampton systematically places black and white photographs and in real time the viewer sees the photograph break down as it burns and eventually disintegrates into ash. The photographs are from Frampton's own past, and as each one is placed onto the hotplate and burnt, an autobiographical description of the photograph yet to follow the one currently being seen is read out by fellow film maker Michael Snow as if he were Frampton. This displacement of image and voice is what makes the piece notable. Viewers find themselves in a repetition of remembering, whilst at the same time taking in new information, almost provoking the act of nostalgia. When faced with each new image, viewers think back to the story previously told, which conflicts the start of a new description. This for me, mimics the channels each of us follow through life and the habits we each share, of fondly remembering elements of the past and contrasting them with the present day. Questions addressing the effective perception of the piece are asked by Vera Dika; "Can we adequately imagine the next image without seeing it? Do we remember the story of the image we are presently viewing? And how long can we hold that story in our memory before it too dissolves, taking with it the image now before us? Finally, what is the possibility of fully seeing or hearing, remembering or imagining, when the image is presented in such a radical displacement from the text?" (Dika, 2003)





Figure 35

**Hollis Frampton**

*Nostalgia* (1971)

Stills from fixed camera film

This conflict of perception verses memory leaves the viewer in a constant state of reflection and imagining, consuming themselves within the stories of another person's life. Frampton's intended displacement of text and image reflects the displacement that takes place within the viewers own thoughts as they begin to take in each element of the piece, and experience moments of selflessness as they evolve a depiction of the life of the artist himself. All the while faced with a contrasting image of destruction of the same life, carefully mapped out using Framptons systematic routine.



Figure 36

**Robert Rauschenberg**

*Untitled [black painting with portal form] (1952-53)*

Oil, enamel paint, and newspaper on canvas

139.38 x 131.45 cm

## Robert Rauschenberg

Rauschenberg's foundations when it comes to several elements of his practice lie in the progressive experimental art education he experienced during his early career. Rauschenberg embraced lessons on assemblage and his job in his school's work programme of sourcing found objects to collage with. He would regularly rummage in skips and other people's bins to source materials to use within his found art experiments. A key principle of his education outlined in 1934 by Josef Albers his teacher was, "to be able to see in the widest sense: to open up his eyes to his own living, being and doing" (Blackmountaincollegeproject.org, 2018), an ethos and habit of practice that seems to have stuck with Rauschenberg throughout his career. During his *Black paintings* series (figure 36) Rauschenberg used newspaper, dirt, gravel, and a variety of paints in thick dripping layers, making the paper underneath react in unpredictable ways. He then went on to photograph the pieces by, and framed within the doorways of empty spaces, not only emphasising the correlations between the surfaces of the walls and the painting, but as an intervention to a lived environment also. "More than simple scaling devices, they suggest human presence and establish a literal conjunction of abstract art, and the physical factum of everyday life" (Hopps, 1991). As the *Black paintings* effectively point to life outside of themselves, indicating the space that lies between the art and life, I am driven to think about my own work, and the effectiveness it has in relation to this. My use of found objects, interventions to them and eventual display of the works are all indicative of this question of the space between human life and object as an art form.



Figure 37  
**Robert Rauschenberg**  
*Scatole personali (Personal Box)* (1952)  
Sculpture  
4.4 x 12.1 x 5.3 cm

Each of my pieces ask the viewer to respond in a way that occupies that space, contextualising the story being told by the object, and its relation to the everyday existence it once had. Retrospectively, in terms of filling the void that is this space between the two, each of my artworks are not complete until they have been interacted with by the human thought process of the viewer. As they stand on their own as an object in a space that is precisely what they are, only when the object is re-introduced to human life does the piece come alive, within the thoughts and the stories conjured by each individual mind that encounters it. Continuing to collect items from the world around him, Rauschenberg went on to produce a series of box works, collections of natural found objects, namely twigs, feathers, fabric and bone, set within a small wooden frame. Referred to by himself as *Mini monuments* (figure 37) the pieces place emphasis on the common objects themselves, creating a sense of importance and an assumption of history, validated by the present day viewer. Rauschenberg who recognises the relationship between the conflict in the definition of the word 'monument' and the scale of his pieces, and suggests that you "May develop your own ritual about the objects" (Rauschenberg, 2016). Remaining true to the values learnt during his time at college, Rauschenberg clearly saw the beauty in the life that surrounded him, and continued to use natural objects in his work.

Moving on from merely using dirt as a medium to make marks with, in his work *Growing painting* (figure 38) is made up of earth, and seeds within a wooden frame, that are watered daily.





Figure 38  
**Robert Rauschenberg**  
*Growing Painting* (1953)  
Dirt and vegetation in wood frame  
182.9 x 63.5 cm



Figure 39  
**Robert Rauschenberg**  
*Untitled (Elemental Sculpture)* (1953)  
Wood with metal screw eye, twine, and tethered stone  
6.4 x 10.8 x 8.9 cm

Talking to art critic Calvin Tomkins, Rauschenberg discloses his reasoning for using actual objects, "I want it to look like something it is, And I think a picture is more like the real world when it is made out of the real world" (Tomkins, 2005). A sentiment spoken by Rauschenberg that strikes my mind with a resounding sense of familiarity within my own convictions. Continuing to produce works using natural objects, Rauschenberg scoured the streets and beaches to collect objects that appeared to have substantial wear, indicating a history of prolific use. He made a series of sculptures, presenting the found objects as themselves, unedited in appearance individually, but strewn together using a variety of methods. These *Elemental sculptures* (figure 39) presented themes of nature and geometry, at the same time as history and culture, as Rauschenberg remains true to the object itself, this differs immensely from his *Red paintings* series (figure 40), where found objects are saturated in red paint and fixed to canvass. He experiments with the question of monochromatic detail, and the idea of meaning. Does painting a variety of found objects the same colour unify them, or do they still remain different?

Colour is a strong identifier of a Rauschenberg painting, whether it's singular with its differing tones, or the vastly contrasted yet perfect blend of muted colours, earthy tones and scattered vibrancies that he refers to as pedestrian colour. (Klüver, 1981).



Figure 40.  
**Robert Rauschenberg**  
*Untitled (Red Painting)* (1953)  
 Oil, fabric and newspaper on canvas, with wood  
 200.7 x 84.1 cm



Figure 41  
**Robert Rauschenberg**  
*Monogram* (1955-1959)  
 Oil, paper, fabric, printed paper, metal, wood, rubber shoe heel, tennis ball on  
 canvas with oil on Angora goat and rubber tire on wood platform mounted on  
 four casters  
 106.7 x 160.7 x 163.8 cm

Rauschenberg spoke of his first works using this new idea of colour classification. "I began to notice that the experience of walking on the street or being in the theatre or around any group of people – that the mass, no matter how colourful it was, - never looked tonal and nothing was particularly outstanding. Someone might be wearing a very bright tie or green shoes, but somehow it was absorbed.... So I tried to get some feeling of pedestrian colour into the paintings" (Rauschenberg, 2016)

The idea of pedestrian colour undoubtedly came from observing the streets of New York, and the way that human life seamlessly blends with buildings and cars. This idea of masses of colour and activity being blended together by your mind into one hive of colour is symbolic of the masses of lives that the art works also represent. It is within the pedestrian colour pieces that I find my own work closely related. After accumulating a mass of found objects representing humanity, I strive to assemble each multi-tone unedited in an attempt to best resemble their history. The word pedestrian conjures images of the movement of human bodies through an urban space, which echoes way that Rauschenberg gathered much of the materials for his *Combine* works (figure 41), sourced on the streets of New York. The new experience of city life and its discarded offerings were of stark contrast to that of the countryside in which his elemental sculptures were created. By including three dimensional found objects within his paintings, Rauschenberg created a map like quality to his work, inviting the viewer's eye to constantly travel around the piece, pedestrian like if you will.





Figure 42

**Robert Rauschenberg**

*Charlene* (1954)

Oil, charcoal, paper, fabric, newspaper, wood, plastic, mirror, and metal on four Homasote panels, mounted on wood with electric light

226.1 x 284.5 x 8.9 cm

It is with this neologism of *combine* that I became enthused by Rauschenberg's work. On seeing the retrospective of his work at the Tate modern in 2017 I was instantly struck by these expansive pieces, their individual details, and their feelings of familiarity upon looking. The use of what I can now identify as pedestrian colour, the found objects, and the scale of the pieces each influenced my practical decision making from that point onwards. Spurring me to upscale my ideas and giving me more of an idea of how I'd like my works to appear aesthetically as a whole.

One work in particular that I regularly recall on the occasion I need a boost of confidence to be bold in my work, is *Charlene* (figures 42, 43 & 44). One of the largest combines, at 7.5ft tall and 9.4ft wide, it commands the attention of the room, demanding its modular composition to be read carefully. Consisting of oil paints, charcoal, newspaper, found images, wood, mirror, metal panels, men's undershirt, umbrella, lace, ribbons and other fabrics, it is mounted on four pressed wood panels, with an electric light illuminating the left hand side, it is a feast for the eyes as you struggle to know where exactly to begin looking. Immediately drawn to the top right hand corner I study the use of colour used in each section of the used umbrella, (muted blue and earthy tones make me reminisce the feeling of walking outside on a rainy day) fixed directly to the canvass, and incorporated into the painting with the use of oils.





Figure 43

**Robert Rauschenberg**

*Charlene, right side* (1954)

Oil, charcoal, paper, fabric, newspaper, wood, plastic, mirror, and metal on four Homasote panels, mounted on wood with electric light  
226.1 x 284.5 x 8.9 cm

Directly beneath stands a plastic mirror panel, distorted as it is propped within its painted wooden frame, (I feel as if I have ended my walk in the rain, and returned to fix my dishevelled reflection.) Beside which are equal height sections consisting of painted panels, the one to right of the mirror is half overlaid with lace, topped with a small block of wood, section of punctured metal, and pieces of ribbon. At the bottom of this section lays a piece of decorative wood, a border from the interior of a house or a piece of furniture.

As my eyes are taken for the metaphorical walk suggested earlier, I move to the left of the mirror, to a slightly smaller module which completes one of the four panels that make up the piece. Largely painted in a deep green the section's top quarter has been collaged with pieces of translucently painted fabric and topped with two indicator style lights (that do not work) and surrounded in gold paint. To the very bottom of this small section, is a miniature painting of the statue of liberty in an untouched wood frame, as if to command a certain level of wonder, but not importance, as its scale and positioning makes clear. Moving to the left of this, is another separate in creation but attached overall panel. The bottom half consisting of carefully laid out found imagery, cut from magazines and overlaid with a wash of varnish and splashes of paint, unifying them into a singular painting. Directly above this, fixed to the panel using pins is a men's undershirt, folded well, but heavily stained with what looks like a coffee spill and white glossy paint. (I am left with an uncomfortable feeling of discomfort as I instantly relate to the humanity screaming from the clothing item).





Figure 44

**Robert Rauschenberg**

*Charlene, left side* (1954)

Oil, charcoal, paper, fabric, newspaper, wood, plastic, mirror, and metal on four Homasote panels, mounted on wood with electric light

226.1 x 284.5 x 8.9 cm

The top quarter of this panel is mostly painted red wood, with a small section at the top left clear so as to see the pressed wood panel that the piece began with, bordered by small off cuts of wood. I enjoy seeing the foundations of which *Charlene* was built, not only does it highlight the laborious effort gone in to layering each section up, but it makes clear the ambitions and intentions of the artist, who has managed to pack so much life and energy into a panel of wood. *Charlene's* largest panel, consisting of layered newspaper, printed reproductions of selected images, oil paint and charcoal, is the most 'pedestrian' in colour and appears chaotic on first inspection.

As a whole this section of the combine, taking up just under half of the complete piece, is packed with movement and the experience of human existence. (The recollection of being amongst a large group of people, universally involved in a hive of activity strikes me as I contemplate the section). To the left of this, within the fourth and final panel of the piece, lies a section almost identical to the large chaotic hive of activity just mentioned, however on a scale roughly a four fifths smaller, made in the same way but framed within odd pieces of wood. Sitting at the bottom of this smaller imitation, an illuminated wall light is fixed, producing its own almost exclusive lighting. (I feel I am inside again, viewing a photograph or a painting of the place I have returned from, a place well known, packed with human activity and respected enough to duplicate none the less). The remaining sections, both above and below this apparent scaled down illuminated duplication, are painted in red tones and layered with lace and other materials.



Figure 45

**Robert Rauschenberg**

*Scripture II* (1974)

Acrylic, sand, graphite and collage on fabric laminated paper with grommets

327.66 x 154.31 x 8.26 cm

*Charlene* demands to be interacted with, with its light gripping hold of differing sections of paint and material depending on where you stand, and the reflection you can distort as you wish. The whole piece, with its familiar materials and objects calls to be touched, and its textures felt, but for me, the most effective interaction it calls for, is that of your thought process. This vast combine appears warm to me, with its pedestrian colour and the found household objects, I think about life, and feelings of being content within a crowd, and the eventual feeling of familiarity when returning home. I think about the significance of the everyday mass of life depicted in the main panel of the piece, dwarfing the reference to an iconic monument made to the lower left of the combine, hinting to me, and Rauschenberg's feelings of preference when placing importance on his new surroundings. To me the piece celebrates the beauty found within the hive of human activity suggested within its heavy use of pedestrian colour, (greater beauty in fact than that of a significant tourist attraction) which when interacted with by the human mind, comes alive once more.

During an exhibition in Israel, Rauschenberg created a series of works titled *The scriptures* (figures 45 & 46) where he had gathered earth from the desert, cardboard boxes, old tins, wheelbarrows, poles, prints based on newspapers, and buckets. Only his intended audience weren't too appreciative of the connections he'd made to their landscape, assuming he was using the items to show them how ugly their surroundings were, and hinting at them to improve it.





Figure 46

**Robert Rauschenberg**

*Scripture II* (1974)

Acrylic, sand, graphite and collage on fabric laminated paper with grommets

327.66 x 154.31 x 8.26 cm

Rauschenberg defended his intentions in a statement during a talk at the Israel museum in 1974, that not only rings true of all of his works, but of mine too. "One of the reasons I used such general materials is that there's no speciality there. Anyone has seen a cardboard box; anyone has seen sand.... I see more humanity in that water tank than I did in the silver in the next room, and I don't see less beauty.... My whole direction has been to confront people with something that might remind them of their own lives, in some way that they might look at it differently" (Rauschenberg, 2016).



Figure 47

**Susan Hiller**

*From the Freud museum (1996-6)*

Glass, 50 cardboard boxes, paper, video, slide, light bulbs and other materials

2200 x 10000 x 600 mm

## Susan Hiller

Hiller's use of found objects differs from those artists who recycled imagery and symbols of popular culture in the 1970s and 1980s. Susan Hiller gathers cultural artefacts such as postcards and fragments of pottery in groups and presents them without an underlying over contextualisation, leaving the object/artefact to present their own significance in relation to the individual culture of the viewer. Hiller has expressed openly, her views of modifying objects to create sculpture like pieces; "Without being sentimental, I think it's a kind of cherishing of things as they are, rather than trying to make them into other things. I deal with fragments of everyday life and I'm suggesting that a fragmented view of the world is all we've got" (Hiller and Einzig, 1996). It is with this respect for the original found object that her work attempts to reveal the mystery behind everyday things and the voices behind the stories that make up their history.

Hiller lends herself to the materials of which she collects, discovering what is required to bring out the "mute speech" (Hiller and Einzig, 1996) of the objects, allowing each piece to represent its own form. Talking of her piece *From the Freud Museum* 1991-1997 (figure 47), Hiller offers an explanation into the methods and obsessions of her practice, "My starting points were artless, worthless artefacts and materials – rubbish, discards, fragments, souvenirs and reproductions – which seemed to carry an aura of memory and to hint that they might mean something, something that made me want to work with them and on them" (McShine, 1999).



Like Hiller, the beginnings of each of my works are a collection of found objects that are sourced via auction sites or rubbish skips, found by chance, or gifted to me. The items are selected and kept for the same reason as Hiller, being that they each have their own voice and speak to me by way of individual meaning and history, and are worked with until their suitable presentations are complete.

Hiller chooses unconventional methods of art representation, favouring groups of artefacts to that of traditional medium in an attempt to voice her observations of reality. In an interview with Rozsika Parker, Hiller explains that; "conventional art materials are mute, it's only when work is put into them in terms of presentation that they say anything. So by extension what I'm trying to do, is to make articulate that which is inarticulate. I'm interested in these cultural materials for the unspoken assumptions they convey" (Parker, 1978). Hiller achieves these dialogues by studying her objects and grouping them, either with directly linked similar artefacts, or with an object calling for explanation as to their association with the other. A habit that undoubtedly comes from her initial study and practice as an anthropologist. Hiller chose to study anthropology when she finished school, she assumed that art was a man's career after not hearing of, or seeing any women in the art world at the time. Only eight years later, during her Ph.D study, Hiller describes feeling an "exquisite sensation" (Cooke, 2018) as she begun to draw on her notes during a lecture on African Art, prompting her to pursue an art career at the age of thirty.





Figure 49

**Susan Hiller***Dedicated to the Unknown artists (1972-6)*

305 postcards, sea charts and map mounted on 14 panels, books, dossiers and exhibition catalogues and 1 painted wooden book stand.

Support, each: 66.0 x 104.8 cm

Overall display dimensions variable.



Figure 50

**Susan Hiller***Dedicated to the Unknown Artists (1972-6)*

305 postcards, charts, maps, one book, one dossier, mounted on 14 panels

Each: 66 x 104.8 cm

The process of collecting data and obtaining the field research required during the study of anthropology is quite evident throughout most of Hiller's works, from the categorisation of potsherds in *Fragments* (figure 48) to the sorting of rough sea postcards in her piece *Dedicated to all the unknown artists* (figures 49 & 50). Both pieces deal with the everyday lives of their differing cultures. In response to the creation of her work *Fragments* Hiller speaks of her interest in the ways differing societies make objects, and how they could be made in any way, with no real significance intended. "They are just things. So in part, what interests me precisely is that denial of meaning or significance, the relegation of things to the category of the meaningless, the banal, the unknown, even the weird and ridiculous" (Hiller and Einzig, 1996).

It is this skill of making, and the "mundane working gestures" (Hiller, 1988) of the anonymous artists that also governed the groupings of the postcards in *Dedicated to the unknown artists*. Also included in some of the panels, are maritime charts and typed text representations of the handwritten messages that were on the backs of some of the postcards. Hiller was interested in the "incredible excitement that the British seem to feel about the waves" (Hiller and Einzig, 1996) and only included the notes that responded to the image on the front of the postcard. This added detail is what brings the piece to life for me. The interjection of shared human experience and the individually displayed artistic skill, work together to reveal this obsession that our culture has with the weather and its affect on nature.

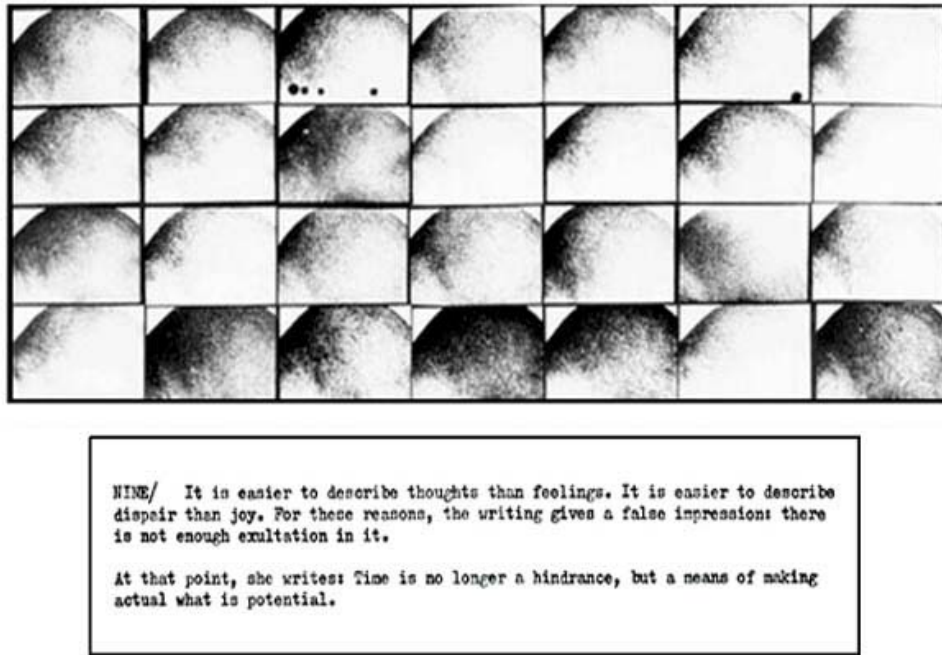


Figure 51

**Susan Hiller***Ten Months* (1977-79)

10 b/w composite photographs, 10 texts, arranged sequentially.

Overall 203 x 518 cm/80 in.x 204 in.

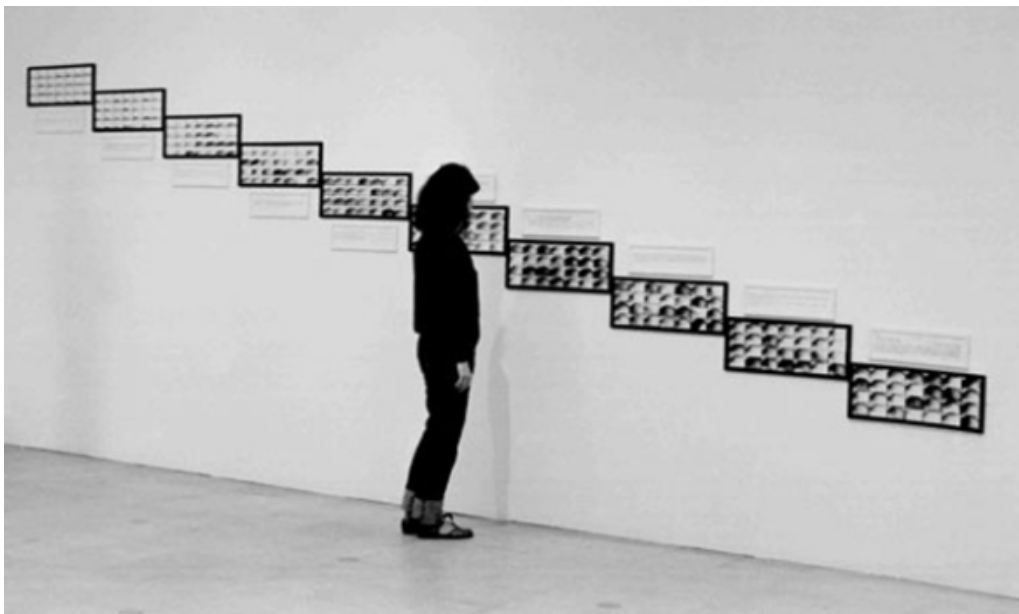


Figure 52

**Susan Hiller***Ten Months* (1977-79)

10 b/w composite photographs, 10 texts, arranged sequentially.

One series of Susan Hiller's works that resonates with my own is her piece *Ten months* (figures 51 & 52) a collection of photographs that Hiller had taken of her own body throughout each day of her pregnancy, accompanied by journal excerpts that reveal the personal changes to her body both physically and mentally. The objects are arranged into lunar months, and each image compositionally resembles the phases of the moon. The final day of each month lines up with the beginning day of the next in a staggered effect as they are hung in close proximity to one and other, the text that corresponds to their time frame is placed either above or below each framed month. Hiller chose to relate this relationship between herself and her growing child to the moon after finding out that the average pregnancy is 280 days, which is in fact ten lunar months and not the nine and a bit she was led to believe. This information, coming years after the birth of her son provoked her to revisit the personal documentation of her pregnancy that she hadn't planned to pursue any further.

*Ten months* brings me to an early work of mine, whereby I documented the most tragic and challenging thirty months of my life at the time by illustrating the key moments of it. I delicately added pen work and colour to initial pencil sketches, and mounted them all in a sketch book in a chronological order. This autobiographical documentation and delicate presentation was named *The Last Thirty months* (figures 53 & 54) and offers a raw and exposing view of the difficulties of my domestic life at that time.





Figure 53

**Stephanie Bannister**

*The last thirty months...* (2014-15)

86 pencil and ink illustrations, scrap book.

22 x 22 x 3cm



Figure 54

**Stephanie Bannister**

*The last thirty months...* (2014-15)

86 pencil and ink illustrations, scrap book.

22 x 22 x 3cm

Both pieces mirror the other in terms of their context, Hiller exposing her thought process and the changes made to her body during pregnancy, and mine exposing each of the difficulties I faced, that had altered my ability to maintain the strength of my mental health at the time. It was a way of processing the time that had passed, and communicating the realness of emotion and how humanity differs vastly until it comes down to these basic unifying factors, being the love and support of my family, and the love Hiller felt towards her growing child.

A piece of work by Hiller that reflects these important elements of humanity is *Monument* (figures 55 & 56). Consisting of: 41 colour photographs arranged in a staggered cross, a park bench situated to the front left with its back towards the wall of photographs, and an audiotape. Viewers are welcomed to participate in the piece by taking a seat and listening to the contents of the tape, "a disjunctive, fictionally-personal text that muses on the ideology of memory, the history of time, and the fixing of representation." (Hiller and Einzig, 1996). The piece addresses the immortality suggested by memorial plaques, these one's in particular all remember people who died in vain, attempting to save the life of someone else, the audio tape accounting their names and how long they had lived, both in the body, and as a representation. Their stories are written in brief, from a 12 year old that held onto his drowning friend, sinking with them, or an 8 year old who died attempting to extinguish the flames that engulfed his baby sister. To me this piece celebrates those moments of pure humility, those people who looked past their own lives to automatically help a fellow human. In each moment these people saw only life, and attempted to save it.



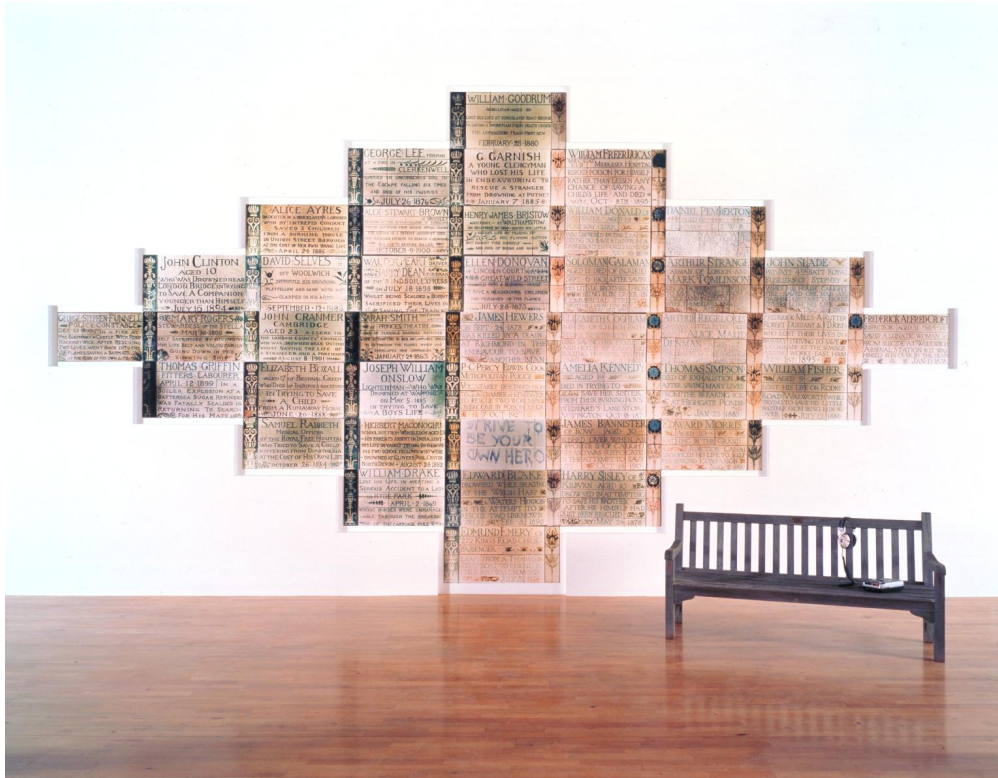


Figure 55

**Susan Hiller***Monument (1980-1)*

41 photographs, colour, on paper, bench, tape player, headphone and audio.  
 4572 x 6858 mm, duration: 14min 23sec.



Figure 56

**Susan Hiller***Monument (1980-1)*

41 photographs, colour, on paper, bench, tape player, headphone and audio.  
 4572 x 6858 mm, duration: 14min 23sec.

Hiller's reasoning for finding interest in these found plaques was just how overlooked they were and how they differed from traditional British monuments. "I realised that all the statues and monuments were commemorating people of noble and exalted birth, viscounts, lords, noble generals, etc. Coming from a country [America] that wished in its origins to overthrow all of that, and that is replete with monuments to ordinary people who became great, rather than to people born great. These pieces began to become things that I simply ignored, or deliberately paid no attention to, since what they obviously commemorated, was a system of social inequality which located me very negatively as a woman and a commoner." (Hiller and Einzig, 1996) It is this notion of commemorating the right people that provoked Hiller to photograph the plaques and to make known their significance as a celebration of the everyday hero's that displayed the most universal of human emotions.

Monument as an artwork falls under the category of installation, and being the preferred exhibition method for Hiller, she gives a good explanation as to what she considers when she is faced with a set of cultural artefacts and looks to present them in a way that "occupies a site in such a way that objects, spaces, light, distances, sounds – everything that inhabits the site – everything is defined by its relationship to all the other things. So nothing in an installation means anything much except in relationship." (Hiller and Kokoli, 2008) A similar realisation to that in the Rauschenberg chapter, both Hillers installations and my own need a combination of elements to be able to respond adequately to one and other.



Figure 57

**Susan Hiller**

*Painting Books & Painting Blocks (1972-84)*

Two series of previously-exhibited paintings reconfigured in sculptural formats, various dates and sizes. (Top: Big Blue, 1976, open. Bottom: Three Painting Blocks, dated with size of originating works)

The bench, the plaque photographs and the audio tape of Hillers Monument, and the clothing, the stains, the scent and the handwritten text of my piece *Moving on* each need their constructed elements in order to be ready for interpretation. It is when this interpretation and engagement with the piece happens that each of the works is complete. The audience activates the differing levels of meaning within each piece by participating in the reading of each element of it, and contextualising it individually. Hiller states that "it's about what is between the objects; context, words, history" that is the significant factor when it comes to translating meaning, that the audience should be "part of the meaning construction" and that it would be "Immoral to dictate their interpretation" when creating a piece (Hiller and Kokoli, 2008).

Hiller has displayed a variety of creative processes that range from mixed media installations like in *Belshazzars Feast* (figure 58) and *Channels* (figure 59), to the transformed paintings in her *Painting books and Painting blocks* continuation (figure 57). Much like my own practice, Hiller adapts her own use of materials according to the artefacts or found objects that she wants to bring to our attention. Throughout my art practice I too have explored a variety of differing ways to intervene with the objects that I source, and have taught myself new skills in order to achieve this, from the welding in *Heavy Heart* and *Lives in retrospect*, the etching in *Life before the object* and the heavy duty sewing in *Moving on*. I realise each varied technique after studying each of the found objects in turn, realising what it is about them that I find intriguing, and piece each sculpture or installation according to the demands of the found material.



Figure 58

**Susan Hiller**

*Belshazzar's Feast* (1983-84)

20-minute single-screen installed video programme,  
configuration and size variable.

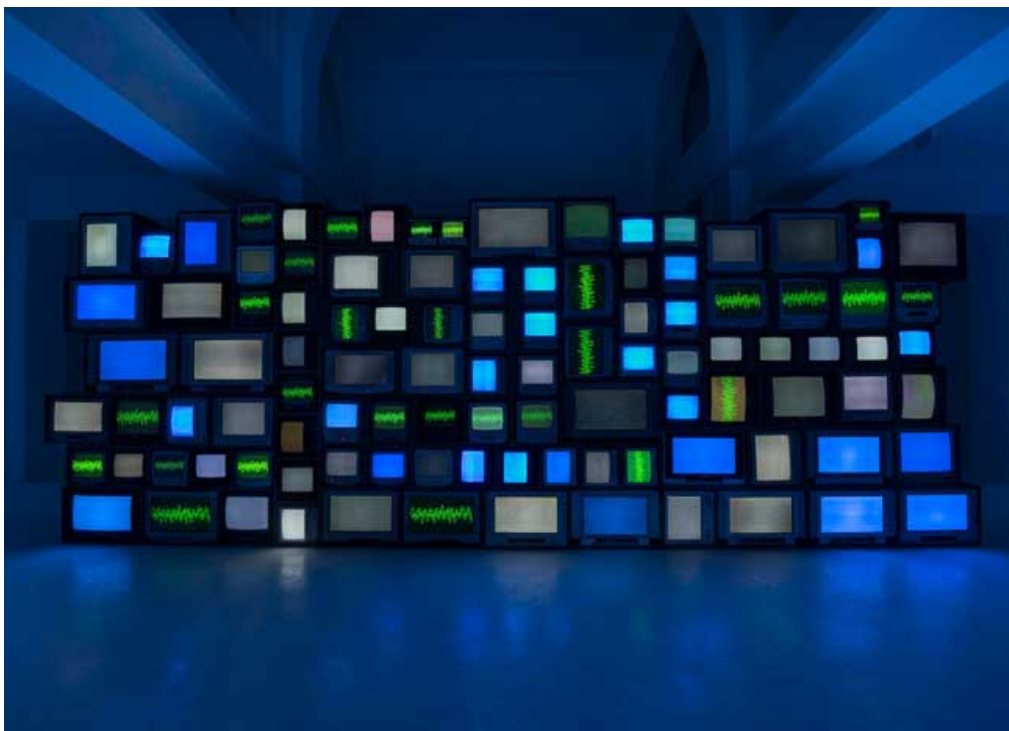


Figure 59

**Susan Hiller**

*Channels* (2013)

Multi-channel video installation, 106 television sets ,9  
media players, 7 dvd players, signal splitters

It was only after reading the following quote from Susan Hiller herself that I realised just how alike our methods of realisation and technique are. "It's a question of matching the two together. The medium is selected because it's appropriate to the subject matter. That's the difference between the way I work and the way a lot of artists work. They make films, or they use photography. I don't work like that. I've had to learn so many different media because I've had to find ways that are suitable. But it does mean that I don't produce work as quickly as some people do. It's never boring. I don't know what the next work will be" (Stevens, 2018).





## Literary Influence

Alex Masters is a biographer, who across three books, has succeeded in not only telling the stories of the lives of ordinary people, but making them compelling to read, as if they were of great adventure or importance. *Stuart – A Life backwards* follows the path of an alcohol and drug addicted 'psychotic' homeless man, and journeys back to when he was a care free young boy, before he encountered the sexual abuse that could have led to his poor choices as an adult. *Simon – The genius in my basement* studies the life of the author's Landlord, whom occupies the basement of the apartment block he lives in. Simon grew up considered to be a mathematical genius, and after making one mistake, lets his life mundanely pan out, just like anyone else's. Both books draw certain parallels with the key themes underlying my practice; giving testament to lives that would have otherwise been forgotten.

Masters' third book *A Life Discarded* is a journey of discovery, after 148 diaries had been found in a skip and then passed on to him by a friend. The diaries occupied ten years of the author's life as he read every single word in an attempt to understand the extracts of life, whilst avoiding finding out who'd written them. The text within the covers of the 148 diaries was written by one woman, referred to as 'I' or 'not Mary' until half way through the book when the diarist quotes some speech from a friend whom addresses her as Laura, much to Masters' disenchantment.



Figure 60  
**Stephanie Bannister**  
*Tell them of me* (2017)  
Matchbooks, canvas, briefcase.  
180 x180cm

"The great excitement of an anonymous diary is that it might belong to anybody. Even giving 'I' a name destroyed a vital thing that made the books interesting – a sense of universality" (Masters, 2016). The endless extracts of 'ordinary' life, and the fact that this diary could have represented anybody, were the sparks that set Masters on his exploration of mystery. He was far more intrigued by the mundane anonymity of such a life, and the instant annotations of a recognisable train of thought, than if it belonged to somebody 'important'.

Not unlike my own piece, *Tell them of me* (figure 60) which occupies the same themes to those of Laura's diaries. The work was made up of 1200 match books dated from 1974 to 1998. They are arranged geographically and fixed side by side with their faces showing on a large canvas, with a briefcase placed on the ground in front of it, as if it were accidentally left. The items belonged to a businessman, who travelled as part of his job, and were gifted to me as part of a house clearance. The man seems to have collected a matchbook from each bar, restaurant or hotel he'd visited around the world. I became fascinated by the traces of human interaction found on each matchbook, with varying levels of use, or used to make notes of telephone numbers, shopping lists or appointments, all in the same 'doctor like' handwriting. Knowing that these small objects were a sort of documentation of the existence that this man had led, mapping out his journey through life, I simply displayed them as they were, un-edited, revealing all the clues to the interactions they'd had with him, just as Masters did with the extracts of Laura's diary entries.

When you ponder the matches, and the period of time each trip would have taken, you start to conjure up stories about the collector's private life, whether he was missing out on seeing his family through travelling, whether he never settled down because he was in love with his job, or whether his job eventually became his life and collecting the matchbooks became a record of that, like Laura using her diaries.

Throughout the diaries, Laura constantly expressed her desire to follow her passions in art, her natural talent on the piano, and her gift of writing. With good intentions of bettering her life, she started things but never finished them, never driven enough to put in the hard work required to succeed in such areas. She never married, started a family, or developed any notable relationships, other than an obsessive attraction with her elderly tutor. Laura lived most of her life working for less than minimum wage as a housekeeper for a man named Peter, and became addicted to the television as a provider of company and distraction whilst confined to her room in the evenings. Only to wake up each morning bitterly questioning her lack of 'life'. Why then, would it be necessary to pursue a story from these diaries? Laura's life goes no-where notable, does nothing special, and mentions nobody of real importance. Yet Masters spent so long deciphering the text, gripped by the writers mundane stream of thoughts, which at one point he likened to "listening to a tomb breathe" (Masters, 2017). He is excited by his attempts to share this record of someone simply existing, as part of an ordinary predictable life, just as I was when I made *Tell them of me* and spent night after night painstakingly sorting each of the matchbooks by destination and fixing them to canvas.

Eventually, Masters captures the bleak moments of realisation as Laura struggles to come to terms with the fact that her life may have been wasted on merely existing, and not living, evoking a universal feeling of sympathy as readers relate to this common emotion, recognising themselves in her. "That's why this life is a valuable life. She can be an excellent writer, she is a good artist, she had the makings of a pianist too, but the real thing is that Laura Francis: The person who ends up not meeting a single one of her hopes and gets thrown out in a skip – represents in a pure form, the feeling that everyone feels of a life not lived" (Masters, 2017).

Ultimately Masters is celebrating this universally felt emotion, admitting that it's a significant part of ordinary people's lives, and should be read about as if it were a great adventure. In much the same way that I celebrate the anonymous male's matchbook collection and his commitment to a job role. Although less obvious than the immeasurable detail of Laura's diaries, my work leaves the story telling to the viewer, with hints left by myself as the artist. The expanse of matchbooks and their painterly qualities demand closer inspection and careful reading, like that of a diary. The 'typical' lives that we all lead are miraculous journeys of self discovery, whether we make anything notably miraculous of them or not. They can be looked at as celebrations of existence, or as failed opportunities to achieve something over a long period of time, however you read it, they are of importance. The significant value being that these people did exist. They had lives that were lived, just like anybody else's, and it is up to us to spend the time seeking out the significance, differing from person to person.



In his piece *Species of spaces* Georges Perec studies the infra-ordinary, minuscule details of daily life, makes notes and lists all of the things we do and the places that we do them without giving them a moment's thought. He constantly questions how best to capture these details and outlines them under the subheading *The Street*; "The banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual? – How are we to speak of these common things, how to track them down, how to flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they are mired, how to give them meaning, a tongue, to let them finally, speak of what it is, who we are" (Perec, 1974). He gives practical exercises to the reader, in which he asks us to describe what we can see, without using 'etc', until we have exhausted the comma. Perec questions space, not the infinity above our heads, but the space between our human existence here on earth, and what surrounds it, or is in it. He divulges into obvious detail, making note of the space that surround us: parks, corridors, towns, and countryside. He states that "Perhaps indeed it should be obvious. But it isn't obvious, not just a matter of course" (Perec, 2008). Perec suggests that we should take the time to attempt to notice these obvious spaces that typically pass us by, and recognise the fact that "There isn't one space, a beautiful space, a beautiful space round about, a beautiful space all around us, there's a whole lot of small bits of space, and one of these spaces is a Metro corridor, and another of them is a public park" (Perec, 2008). Perec sees the beauty in the everyday, the banal repetitive moments of the human experience, that go un-noticed ordinarily, and communicates his thoughts biographically, in an almost guide book manner.

On reading *Species of Spaces* I have found myself noticing more in my daily life. Taking the time to notice the particulars that I may have overlooked thousands of times during my daily routine. I have begun to see certain aspects of my own life differently; I have begun to notice the beauty in the placement or displacement of things, and their relation to human life. I have begun to allow myself the time to appreciate each environment that I situate, and their differing details. Recognising that I am in fact, in a space and not thinking about how I got there or where I am going next, as suggested in *Species of spaces*. Perec's writing has unified a lot of my existing thoughts, about the difference in the importance and value of an object depending on how you look at it. Those who look at an item for longer, and allow themselves the chance to notice more, exhausting the comma, if you like, will inevitably recognise a greater significance in the object and its surrounding space.

It is this moment of extended looking that I attempt to invite when I create an exhibition piece myself. To assist in the contextualising, I usually pair an object with clues to their previous existence as a useable object, and leave them to be noticed by the viewer. I make an effort to use the space, the found object, and its links to a human existence in a way that reads like a story. Like Perec, I invite people to notice everything about my piece, the found object/s and each of the un-altered signs of use, the descriptions of the materials and where they were sourced, the handwritten clues to the owner of said object and/or why it was discarded, the lighting I have chosen to highlight specific areas/markings, even the order in which I have sorted each item.

The longer a person spends looking at one of my pieces, the more value it will have as an effective piece of art, bringing them to my intended conclusion of thinking about the beauty that lies within these banal everyday lives.

Perec's uses of writing systems allow him to achieve the responses he desires within the mind of the reader. OuLiPo writers use these techniques of writing to produce literature that is bound by structure and constraint. OuLiPo meaning *Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle* (Workshop for Potential Literature) were a group of writers and mathematicians formed by poet Raymond Queneau and mathematician François Le Lionnais in France 1960. Believing that effective works were better born through some constraint, the writers thought up mathematical systems in order to choose certain words or to structure a sentence. The wider used systems included the S+7 method where each noun is replaced with one 7 places on in the dictionary, or the snowball method where each letter within a sentence is one letter longer than the word before. Each OuLiPo text although being complete in itself also gestures to other works that can be written using the same method, suggestive of something that is infinitely larger than itself. . The act of disconnecting the writing process from feeling creates feeling in turn. Perec's work *Void* is a 300 page text written whilst omitting the letter E, and is provocative in terms of its purpose as a thought process as well as a piece of literature

*Significant objects* is the recording of a project by Rob Walker and Joshua Glenn, whereby one hundred seemingly meaningless objects were collected, allocated a story by an established writer, and then sold on via eBay.

Captioned '100 extraordinary stories about ordinary things' The experiment was to see if by giving the object a significant life, it increased its worth, of both value and meaning.

"We understood that stories make objects more meaningful. Its stories that make us treasure childhood toys, family heirlooms and the like, far beyond their rational market value" (Glenn and Walker, 2012). The objects became creative outlets for each of the writers, it is with them that the authors were inspired to think beyond what they saw, and attempt to see the items in greater detail after extended periods of looking, in the way that Perec outlines in *Species of spaces*. It was only after the writers were invited to look further by Rob and Joshua that the objects came of meaning and came alive, ready to be purchased by a member of the public that embraced the item with its story, becoming affected enough by its new found significance to bid on it. While the initial project was an economic experiment, I took from it some confidence in my own practice. I became enthralled by my own sense of storytelling, enthused by the significance of the stories behind the objects I'd found, and excited by what I was doing. Although its intended context differs to my own, *Significant objects* led me to the realisation that there is value in objects with stories attached, mundane or not. "Regardless of the things utilitarian properties, an object's value can be increased by way of the narrative attached to it" (Glenn and Walker, 2012).



Figure 61  
**Stephanie Bannister**  
*Moving On* (2017)  
Clothing, Copper tubing, wire



Figure 62.  
**Stephanie Bannister**  
*Tell them of me too* (2017)  
Soiled clothing, antique chair

### Exhibition Findings

My exhibition piece for 2017 was an Installation titled *Moving on* (figure 61) a large mass of fabric, floating and twisting around itself in mid air before fusing itself onto the gallery walls. A mass celebration of humanity, the piece was coupled with a book of handwritten notes from the 'ordinary' people who donated the clothing that made up the panels within the expanse of fabric. *Moving on* was the result of an extensive study into the effectiveness of using found clothing items within my practice. Initially occurring by chance, after being gifted a collection of soiled women's clothing and an antique chair. I found myself overlooking the clothing as a whole, and neglected to even notice the patterns in the fabric or the texture of the different materials. Instead I traced the signs of wear, and sought out any marks and abrasions that were made when the clothes were once graced with the vibrancy of a living being. For the piece *Tell them of me too...* (figure 62) I made use of the clothing by hand stitching it to the chair, as they both once belonged to the same person, however the static nature of the chair failed to give the signs of a life once lived, vivid enough justice.

With this in mind, the remaining clothing remnants and the influence of the Rauschenberg retrospective, I began to sew sections of clothing together by hand. My initial intentions were to create large combine scale panels of fabric to use as wall hangings, I quickly realised that I'd need a lot more material. Being a collector of sentimental objects, I rescued a large box of my son's outgrown clothes from the loft and began sewing them together.





Figure 63

**Tracey Emin***I do not expect to be a mother* (2002)

Embroidered fabric panels



Figure 64

**Stephanie Bannister***For you* (2017)

Clothing, rug.

They made up their own large panel and I started to experiment with incorporating text, also cut from the clothes, on top of the clothing panel. Possibly a seed sewn by visiting the work *I do not expect to be a mother* (figure 63) by Tracy Emin.

Although differing in their compulsions, Emin's disclosing her far from conventional aspirations for family life, and my concerns regarding the happiness of my own, both came from the internal monologue of a female battling against the expectations of life, displayed using the same bold intentions and techniques. For the piece *For you* (figure 64) I chose a quote that had significance to the unique personality and clothing choices of my regularly bullied son, thinking the piece required a literal physical voice. But although the piece works well for my personal art collection, I found the use of text an unnecessary addition that took away the significance of the abrasions and soiling that I felt so compelled by.

Not yet satisfied with the investigation into the stories behind the used clothing items, and exhausting my supplies during my previous experiments, I wrote a public plea, asking for old clothing donations and began collecting as the offers came in. During this process of visiting the homes of family, friends, and strangers I developed an increasingly beautiful routine. I'd drive to a location, knock upon each individual front door, and be greeted by people who would automatically explain their reasons for wanting rid of certain items of clothing, I'd swap them for some home baked cupcakes, and then drive away again. All the while repeating the little snippets of life in my mind until I got home, where I studied the clothing, trying to picture them coming to life and playing their part in their recently disclosed story.



Figure 65  
**Stephanie Bannister**  
*Work in progress* (2017)  
Clothing panels.

It was after a week or so that I realised that I was doing more than just collecting peoples old clothes, I was collecting their stories too. In the same way that Susan Hiller collects stories for her works, I started making recordings of them, not wanting to forget them, but unsure of where they would find their use. In addition to this, a personal friend of mine from the Salvation Army Charity shop in my local town offered to display my request by their till. I jumped at the chance to gather more tales of discarded clothing and left a blank notebook by their till alongside my request, and the donations really started to pour in. Now with an abundance of clothing and an ambition to fill the entire ceiling, floor and walls of my 3.6 x 2.4m exhibition space, I would have been forgiven for using a sewing machine to join each piece to the next. However, after a test panel I was unhappy with the impersonal patch work quilt effect that I was trying to avoid. So I proceed to cut panels from the clothes, concentrating on their most marked areas, and sewed all four sides of each panel to the next by hand, using upholsterers tools, twelve hours a day for two months. Until I produced three vast sections of varying fabric, each roughly the same width at 1.3m and the length of my living room at 5m long.

I began to consider the composition of the fabric once displayed and positioned it all in a similar sized mock up exhibition space, in several different ways. Concluding with a desire to create a 3D structure or to hang it all from the ceiling after being introduced to the installation *Passages* (figure 66), whereby the artist created fabric replicas of each of the spaces that he has lived and worked in during his lifetime.



Figure 66  
**Do Ho Suh**  
*Passage/s* (2017)  
Translucent textile, aluminium frame.



Built at a 1:1 scale, visitors were able to move freely amongst the translucent structures, placing emphasis on the movements we make throughout life. It is this transient effect that I drew inspiration from, and wanting to mirror the movement and the energy within the vacant areas, I built a reinforced ceiling to the three and a half walls of my exhibition space. Making sure it was strong enough to hold up at least 25kg of material and 18 meters of flexible copper piping. The copper piping was recommended to me after a discussion with my father and his engineer friends, who advised me that it would be lightweight and malleable enough to change the shape several times until I was happy with a final composition, yet strong enough to hold its shape under the weight of the fabric. I pinned one of the 5 meter edges of the fabric panel to a 6 meter length of copper pipe, and using parcel string initially, I hung it from the ceiling, bending it into an irregular fluid shape that spanned the length of the space. I repeated this with each of the lengths until I had three panels of fabric, hanging freely in messy patterns. To say I was disappointed with the flatness of the overall appearance of the piece would be an understatement. As it was, it didn't reflect the energy of human existence effectively enough; the panels were lifeless and separate. I knew at this point that I wanted all the panels joining together, in an attempt to depict the universal consciousness that comes with the beauty of being human. So I left it all hanging there, in a state of suspension both literally and metaphorically, as I went back to the drawing board compositionally. After conversations with peers, and a well needed roast dinner cooked by my mum, I sketched a shape on a piece of gravy stained kitchen towel, and hurriedly went home to reconfigure.





Figure 67  
**Stephanie Bannister**  
*Work in progress* (2017)  
Copper tubing, fishing wire.

Instead of three 5m panels of fabric, I'd need two at 10m each. They would be joined together at the back corner of the space, then reach forwards moving freely, looping around each other without ever touching, before fixing themselves to the outside walls of the Exhibition space. With just two weeks to go until the opening night I had to sew another 5 meters of fabric, as well as bring each of the panels to the same width all the way along each length. I then had to create a full copper framework to support both sides of each length of panel, using 50 meters of copper piping all together, and transparent heavy duty fishing line to suspend it. On which I pinned the completed fabric panels to the shaped framework, (Figure 67) and proceeded to hand sew each of the ten meter long panels, on both sides. I also spent my nights putting together fabric panels of similar colours to disguise the supporting lengths of piping on the underside. Once this was complete, past the fog of sleep deprivation and the pain of sores on my hands, I was pleased with the effect that the new shape gave to the clothing, (Figure 68)

In my opinion, I had now achieved the right amount of vibrancy that the 250+ stories called for, which was an easy contextualisation for me to come up with myself, because I knew that each of the panels had a reason for their being discarded. I had to figure out how best to share this added depth with the viewer, who currently would just see a swirl of fabric, with no other compelling context. I considered projecting text on to the fabric, or recording the spoken stories and adding a sound art element. I even considered writing them all down upon the white walls of the space.



Figure 68

**Stephanie Bannister**

*Moving on* (2017)

Clothing panels, copper tubing, scrap book containing handwritten notes.

However, there was something about the book that I'd collected from the Salvation Army Charity shop, something so very warm, and real. It took me a little while to realise that it was the individual handwriting of each of the clothing donors that I found compelling. So with the same system of documentation that Mary Kelly displayed herself by including samples of her own handwriting alongside her sons in *Post-partum Document*. I compiled every note I'd been written, raw and unedited, into a display book that I'd also sourced from the charity shop, and built a small shelf for it to sit on to one side of the piece, leaving a subtle connection between the two (figure 69). The idea being that the viewer was initially struck by the vast amount of fabric and the energy of the composition, and as they moved around the installation, they'd begin to notice more clues as to the history behind each individual panel. I also displayed a brief description of the piece, together with the title, dimensions and materials and where they were sourced. Finally, I used two bare filament bulbs, placed on the floor at either side of the space to light up the darker corners, making sure that the installation as a whole felt as alive as the lives that it represented.





Figure 69

**Stephanie Bannister***Moving on (2017)*

Clothing panels, copper tubing, scrap book containing handwritten notes.

Although I could never pre-empt any conclusions drawn from a piece by a viewer, I could leave indications towards my compulsions when making. On observing visitors to the installation I witnessed a range of responses and reactions to the work, and I am pleased to say that my indications were well realised by the majority of them. Of course there were people who didn't give the piece enough time to effectively notice each part. But mostly, there was this universal feeling of having been moved by something, which was beautiful to witness. I saw strangers initially find themselves in awe of the expansive shape and pedestrian tonality of the fabric and then move towards a compulsion to read every note within the book, becoming emotional at several of the relatable life experiences written within it. I then noticed some visitors repeatedly moving between the text and the fabric, studying each of the clothing panels individually, in an attempt to pair the stories with the marks and abrasions. Which is reminiscent of the effect upon the audiences of Susan Hillers' *J Street project*. Where viewers searched for a particular location amongst 320 photographs, from a numbered list of street names. I could have only wished for such an encouraging response, and although exhausting at the time, the feedback and positive response to my piece made every step of the journey towards the exhibition worth it.





### Conclusions and future directions.

Although the possible exploration into every avenue of my personal influence is infinite, I feel that I have explored a good percentage of the inspiration and contextualization behind my own artworks and decision making. I have included a large amount of the research that I have carried out, and have discussed each thought in detail. I have given examples of the main influential pieces made by other artists that have had significance to my own artistic practices. I have included a breakdown of each of the concepts that I have found myself working within over the last five years of my art experimentation. Within each of these concepts, I have provided examples of my own work in relation to the works of certain artists that fall within them. I have given an overview of the career of Robert Rauschenberg and highlighted key works of his that have a marked significance to my own pieces. I have included a summary of a handful of artworks by Susan Hiller, addressed the intentions that lie in her creative decision making and related this to my own thinking. I have also outlined the influence I have found within certain literary texts, and related them to my own artworks. I have disclosed intimate personal details of my own domestic life and related the experiences that I've witnessed to my own creative processes, and included a breakdown of the thought processes and decision making leading up to the piece 'moving on' as well as a summary of how well it was received.

Having the opportunity to intensively investigate the avenues of inspiration behind my art practice has given me the understanding of where my work sits within both the current art world and which artists are historically relatable. I have been able to discover which works I have

drawn influence from and which elements of my practice they relate to. As a result of this I have been able to deduce my practice into three main parts; my compulsions and obsessions with the depiction of everyday life, my fascination with found objects and the stories that they hold, and the practical skills I use to link the two. On reading my text through, I can relate each area of my research to one or more of these parts, whether it's the sourcing of my materials, the realization of the context within them, or the creation of the piece itself.

The understanding of who I currently am as an artist is the main outcome of this research masters. To be able to think about my works with an advanced understanding and to be able to situate them comfortably among various artistic giants has boosted my abilities to recognize myself as a respectable artist. It has given me the confidence to rationalize my compulsions with some precision, and to discuss the theoretic approaches behind each piece. I can now discuss the concepts behind my works comprehensibly, and summarise my art practice with professional clarity. Abilities that I think I wouldn't have developed had I not given myself the time to intensively explore the universe that surrounds my own concerns as an artist.

As positive as this experience was for me, there were still some limitations to my research that I will continue to address alongside my art practice. The first being the reduction in the amount of work I could physically discuss. As mentioned before, naturally the amount of influences to my own convictions is infinite as it would be for any artist, for we find inspiration and influences in everything we see and feel.

I do think I have discussed the most prominent of factors that support my works though. The second implication being the experience of seeing works in person, particularly installations, and their requirement of human thought in order to complete them. I can only use words and flat photographs to produce a feel the best I can of the art works that I discuss, but will never be able to accurately portray the effect they achieve when witnessed in person. The third limitation lies in the same factor again but with my own work, and the accurate perception and understanding of every element to my installations, such as scent, fine detail and lighting. Again, I think I have provided accurate enough verbal descriptions and images as reference, however, the experience of being faced with a vast expanse of life has to be witnessed firsthand to achieve its full effect.

Moving forward as I return back to my studio, piled high with collections of stranger's objects, I look forward to the continuation of my physical art practice, taking with me the foundations of a vast amount of research and experimentation. Of course I will assumedly retain the same compulsions, although I tend to work with chance, and enjoy discovering moments of intrigue in unlikely places. I will strive to continue with the recording of my own intentions regarding the contextualisation alongside each exploration, be it with material, process or technique. With these completed works I aim to improve my online presence as an artist, and begin the journey towards achieving a self-made lifestyle, and having my income emerge solely from my worn hands.



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