BECOMING BECOMING OPEN ALL-AROUND

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Abstract

The thesis *becoming becoming open all-around* argues for a posthumanist and nondeterminate approach towards action as sculpture. It does so to overcome and place *out of practice* any kind of deterministic force that engenders predetermined rigid forms, processes, concepts, sounds, practices, bodies, meanings, genders, orientations, desires, and the narrowing of agency (possibilities) into a fixed doctrine of action. Through an engagement with the queer/feminist theory of Karen Barad the field for this research is revealed, constituted by a discussion of recent Australian action as sculpture projects by OSW (Open Spatial Workshop), the participatory, instrument-making practices of Franz Erhard Walther and Nathan Gray, and the picturing practice of Gilbert and George.

The thesis (consisting of an exhibition and written dissertation) exposes the ways that my practice advances this field, arguing for action as sculpture to take multiple shifts. These shifts include a focus upon imperceptible and nonlinear action and its often unknown consequences, and the assertion that open artistic practices can be grounded by what *comes to matter* through contact. This grounding of openness consists of a swarming of relations and connections as the orientating forces of the work of art (rather than discreet, intentional artists/works) – constantly redistributing what matters. This compels a nonanthropocentric approach which, rather than trying to ignite nonanthropocentric modes of action by separating the ‘human’ from it, tries to vitalise the possibilities of a posthumanist approach to action which repositions the ‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’ as differential, dispersive and entangled; and, wholeheartedly restores bodies as *flesh of the world*.

This writing details some of my projects, each constituted by a changing set of materials, instruments, people, pictures, relations and connections. In arguing for open practice, a two-sided position is taken: *all action comes to matter/not all action comes to matter*. These changing sets of inclusions/exclusions aim to both open all-around in the improvisation of unexpected action and to ground open practice in the particular relations and connections produced by such an openness. A main concern involved in this practice is the latent consequences of its activity, compelling art practice to spill into a mode of knowing *in* becoming, entangled within the ethicality of the world – as the world becomes thoughtful and the ‘human’ becomes worldly.
Declaration

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the masters,

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(iii) the thesis is 14909 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Benjamin Woods
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‘The future is radically open at every turn.’1 Karen Barad

INTRODUCTION

This thesis argues for a nondeterminate2 and posthumanist3 approach towards ‘action’ in art and life, and their entanglement as part of the world. My project explores the ways that action can constitute sculpture. With this focus on action, I aim to make a position for open contemporary artistic practices,4 in which they are not seen as arbitrary or random, but rather as affirmative practices that enfold particular relations and connections as a kind of knowing in becoming. At the same time, I articulate the possibility of overcoming anthropocentric notions of action in a way that wholeheartedly includes bodies as flesh of the world – making the ‘human’ inseparable from the work of art.

To expound how this might be possible, I provide in-depth discussions of my own sculpture practice as it embraces actions of celebration, contact, liberation and nourishment, focusing on the all-around open potential of orientation and the ontologically primitive.5 I position my practice in dialogue with the queer, feminist theory of Karen Barad, showing how knowing in becoming provides compelling shifts for notions of openness. My own open artistic practice includes: instrument and implement making, nomadic and sporadic spacetime scales, nonlinearity, imperceptibility, picturing, action improvisation (involving collaborative participation of familiar and new coming people), and sets of relations and connections which are constantly enfolding new forces and capacities into the constitution of the work.

Throughout this essay I explore a diverse selection of past, current and local artistic practices working in this field. I focus first on Franz Erhard Walther and OSW (Open Spatial Workshop). I then extend these explorations through my own work by referring to Bianca Hester, Nathan Gray, Spiros Panigirakis, Tehching Hsieh,

2 Open all-around
3 Decentralised and dispersed ‘human’ intentionality, overcoming anthropocentric mastery, while maintaining ‘human’ responsibility and accountability.
4 Usually attributed the name ‘process-based’. I use the term ‘open practice’ because process is a given force in any artistic practice whereas openness is not. To be open requires work.
5 The open redistribution of what is possible and what is included and excluded from mattering.
and Gilbert and George. Throughout I draw parallels between relevant theories which help to position new ways of thinking about sculpture as all-around open action and the positioning of bodies and the ‘human’ in such a practice. These theorists include: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Barbara Bolt, Brian Massumi, Sara Ahmed, Nisargadatta Maharaj, Gordon Bearn and John Dewey.

There are two picturing sections within this essay titled *all action comes to matter / not all action comes to matter* which operate as fields of relations and connections teeming together. These sections reveal the way that any meaning of the work is inseparable from the particular and immanent matterings of the work. The first section of pictures, from page 38 to 71 (made before, during and after *processual rhythms, drawing as/of/with material densities*) details many of the discoveries which helped to generate the parameters for the second section of relations and connections, from page 92 to 101 (for *open blankets*).

By looking to the happenings of my own major projects (*processual rhythms, drawing as/of/with material densities* May/April 2012, *open blankets* August-December 2012, and the potential of the forthcoming final exhibition *becoming becoming open all-around* December 2012), minor experiments (*EB Myer private improvisation* 2012) and the processes implicit in them, this thesis details and elaborates upon a range of tactics, positions and ethics for advancing nondeterminate and posthumanist action as sculpture.

Through this project there is an enmeshment of multiple issues all-at-once, considered – as articulated by Barad – an:

...ethico-onto-epistem-ology - an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being - since each intra-action matters, since the possibilities for what the world may become call out in the pause that precedes each breath before a moment comes into being and the world is remade again, because the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter.6

An ethical approach towards my action as sculpture practice is discussed in terms of

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6 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 185.
its imperceptibility. This concerns the imperceptibility of action as it happens too fast to be visible, and the unknown consequences of these actions as they come to matter too slowly to be perceived. Unknown consequences become a tactic for openness embedded in the ethical fabric of the world.

My research project has attempted to overcome and place out of practice any kind of deterministic force that engenders predetermined rigid forms, processes, concepts, sounds, practices, bodies, meanings, genders, orientations, desires, and the narrowing of agency into a fixed doctrine of action. My project has been about making and connecting ways of overcoming deterministic thinking, while working alongside it, knowing it exists at large as a powerful and dominant force of the world.7

QUEER THEORY AND ACTION AS SCULPTURE

Engaging Karen Barad’s work has obliquely though powerfully provoked the articulation of an expansive, physical approach to action as sculpture. Barad’s basis in queer, feminist theory, the history of consciousness, and physical scientific practice is useful for the discourse of open (process-based) artistic practice. Her theory of agential realism offers a way of seeing action8 as constitutive of the world and of material bodies in their combined, differential becoming.9

She proposes a notion of ‘intra-action’10 (as distinguished from ‘interaction’) which, at the same time as overcoming predetermined, discrete entities in action (attributed to the representational comparing of ‘words’ and ‘things’),11 also reveals the way that ‘concepts… are not mere ideations but specific physical arrangements.’12 Barad uses

7 Deterministic thinking will not be identified within any particular practice, person, or action, but only as a separatist stance towards the world and an anthropocentric force of the world. This stance and force lives off the misconception that humans are masterful and unchanging beings with positions outside a world that they know. To seek to identify any of these deterministic practices would be to partake in them, and thus to keep them in practice by separating and forcing practices and people into definitions – letting determinism matter irresponsibly and antithetically to my own affirmative nondeterminate approach. I will not define anyone or anything as deterministic, but I will only say that determinism is the quelling of potential and possibility.
8 Movement, activity, doing
9 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 139-141.
10 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 139.
11 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 139.
12 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 54.
the example of an apparatus that experiments with relations of stillness and rest to explore these phenomena as concepts. The apparatus is made up of parts which move with momentum and parts which hold positions. The multiplicity and particularity of the concepts’ position and momentum are produced by such an apparatus and its specific physical arrangements. In other words Barad reveals concepts to be the very particularities of materiality. Because specific physical arrangements are always changing (i.e. being particular), they make up a landscape of nondeterminate possibilities, that combines a knowing intertwined within being. The repercussions of this are bound up in a repositioning of the terms agency and causality.

Barad’s theory offers a radical rethinking of deterministic and anthropocentric approaches to action, suggesting they must instead come from a return to a notion of matter as process, a notion which re-articulates matter as the congealing of agency. In her schema, matter is not made up of ‘atoms’ (nothing is reduced to discreet ‘parts’) it is made up of what matters. Matter, forms, processes, concepts, sounds, practices, bodies, meanings, genders, orientations, desires are made up of what matters.

Nondeterministic and posthumanist action, in Barad, comes from positioning sensing bodies as a part of the world, rather than as separate, controlling and capturing entities in the world. It also demands that we rethink the world as full of thought and action. Rather than the human brain as the main place of thought and the human body as the main ‘agent’ of action, the world becomes thoughtful and human bodies become worldly. Barad expands on this, saying that instead of intentionality and agency being seen as the attribute of an entity that prescribes to a ‘traditional notion of the individual,’ it should be seen as ‘an entangled state of agencies’ that consists of the ‘ongoing reconfiguration of the world.’ This repositioning expands action into a complex field of mixed up human and nonhuman material conditions in action actually as a mode of thinking and knowing in becoming. Barad’s thinking offers

13 In artistic terms, I see this notion opening an alternative avenue for current ‘material/sculptural thinking’ discourse. I discuss this potential further in the appendix called ‘Sculptural Thinking.’
14 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 191.
15 Barad’s theory says that action, as the ongoing reconfiguration of the world, is actually what constitutes matter (and thus bodies etc.). In this schema, it can be argued that ‘what matters’ is continually deciphered through the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, taking place both in ‘human’ terms and in ‘non-human’ terms.
16 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 23.
sculpture, and my project in particular, a shift away from past articulations of action in expanded sculpture practice, whereby a particular set of actions or instructions are developed, refined and delivered by humans at the fore, with little scope for variation.\textsuperscript{17}

In contrast, Barad’s notions of action – of an explicitly materialist, posthumanist, nonrepresentationalist, nonlinear, causal and nondeterministic position – provide a compelling shift for action in sculpture practice. Her theories align to the emphasis within my practice to work in a field where action\textsuperscript{18} is always an entangled and ontologically primitive state of material relations. Barad’s loaded use of the term primitive does not refer to human progress. Rather she uses the term to refer to material relations as they are always open and reconfiguring. My project takes up her use of the word primitive, also conceiving it as a nonlinear state of agential entanglement that is constantly germinating knowledge in its differential becoming. In my practice this means that forms, processes, concepts, sounds, practices, bodies, meanings, genders, orientations, desires are always physically reconfiguring due to the enfolding of fresh relations and connections arising from their immanent openness. They are primitive because they always (if allowed by working beyond anthropocentric preconceptions) openly redistribute what is possible and what is included and excluded from mattering. This embeds a push to engage within the constant particularity of forces in flux as they actually make the spacetimematters\textsuperscript{19} of which ‘we’ are also changing and responsible participants.

Paramount to my use of Barad’s theories as a way of articulating action as sculpture is the potential of sculpture to be physical, real and becoming. My work connects to open art practices that have contributed to the growing shift toward nondeterminate and posthumanist action, enfolding relations and connections through ‘intra-actions,’ as changes in the fabric of possibilities.\textsuperscript{20} Action as sculpture has an historical trajectory that has involved a diverse range of approaches. After giving a brief overview of this field, I will show how these approaches are engaged in a

\textsuperscript{17} Erwin Wurm’s early work is an example of this, and could be contrasted to Franz West’s open action work.
\textsuperscript{18} As reconfigurations or phenomena.
\textsuperscript{19} Barad, \textit{Meeting the Universe Halfway}, 139 and 230.
\textsuperscript{20} Barad, \textit{Meeting the Universe Halfway}, 240. Barad says that intra-actions are the enfolding of phenomena within a field, in a way that ‘is not an arbitrary, random, or automatic process’ but rather ‘a matter of iterative agential changes in the nature of production.’
conflated manner within my own work – compelling a different array of methods and expansions, revealed through overlapping discussions about processes. In particular, I will reveal how my own works focus on the way even the slightest matters of nourishment, giving, and contact with phenomena through joyful dwelling can have consequences for knowing and becoming.

An early precedent in nondeterminate action practice is Franz Erhard Walther’s work set #14, *Sack and Cap* (1966). In the work Walther offers the viewer/participant a written instruction: ‘use both pieces in ways that have not been determined beforehand – find possibilities for use.’ Walther’s ‘instruments’ thus become sets of ‘material conditions’ which are used to engender action. With the work situated at different times, outdoors and in gallery contexts, what becomes intensified with such an experience is the particularity and multitude of simultaneous meanings for the terms use, sack, cap, work, instruments and bodies as material configurations and relations.

Walther’s work *Collector, Mass and Distribution* (1966) enacts an expansive notion of action with instruments and people as participants in the work of art, showing how ongoing shifts in material circumstances reveal the nondeterminate and posthumanist nature of the work of art. A bag constitutes the initial instrument for the work. The title provides the only instruction: ‘walk around with the bag and look for objects, distribute them among the pockets of the bag.’

Through this invitation, Walther asks participants to embrace an openness to the ever-altering dynamics of weight and distribution. Elements including the capacity of the bag, the shifting circumstances of a temporal and nomadic action of walking and gathering; and the potentiality of the person, or ‘collector,’ can result in endless possibilities for the emergence of the work. Looking at this work through Barad, this asserts Walther’s instrument as both a changing set of material conditions for action, and, as a changing set of material conditions produced by action and the new potential influences that are opened up by the relations of weight it generates.

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22 Lange, *Der 1. Werksatz*, 42 and 59.
The major retrospective of Walther’s practice *Work as Action* (2012), at Dia Beacon in New York attests to his influence on the contemporary spectrum for posthumanist and nondeterminate action as sculpture.\(^\text{24}\) Central to this affect is the involvement of audience participation in the production of work, decentralising the authorship of a single artistic authority.\(^\text{25}\) Bridging the historical trajectory from Walther onwards, there has been a tendency for action to be anthropocentric in art practice that – following the avant-garde attempt to conflate art and life – saw its apex in the 1990s theory dubbed ‘relational aesthetics.’\(^\text{26}\) As the schema of Nicolas Bourriaud’s ‘relational aesthetics’ arose, it became clearer that action was being discussed in more and more determined, and more and more humanistic ways (in the way that determinism binds action to human control, centrality and intentionality) because of this. In contrast to Bourriaud’s structure upon art as ‘human’ relation, my own works, as I will show, are about relation being both of the world, the mixed up ‘human/non-human’ and particular.\(^\text{27}\) I see this trajectory after Walther as enough of an example of deterministic and anthropocentric practice to compel the necessity to rearticulate action as constitutive of the world, the ‘human,’ the ‘non-human’ and what matters, by engaging with Australian-based artistic practices.

In the contemporary Australian context, the exhibition *BIG LOG JAM*, 2011 (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4) by collaborative group OSW (Open Spatial Workshop) manoeuvres this approach to action towards a focus on materiality with a far more subtle participation of bodies than Walther, aiming to address methods of overcoming anthropocentric notions of form through action. OSW, made up of artists Bianca Hester, Scott Mitchell and Terri Bird, is a Melbourne-based group that ‘experiments with material processes to generate connections between force, movement and duration that produce new configurations of materiality and spatiality.’\(^\text{28}\) In *BIG LOG JAM*, which

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25 Joseph Beuys is an appropriate example, as while his practice embraced a notion of everyone is an artist simultaneously his practice fostered the production of a single mythologised figure as part of his affect as an artist. A contemporary example is Matthew Barney with highly directed narratives.  
27 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 229. According to Barad any kind of structure placed upon life forces such as human/nonhuman relations can be defined in terms of “…structures [that] are not an external set of relations but “force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate” (Foucault 1978).’”  
was exhibited at the Adelaide Experimental Art Foundation, OSW produced an unfolding diagram mapping their various activities and public projects since the groups’ emergence in 2002. A different set of relations form each page of the book BIG LOG, which are then projected from a brown platform. In their writing on the work, OSW comment: ‘inherent in any diagram is the potential for the material to be organized differently, to open up to new capacities, new assemblages, to be folded into new formations. BIG LOG exploits this unfolding and refolding potential for the diagram. Utilizing the form of the book it develops correspondences through proximity that enable new constellations of associations to be formed…’

Figure 1

“BIG LOG JAM,” OSW.

Figure 2

Figure 3

31 OSW, BIG LOG JAM.
32 OSW, BIG LOG JAM.
A temporal depth is embedded in this project by OSW’s engagement with the formation of a meteorite fragment. By casting the fragment in plasticine and positioning it at the entrance to BIG LOG JAM – OSW ‘extends a specific constellation of ideas present in the book… relating to the correlation of force and formation, material expression and duration, as processes exploring the continuum of structure and flux. Across this continuum the exhibition presents a field of forces whereby matter becomes expressive of the events of its formation.’

Along with the meteorite and diagram there are a number of other objects and processes that constitute the installation as a constellation of airborne events: a large inflated green ball and a sloping plasticine screen become the targets of a tennis ball machine firing its balls, and an oval timber drum-head-like hoop which is stretched with pink paper perforated by innumerable and tiny projectiles percussively blown from an air cannon. A large golden ball hangs across the ceiling by a rope beaded through its middle and a mobile-like structure hangs from the ceiling with the capacity to move compass-like all-around. These materials work alongside the unfolding diagram to ‘engender a series of actions for the duration of the exhibition,'
accumulating in a field of inflected surfaces in which materiality’s expressions are exposed.’

Matter as process is investigated in this work – overcoming the setting of rigid or separative logics that view matter as inert and the knowledge of bodies as removed from a world of which they are differing sensorial participants. As a new kind of book, BIG LOG works to redistribute a set of past relations freshly by articulating it as a dynamic component in BIG LOG JAM, whereby new ‘flows, punctures, tears, impacts and impressions are unleashed across various surfaces in a theatre of actions.’

A paper by OSW member Bianca Hester called Enabling Restraints, 2008, articulates an approach towards what art does in a way that aligns to this particular mode of open and enfolding artistic practice. Hester’s approach towards art is ‘to take it as a kind of action that enables experimentation with modes of sensation, perception, cognition and articulation.’ For Hester, experimentation involves a redistribution of relations between doing, making, being, and seeing ‘whereby the unknowable and the unforesееable might occur.’ This argues for art as an ‘opening up’ of new forms of thinking that come into existence ‘alongside’ practices that are already established. Hester enacts a notion from the work of Deleuze and Guattari, seeing this mode of opening through experimentation as a process of working through ‘middles… places where multiple forces converge - articulating a swarm of relations.’ These practices and ideas form the field within which my practice operates and from which it leaps.

For me, working with action as the redistribution of relations provides a platform for a process of opening or a physicality of openness for which this research argues. I work to make visible an agential reality where action is that which forms relations that matter. I have attempted to do all of this by grounding and orientating open practice in a different way – taking off from OSW’s propelling focus on the airborne.

35 “BIG LOG JAM,” OSW.
36 “BIG LOG JAM,” OSW.
38 “Enabling Restraints,” Bianca Hester, 4.
39 “Enabling Restraints,” Bianca Hester, 4. What Hester discusses as that which is already given.
40 “Enabling Restraints,” Bianca Hester, 4.
MOVEMENT ONE expounds details of my art practice across its main processes: instrument-making, picturing and action improvisation. Focusing on examples of each process through the major project *processual rhythms, drawing as/of/with material densities* (2012) and other minor projects, I reveal how they constitute and advance tactics for nondeterminate openness and posthumanist articulations of action. MOVEMENT TWO discusses how these elements work in dialogue/concert in the production of the project *open blankets* (2012). Through *open blankets* I expose how action *comes to matter*, what this means, and how it advances nondeterminate and posthumanist action as sculpture by reinserting bodies in an entangled fashion.

MOVEMENT ONE

INSTRUMENT-MAKING (abstraction and queerness)

Karen Barad and OSW’s work compels a need to redress the forces within Franz Erhard Walther’s practice in terms of the current Australian artistic climate. This is registered by Melbourne-based practices such as Dylan Martorell and Nathan Gray, whose work exposes a renewed local interest in instrument-making – where a wide range of geographical, cultural, musicological, collective social and material vernaculars are taken up in sonorous enactments. In these works – such as Gray’s recent show called *Theorist’s Training Camp/Practice Piece* (2012) at Westspace – already established instruments whose forms and practices are derived from specific cultural contexts are absorbed into installations focusing on the production of sound. What I am interested in doing is positioning instruments as part of the conditions capable of redistributing what it is that can be done, said, seen, and thought, through focusing on combined human/nonhuman action.

I produce instruments with a variety of found, selected and gifted materials and devices: gold ribbon, rocks, sticks, bamboo, different timbers, rubber, bells, string,

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41 An example of this is Dylan Martorell’s show at Utopian Slumps called *Duppy House*, 2010.
42 “Enabling Restraints,” Bianca Hester, 5.
Hester argues that by positioning art as a kind of action that produces a redistribution of relations, multiple converging logics that could be said to be harmful for the proliferation of art practice are avoided, being: one that separates art practice from its contextual immanent forces in the fashion of the Romantic; another that takes an oppositional stand against dominant practices; and another that might instrumentalise art as a propellant for a better world.
lead, blankets, steel, seeds, food, water, clothing, tools and circumstantial materials (such as walls, ceilings, air, grounds). This is done through sporadic and often collaborative play with the phenomena they make; i.e. their distribution of weight, colour, speed, rhythm, tone and what they do to bodies and their circumstances.

At the same time, my process involves working in collaboration and participation with family, friends, colleagues and newcomers, to move beyond an artist-based involvement and bring a cross-generational, physical, cultural, historical and personal array of relations into proximity. By doing so, my project extends instruments as conditions which could engender possibilities, differing from Walther’s participatory work by involving my own participation and action in a responsible, decentralised and entangled fashion. Within this process, making instruments becomes about enfolding phenomena back into the configuration of material elements that constitute the instrument.

Figures 5, 6 and 7
The instrument combined human/nonhuman protraction (2011-2012) and two pictures from some of its action improvisation (Figures 5, 6, 7), show the way improvised action changes the material make-up of the instrument. This kind of instrument constitutes the bulk of my instrument-making, where materials are engaged with in an ad hoc, abstract – though completely real – play of force-relations. Because of this play, connections to other practices are produced: in this case, a kind of compass and an act of balancing. Over long durations these relations can be taken up in the making of new sets of conditions for action (without a sense of ‘progress’), generating contact with a larger world of forces and other practices. By taking Barad and Hester’s theories together, I can assert that this occurs in an ontologically primitive entanglement of relations and connections that constantly (dis)orient and redistribute what matters.

In an effort to advance this way of working, I focus my attention towards influences which have arisen through abstract play, such as ‘human’ practices of melodic and percussive instrument-making and also to the accoutrements and material conditions of actions of nourishment, ritual, celebration, family and curiosity. These influences taken together, offer a way of conflating a past separation of utility and aesthetics (obvious in Western life) within a diverse range of ancient and contemporary practices and phenomena. At the same time, by conflating nourishment and celebration, ‘non-human’ phenomena and tendencies such as seasonal, elemental change, weather, germination and topologies expose a percussive and concussive combination of human/non-human phenomena. This action as sculpture embeds collisions as resonating with potential from contact.

To avoid determining actions with these influences, I employ what I term a queerr

43 Dewey, Art as Experience, 27.
‘The story of the severance and final sharp opposition of the useful and the fine is the history of that industrial development through which so much of production has become a form of postponed living and so much of consumption a superimposed enjoyment of the fruits of the labor of others.’

44 Concussion is important to percussion practice where two sonorous material surfaces resonate in the event of colliding.

Spiros Panigirakis is a Melbourne-based artist whose practice and its production of furnishings of relation give me a way of articulating this ‘queer’ method of making. In the exhibition called FERNTREE GULLY, 2010, at Sarah Scout Presents, Panigirakis readied chairs in a bunch for the painting of a mural (QUORUM, 2010), produced a ‘queer’ easel called OPENING, 2010, which, painted deep green, conflated associations of both the easel and the fern. Resulting from these furnishings, Scott Mitchell discussed – in his text
methodology in the making of new instruments for action improvisation. This means that the richness of already existing practices of others is not exploited or copied but joyfully celebrated and connected with according to the particularity of the materials, actions and circumstances that form the conditions of my own practice. It is through a tactic of making queer as well as abstract instruments – that is, making instruments that are made oblique to their past influences and tendencies – that I hope to engender unexpected action that opens to a world of otherness.

The instrument open rattle (Thank you Jill/Rick) (2012) (Figure 8) enacts this method of queerness. This work is from the exhibition processual rhythms, drawing as/of/with material densities held at The Substation. It obliquely extends an array of relations found in the production and use of rattles in percussive music across the world and through the action improvisation of my practice. The instrument is made up of a multitude of gold ribbon flecks, each weighted at one end by a small piece of orange or white rubber. With these flecks scattered across the surface of a floor, the instrument provokes awareness of a sensorially charged ground. As bodies enter into proximity with these flecks it is difficult to separate physically from the alteration of the instrument – feet touch the flecks making them glimmer, people become compelled to pick them up and flinging them about, they move around with the force of air from an open window. In such a way the flecks work to make clear the incipient implication of bodies and other forces on them, and vice versa. In the act of extending the rattle out beyond a gourd or containing vessel, a focus is given to action, with sound becoming a sensorially compelling part in the swarm of relations that action produces.

The way the flecks bounce up rattling upon the ground as they are thrown compels the gathering of more flecks, making many and little bursts in a physical becoming of particles. By opening up the rattle and ridding it of its container the rhythm of

46 Celebrated as existing simultaneously and particularly.
47 This is done in my work by bringing together the two approaches to open action in Franz Erhard Walther and OSW’s practices outlined earlier.
48 Framing this instrument as an open rattle helps to position a reconfiguration for the instrument that, rather than being contained within an supposedly rigid form, is opened completely to the world and its contingencies, concussions and reconfigurings.
the rattle is slowed, overcoming attempts towards anthropocentric mastery over the instrument. In the act of picking up and collecting the bits into handfuls to be thrown once more, relations of nourishment are also made in the hunches of bodies. This denotes a realism of action and the way it congeals agency into what matters. In this range of actions, open rattle (Thank you Jill/Rick) also works to reveal the entanglement of nourishment, requirement, and labour with celebration, liberation and desire.

Figure 8
Figures 9a, 9b, 9c and 9d

Figure 10
Instruments as they exist in my work, denote what Karen Barad refers to as ‘phenomena producing phenomena.’ Here, what becomes apparent is the way that instruments extend the sensorial capacity of bodies far beyond the corporeal, opening up a wider range of possibilities and consequences for both action and sensation and the landscape of knowing and becoming that they constitute. Coming from this point of view, I do not think it necessary to play down the seriousness of the consequences of any action. In my reference (Figure 12) to Jean-François Millet’s painting *The Gleaners*, 1857, action comes to constitute the body-world relations which can also potentially form deterministic structures upon gender, orientation, power, agency (possibilities) from which it takes work to become liberated and open.

PROCESSUAL RHYTHMS, DRAWING AS/OF/WITH MATERIAL DENSITIES

Protracting from Barad’s theory, my projects assert open structures or limits immanent to the shifting force relations of which they are composed. All of my projects entail particular and changing exclusions in the form of pictures, instruments, people, contexts, and open sets of relations and connections. ‘Exclusions foreclose any possibility of determinism, providing the condition of an open future.’ In this way, both Barad and I engage exclusions affirmatively rather than negatively. At the same time, exclusions encourage a posthumanist (nonanthropocentric) approach towards the world because any ‘human’ world view is always-already entangled and partial, there are infinite possibilities. Barad solidifies this approach towards posthumanism in her own theory when she says:

... the idea that the rightful place of the human is that of an exterior observer, a spectator, removed from the scene of action, is ironically no less wedded to the humanist conception of man than its anthropocentric counterpart.

A main methodology for this to occur in my project *processual rhythms, drawing as/of/with material densities*, was to continually enfold the relations and connections

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50 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 170-171.
51 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 229.
52 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 234.
53 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 323.
actualised by the action of the project in a way that simultaneously added and subtracted from the field.

Figures 13a and 13b

This month-long exhibition tactically employed an installation of instruments and pictures distributed out to the edges of its space, aiming to make an arena for a series of action improvisation sessions with whomever wished to take part. People would come and involve themselves by energetically moving their bodies around the installation and handling its bits and pieces, as is exemplified by Figures 13a and 13b. A dishevelled and scattered installation made clear the inseparability of a viewers physical relations within the work of art. The ensuing focus on the ground and air was crucial to this work, where these main contingent forces for sculpture practice were made intense by deploying instruments such as open rattle (Thank you JillRick), nervous orange line (2012) (Figure 14), and the rooftop flag work gold ribbon line (2012) (Figure 15).

Figure 14
IMPERCEPTIBILITY

The picture *stick/arm trunk, step, swing, becoming-molecular elephant* (2011) shown in Figure 16a helped to generate the instrument *pendulum* (2012) (Figure 16b). Stemming from the force-relations of the picture, *pendulum* aimed to experiment with nonlinear action as sculpture, while maintaining its causal mark. To maintain a causality meant to maintain the responsible and inseparable consequences of the often small differences in spacetimematters that action makes, whether it be from the force of bodies or not. String threaded through a steel ball, hung from a nail and pushed or dropped from a height produced this particular pendulum. This pendulum moved from side to side at a contingent tempo. Strung up against a white wall in the Substation space, it bounced off the differing textures of the surface of the paint and the uneven surface of the cast steel ball. It did this with each push until it slowed to rest. After over a month of innumerable pushes, a wide smile mark had accrued on the wall from this action.
Rather than marking time as container/measure, this pendulum operated in a way that positioned marking as time, made visible by its smile mark. The pendulum embodied an undecidability in its possible actions. A to-ing and fro-ing within a changing zone of possibility openly produced by the length of the string and the strength of the push and the roughness of the wall and the ball.
This pendulum revealed change or becoming in my practice as mostly imperceptible. The pendulum made a clear mark on the wall (a clear correspondence between action and mark), a smile mark, which because of its expressivity encouraged the further pushing of the pendulum. This made it apparent that other materials and bodies changed without making marks that were clearly perceptible. Imperceptible change makes a case for a nonlinear causality in my sculpture practice making the temporality of materiality – rather than being noticed only as clearly marked changes or inflections – be seen as relations that differentially matter. Although all matters could be said to engender the opening up of action, with my queer and abstract instruments it is often unknown what latent materialities are going to come out of this openness.

By drawing a relation between pendulum and OSW’s BIG LOG JAM it can help to form a new notion of the materiality and potentiality of my own action as sculpture. The focus in BIG LOG JAM upon inflected surfaces aligns with pendulum. However this is the only instrument/action within my project that denotes this kind of direct clarity of mark or consequence. In my work’s extension of OSW’s project, the imperceptibility and latency of consequences become a focus. The impact of this upon action is that it conjures a notion of imperceptible consequences that both happen too fast to be seen and occur too slowly to show their effect upon what will come to matter. To discuss this imperceptibility of action and consequences I turn to my process of picture-making, which is a tactic for making new connections and relations visible. This is a process which I align to a renewed notion of sculptural relief.

NONLINEARITY

To promote nonlinearity and nondeterminism for the project I dissolved any use of timetables (seen in Figure 17, fist timetable, 2012), instructions, didactic and sequential pictures or videos, and employed a sporadic approach to invigilating the exhibition. It was also at this moment that I became more attentive to my own way of being a responsible participant. In using a sporadic mode of invigilating and documenting the action of participants (human and nonhuman), a nonlinear

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54 Seeing my role as an accommodator and participant simultaneously, rather than as a director or instructor.
temporality also became a new way of overcoming deterministic thinking.

Figure 17

The documentation images produced from these improvisations were not representational images for the indexing of action in a linear sequence. Instead, documentation is simply a set of images generated by the inclusion of a camera in the project. Each day of the exhibition I would pin up new pictures over and amongst others on a pin board made specifically for the site. This process ensured a consistent enfolding of material and bodily capacities and relations that produced connections between forces whose contact generated a field of potential for open futures.

I am always adding to and editing a folder of documentation images. In the process of making pictures, I comb through this folder, cutting, shaping, colouring, reconfiguring and combining many bits and pieces across Photoshop planes. Thus, these pictures embody a nonlinear approach to time because they conflate a multitude of marks caused by different contexts and events without being a fixed sequence. In the same vein as the instruments my pictures are constantly reconfigured according to their current context and in relation to new actions that occur. They are constituted by marks made by action. Because of this, I would like to position the abstracted pictures55 that have been produced during and since this project as another kind of surface, the result of nonlinear temporal materialities in action that are capable of redistributing past relations freshly, disorientating any chance of a representationalist logic.

55 Which also link to historical practices such as Hannah Höch, Franz West and to current Australian artists Bianca Hester and Rowan McNaught.
Where OSW’s *BIG LOG* presented proximate relations as an unfolding diagram, my own works relations and connections are revealed by pictures generated from past activities in a conflated nonlinear and combinatoric fashion. They are presented in formats such as websites, emails, slideshow projections, single poster and book prints, and handouts. These pictures are specific sets of dynamic physical arrangements with their own force. The force-relations that they offer are used for the continuing production and gathering of new sets of relations, instruments and people in the production of future projects, action improvisations and approaches towards the world. These combine to generate a landscape of possibilities which, in extending OSW’s project, opens up new capacities of spacetime-body-world configurations engaging process in the way Brian Massumi denotes as ‘the rolling of the already more of the world into a nextness’.  

My own continuing aim is to see that ‘nextness’ become open all-around, while remaining specific and vital.

**ALL ACTION COMES TO MATTER / NOT ALL ACTION COMES TO MATTER**

The following pages show a large array of relations and connections generated before, during and after the project at The Substation. I have used this format of presenting nonlinear pictures within the thesis to enable the work to produce its own swarm of connections, showing purposefully that this swarm proliferates beyond any attempt to control, capture or represent it. Each picture has an extended title offering a field of entangled, expansive engagements with philosophers, artists, phenomena and other life practices that have been formative forces for the research. As well as this the expanded titles include acknowledgements (Thank you...) of friends and participants involved in the making of the work. In making relations visible with pictures, I seek to ensure they are not seen to be manufactured or complete, but rather emergent and ongoing. This constitutes one appropriation of OSW’s *BIG LOG*, advancing nonlinearity and the confluence of nourishment, celebration, contact and liberation, focusing on the possibilities of including bodies wholeheartedly in nondeterministic and posthumanist action. All figures are current, and by Benjamin Woods (2012).

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Figure 18

dispersing a body as a field of specked collisions (Thank you Sarah crowEST, Eliana Urrutia Bernard and Marcel Duchamp Nude Descending a Staircase, 1912, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari)

‘Becoming is to emit particles that take on certain relations of movement and rest because they enter a particular zone of proximity. Or, it is to emit particles that enter that zone because they take on those relations.’

Figure 19

*Decapitation, brain-knives*

I was decapitated by a branch today. It was just the top of my skull that was severed - brain matter scattered. This brain matter was already scattering, nervously and autonomously protracting and producing. My arms are brain, my hands and fingers and nails and my shoes and my socks are brain. This picture is brain. Every time I encounter this picture I am decapitated. Not by a branch now but by a brain. A brain that sharpens into a knife to *cut itself*. A brain-knife that severs-oozing inseparably from its potentiality amongst a world of interpenetrating-cutting-differing brains. Brains; that you feel the weight of; that you unravel, disentangle the density of; that you knot up with your fingers and teeth *again*. That, skull cap, that you harness and punch a rhythm on – with rubber mallets and steel balls electrified by the contact. And that impact irreversible now, as a dance is improvised, compelled together by a sonic grey-flesh *profusion* into pink weaves, and holed, perforated bone cups.
The Awa Odori is an old city-wide dance festival held in the Tokushima Prefecture, Shikoku, in Japan.\footnote{The Awa Odori is an old city-wide dance festival held in the Tokushima Prefecture, Shikoku, in Japan.}
Figure 21

*saturated with action, unexpected instruments*\(^9\)

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Bolt cites the invention of perspective in science and technology as a key enabler of anthropocentric approaches towards the world.
Figure 22

up-down

Wet fingertips to the sky, people seemed to be sensing the weather of the air. To complicate this I foraged for a stick. Conspicuously, noisily crunching some underfoot before finding a straightforward one with enough length, I placed its tip in my mouth and focused on salivation. I then precisely put the bottom end of the stick on the pad of my index finger and balanced it, now with a wet wooden tip in the air, pointing towards the sky. The bare-feet came into sense, shifting on their pads, their soles tenderly feeling a surface of the earth, to accommodate the movement of the air and its volatile and tirelessly shifting flow. The eyes cyclopesed up, and knew only the moistened tip of the stick as it relentlessly moved. These bare-feet, once considered downwards, joined entangled with the action of the stick, upwards in the sky. The feet took to the ground as a thickness as thin as the air. The eyes and the mouth glands took to the wet stick tip as wet as the other peoples finger tips.

(Thank you Paul Adair)
Figure 23

*a combinatoric of flesh and instrument*
Why not walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly: the simple Thing, the Entity, the full Body, the stationary Voyage, Anorexia, cutaneous Vision, Yoga, Krishna, Love, Experimentation. Where psychoanalysis says, “Stop, find your self again,” we should say instead, “Let’s go further still, we haven’t found our BwO yet, we haven’t sufficiently dismantled our self.” Substitute forgetting for anamnesis, experimentation for interpretation.60

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Figure 25
brain knife carving itself
Figure 26

posthuman decentralised, dispersive, tentative, combined sensorial, becoming-molecular being, engaging the ground and air as a sensorial confluence through the weight distribution and pull of the hands and feet (Thank you El Lissitzky)
Figure 27

stretching monstrosities, working a front and a ground into different sides (Thank you Sara Ahmed)
Figure 28

within the scattered all-around, bodies dispersed within sculpture-in-the-round
Figure 29

*multiple positions, circumstances, times, bodies, cuts* (Thank you Megan Dennis)
Figure 30

*all-at-once* (Thank you Henri Bergson, Étienne-Jules Marey and Eadweard Muybridge)
Figure 31

*bundles of potential* (Thank you Brian Massumi)

The limits of the region and of the entire field (the universe) are defined by the reach of its elements’ collective actions at a distance.\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{61} Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 34.
Figure 32

inseparability, complete contact, endless touching (Thank you James Degenhardt and Johann Gottfried Herder)
Figure 33
dispersal
Figures 34, 35

tendencies across generations (Thank you Jill Woods)
Figure 36

_Bodies without Organs_

‘The tantric egg.’ ²⁶²

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²⁶² Deleuze and Guattari, _A Thousand Plateaus_, 170.
Figure 37

weighing into a ground (Thank you Ann Fuata)
attending to a ground, *time as constitution* (Thank you Antonio Negri)\textsuperscript{63}
Figure 39
Beuys (Thank you Emma Woods)
Figure 40

*ritual* (Thank you Makiko Yamamoto and Tyrone Renton)
Figure 41

*pushing out at edges* (Thank you Ann Fuata)
Figure 42
*relief* (Thank you Jill Woods, Megan Dennis, Hannah Camilleri)
Figure 43

becoming-animal (Thank you Ann Fuata)
Figure 44

giving and opening, devotions (Thank you Megan Dennis and Anna Parry)
Figure 45

crapping inseparable from a swarm of relations (Thank you Ann Fuata and Bianca Hester)
Figure 46

carrying weight on the head (Thank you Megan Dennis)
ontologically primitive relations, thankfulness, devotions and the thoughtfulness of the nonhuman world
Figure 48

*centred all-around*
Figure 49

dynamic stability, swarming airs
Figures 50

becoming-molecular
Figure 51

becoming-imperceptible
PICTURING

In the paper *Unimaginable Happenings: Material Movements in the Plane of Composition*, 2010, Barbara Bolt outlines the possibilities for nonrepresentational processes of picturing. According to Bolt, pictures – whether paintings, drawings or collages etc. – enact an athleticism of material forces ‘in which colour vibrates and shimmers, lines quiver, and shapes push and shove and topple over’ as an ‘expansive force.’ As such, pictures become active as ‘blocs of sensation’ rather than set descriptions of past action or representations of discreet subjects and objects.

Bolt says – in working through Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari – that the energetic event by which a picture emerges does so by ‘the positioning of bodies in fields of force.’ She says that in the event of picturing ‘there is… a summoning forth in which ‘invisible forces of gravity, heaviness, rotation, the vortex, explosion, expansion, germination and time … make perceptible the imperceptible forces that populate the world.’ These forces… are not just glimpsed, but actually affect our becoming.’ This means that pictures can enable their own kind of action – making perceptible some of the often invisibly small but consequential differences of the rest of the world.

In my process of making pictures, I remain seated in a chair usually at nighttime (processing the materials of the day and of the past together) my fingers cutting with a computer touchpad. It can be seen that even in my relative calmness and rest, I am always being repositioned as a body ‘in fields of force.’ Even though this process becomes akin to the pendulum in that it constitutes mark-making, its marks become strange to past action. As a result, my picture-making, like instrument-making, also aims to advance and propel the nondeterminacy of action and the dispersive sensorial combination of materials and bodies that it involves, revealing forces that make and remake planes of composition. Picturing in this way, as a process with its own kind of action, is a propellant of radically open futures for the becoming of the world.

67 Barbara Bolt, “Unimaginable Happenings,” 266.
To embed a nonlinearity for picturing (and by expansion surface dimensions in general), I draw influence from the juxtaposition of picture-making (from sources such as Tantric, Yogic, Persian, Buddhist and Hindu scriptures) and contemporary images of continuing habitual practices (often these are derived from both my own and my family and friends’ travel images: example Figure 52).

Figure 52
Figure 53 offers an example of the way my picturing makes imperceptible force-relations visible enfolding forces from a nonlinear past. Several actions actualised at different times during the project *processual rhythms, drawing as/of/with material densities* have produced the digital laser print called *thrown, unanticipatable habits, wedge, slippery pink matter and tied up hair (thank you Makiko Yamamoto and Tyrone Renton)*. In this picture, Yamamoto is seen to be waving a pink rope, I am seen to be throwing or waving an arm, and Renton is watchful, his head titled toward Yamamoto’s throat. The material forces of this picture seem scattered because there are many different weights, colours and cut shapes in a combination that makes it difficult to stop finding possibilities for what exactly is going on. A bag weighs heavy in ‘midair,’ a piece of unknown brown/gold is flying ambiguously having been thrown by me or dropping, my heels are wedged up by a giant piece of tanbark and Yamamoto is stepping on the same, very slippery pink shape that she is flinging about with her hands, and which unimaginably relates to the top part of her skull which has been cut, maintained and spread at the back of her shins. When these pictures were ‘separate’ and in their raw documentation format (Figures 54a, 54b and 54c), it could be easy to talk of them as expressive of specific actions which have happened in the
past. Instead, in the process of picturing, infinite possibilities for the picture and its current activity engenders a radically open future rather than a set of representations fixated upon ‘capturing’ past events. This could encourage the taking-awareness of a sensing picturing body who experiences the picture as an immanent set of force relations.

Figures 54a, 54b and 54c

In the improvisation of Yamamoto’s particular action on the opening night of the exhibition, her hair tying and her shaking of this pink rope came together as a
registering of two ritualistic actions operating simultaneously at different speeds. However the surface of the picture (Figure 52) itself explodes with new possibilities. The tied shaped hair is cut along with the skulls cap, and the ground is suddenly made up of a profusion of pink. Pink spills out from the based of the rope - a liquid action - and the top of the skull opens the brain out, untying it amongst shoes as a different ground, and sending it into the air to be shaken. The picture makes the affects of a past inseparably productive of what is possible now, as it intensively opens to the future. This becomes clearer in the way that this picture (along with innumerable others) forms part of a set of relations that has potential to make new connections, influencing the production of installations, instruments, further projects, other pictures, improvisations and their fresh action.

As well as the depth of this project’s investigation into the nondeterminacy of action, there was a simultaneous focus on the participation of bodies as dispersively combined with instruments, pictures and circumstances of action, constituting an intensive investigation into a new posthumanist approach towards nondeterminate action.

RELIEF (PICTURING WITHIN ACTION AS SCULPTURE)

The British artist-couple Gilbert and George provide an example of the way that my practice engages picture-making as an integral part of a wider action as sculpture practice. Their liberated approach to picture-making is a major influence for my picturing because of the way they mix up perspectives, conflating ‘documentation’ of many different particular contexts, people, phenomena, joys and labours. Paralleling my own practice, pictures are involved in their expanded field in which they – ‘singing sculptures,’ ‘living sculptures’ – live as art. They propose their work as an ‘art for all.’ This includes all of their activities from taking tea of a morning, getting drunk on gin, walking in steady sync down London streets looking and discussing,


An Australian example of the role for pictures in a larger action as sculpture practice is in the spare and precise use of documentation images in the practice of Alicia Frankovich.

69 A process of making that they say has been a unique development of their art practice.

70 Julian Cole, With Gilbert and George, directed by Julian Cole (London: Whole Picture Productions, 2007), DVD.
singing, whatever they might say, and to the pictures that they make. All of this is done together as one artist, as two people always side by side. Their working method is to generate images from their experience of life in the region of their home in London; taking thousands of images which they then use in the making of pictures like *Drunk with God*, 1983 (Figure 55).

Figure 55

In this picture the figures of Gilbert and George and other men, landmarks, rogue or intrinsic materials (such as poo) and occurrences in their neighbourhood take the focus. As such, the picture makes visible the way in which artists are entangled in a community not just made up of artists, but other people, other practices, cultures, histories and ways of being. Their pictures give me a platform from which to further picturing in action as sculpture with an experimental approach, where pictures are not given fixed configurations or possibilities, but instead open to the influence of the world by remaining malleable. To do this I employ slideshow projections and simple laser printed handouts or gifts which are made and remade regularly – usually in times of relative rest – as a way of allowing a flow of alteration. Expanding upon Gilbert and George’s work, my picturing remains in an organic state of agential entanglement with the happenings of my larger practice. In this manner, I have begun to see my picture work as a form of sculptural relief, that offers a tacit (although eventful) practice that can reveal even more of the imperceptible forces and consequences of the action of bodies, instruments and of the world. Through Gilbert

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and George, I can further the possibilities of OSW’s *BIG LOG* by deploying open sets of nonlinear relations that reveal rather than map marks of imperceptible forces.

**ACTION IMPROVISATION**

Bursting from participatory practices such as Walther and Gilbert and George, my practice involves action improvisation as the tactful participation of other people, instruments and specific circumstances and contexts in the actualisation of new possibilities for specific physical arrangements (concepts) and entanglements of bodies, instruments and the world. This is an aspect of my practice that engages my position as an artist and person in a different way – in the role of accommodating, readying and enfolding the connections that emerge as a consequence of action that happens. In this manner I advance Walther’s work beyond instruction, demonstration or separation (of the artist) by becoming a participant in the movement of the work as well. To do this I participate with a small changing group of participants from which to expand out, becoming part of a collective landscape of artistic possibilities. Accommodating action openly involves taking-awareness of unforeseeable happenings without anticipation or expectation. This openness requires an affirmative, joyful approach which I articulate as a kind of tact. As Alphonso Lingis says:

To really respond to the other involves tact. Tact is the light touch that does not seize hold or manipulate or possess. It is letting the other be and act in his or her space. It is also sensitivity; it is to let the other affect one, with his or her curiosity, affection, probings and reserve. In tact one senses something of the other’s desires and pleasures.

In my work this means I must be tactful not only towards other people, but other forces, other actions and other matters, that are ‘other’ only because they enact, according to Barad, an ‘entangled relation of difference’. This means that they

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72 I engage and include my family, friends and colleagues in my practice to bring to the fore the fact that practice is inherently collaborative and local within a community.

73 Often on an individual – or at most three or four at a time – basis.


75 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 236.

“‘Otherness’ is an entangled relation of difference.”

78
reveal difference by bringing unexpected rhythms, tones, relations, concepts, bodies, orientations and so on, into contact. This otherness\textsuperscript{76} can also come from ‘my own’ action, and so this practice of joyful accommodation has revealed a push to become aware of my own bodily postures and their changing relation within the world. In extension, this is an aspect of my practice that leaks into a way of being, where it could be said that beliefs are lived in the movements of the body:

The ways the body moves, are themselves, a belief system. The process of moving into and through postures is not the corporeal \textit{translation} of a belief or idea; rather, that process is the belief or idea as it produces a certain stance towards the world, the self, and the relations linking the two... This belief is lived on the order of the body – as a form of \textit{consciousness}.\textsuperscript{77}

Figures 56a, 56b, 56c, 56d and 56e

\textsuperscript{76} Barad, \textit{Meeting the Universe Halfway}, 378.

‘The point of challenging traditional epistemologies is... to welcome females, slaves, children, animals, and other dispossessed Others... into the fold of knowers...’

\textsuperscript{77} Carrie Noland, \textit{Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 36.
In addressing this aspect of my practice, I undertake sporadic sessions of private action improvisation. An intensive session took place mid 2012 in the EB Myer project space at VCA, Sculpture and Spatial Practice. As seen in Figures 56a to 56e, this session allowed me to test out possibilities, enacting action across different postures, processes and approaches with a selection of instruments and pictures as conditions. This particular session resonated with an intensity. I linked the notion that beliefs are lived on the body with Barad’s notion that concepts are physical arrangements, deepening a bodily engagement with the notion that the world is thoughtful and the ‘human’ worldly. As I approached this improvisation aiming to open all-around, I realised that the influence of a stationary camera documenting my improvisation revealed a frontal tendency of orientating my stance.

After an initial attempt to move out of this habit during the session, I began to think through the possibility that a frontally orientated body brought pictures and improvisation closer into their mutual thinness. By experimenting with my sides, back and all-around, a disorientation of the front to the sides became a tactic to open up the all-around capacity of bodies, a process that seems to ‘thicken’ action as does the

78 A lot of this kind of solo improvisation also occurs in instrument making.
nonrepresentational relief that comes from combining pictures. Sara Ahmed’s work in queer theory makes me see this as an affirmative response, opening up tendencies of orientation:

Perhaps this is a different kind of politics of sides: one is not asked to “take sides” when one is “beside”—one walks beside and alongside. That is enough to clear the ground. To walk “in unison,” to be “arm in arm,” requires work: one has to keep up. You walk together through such gestures of following, a following in which one is not left behind. Perhaps the simple gesture of bodies that keep up involves a radicalization of the side, when the beside becomes alongside, where one side is not “against” the other.\(^79\)

This position, where oppositions become the exclusion of the ways (determinism, representationalism, anthropocentrism) that you do not lock arms with, but still walk alongside, leads into the way that Karen Barad frames the intertwining of being and knowing within an ethicality that ‘is part of the fabric of the world; [where] the call to respond and be responsible is part of what is.’\(^80\) Experiencing pictures requires action just as much as playing an instrument and walking upon the thin surface of the earth. These ideas should not be construed as a deterministic approach towards ‘ones’ action, but rather an accountability to their nondeterminate consequences. This is achieved by the tactfully open exclusion/inclusion of bodily postures and their beliefs, involving the liberating limit that not all possibilities for action can be taken up at once.

ENTANGLEMENT

The large projected work called dynamic stability, swarming airs (2012)(Figure 57) can be seen to engender this sense of our own becoming, enmeshed in the world, and in the work of art as it swarms with an array of human/nonhuman parts. In this particular iteration it consists of a cut up ground, a person ambiguously destabilised


\(^80\) Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 182.
or attending to that ground, hunched with a container/weight, and an air filled with a swarm of projectiles moving in all directions across the picture plane.

**Figure 57**

This picture enacts invisible forces such as the breaking up of a ground and a dense flowing of air. It also shows an attendance to the ground, an endless touching of the ground. Here, in the forces of this picture, thoughts are embedded: a body has a relation to the ground, a relation of either steadying or tending. In this picture the ground shifts as does the air. However, what ‘grounds’ this ground is that the person might be tending to it. What generally matters to a being is a stable ground, and so stable ground is lived with bodies dynamically as a bloc of sensation. Here, a dynamic ground is accepted as having its own stability of entanglement.

Experiencing pictures and their blocs of sensation as ‘bodies in fields of force,’ links to and affirms Michael Polanyi’s notion of tacit knowing, whereby it could be said that the force relations under experience within the picture constitutes our indwelling in its forces: cut ground, hunching, scattering and stretching.

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81 Barbara Bolt, “Unimaginable Happenings,” 283.
In tacit knowing is where our bodily processes take part in the force-relations of experience, whether with pictures or with instruments, or each other always as part of a larger world. The work of this practice can be seen to be involved in a knowing intertwined within becoming, where we can – through our dynamic entanglement within particular physical arrangements – ‘know more than we can tell.’ These ideas and works constitute my effort to overcome anthropocentric notions of action and consequence by entangling bodies as dispersively entangled within a world of knowing and becoming.

MOVEMENT TWO

Art is one way to live, an energy or power that gives you a way to be.84
Tehching Hsieh

We go back to the blanket... From your feet on up you are beautiful.
You weave splendor with simple tools. Feed me the traditions your body would not forget.85 Qwo-Li Driskill

OPEN BLANKETS

The ongoing project open blankets (August to December 2012) focuses on responsibility and knowing in becoming, which requires support from both being side-by-side with others and from a new grounding of openness. Open blankets comprises multiple elements simultaneously: a growing set of blankets to be altered with the sewing of shapes, a bag filled with a changing array of instruments and equipment to be unpacked for the improvisation of actions on and around the blanket, a website86 with contact details for the organisation of meetings with participants and, to present pictures produced by the project. The meetings that constitute open blankets work both nomadically (taking place across various contexts within

83 Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, 4.
86 www.openblankets.net
Melbourne) and sporadically (happening for unknown durations), and use these spatial and temporal modes to intensify an openness all-around within a larger confluence of forces.

We meet at a landmark of each participants choice and move from there. We carry blankets and the large bag to a place of our combined decision, and we unfold and place the blankets upon the ground and open the bag, distributing its contents out over the blankets and their ground. These actions already generate a dense field of micro-movements, as each open blanket unfolds a process of combining the work within its immanent contextual and experiential circumstances. A greater sense of working through middles of swarming relations and working ‘intra-actively’ has been a focus in producing this project. With each fresh redistribution of the work a sensation of being-in-the-thick-of-it becomes palpable. I think that this occurs because of the work’s in-built openness to the instrument-body-world force-relations that occur.

One experience of this was initially revealed by the act of walking while carrying the meetings’ accoutrements on my head.87 As I travelled, orientated towards meeting, I worked to take the posture of calmly and joyfully walking, for a moment I was joined side-by-side by my colleague Danica Chappell, who took several photos of me. Then as she disappeared, I walked on through the city feeling like a phenomenon, and compelled through odd stares by my connection and intertwinement within a world of other people with whom I am inextricably involved in action. Once we had met, opened the blanket and as our work together felt as if it was coming to a close, participant Avril McQueen, began blowing into a trumpet I had carried with me, making a huge wavering horn sound into the intersection of Collins and Swanston Street’s in the city of Melbourne. Somehow, this was completely unanticipated. In her action, McQueen refilled the established heraldry of the trumpet88 with a refreshing frivolity and uninhibited open sound.

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87 An action that came to matter because of Megan Dennis’s improvisation with a bell instrument at the Substation in April 2012.

88 A connotation that could be associated with the gendering of established instruments. Having an unchanged trumpet became an experiment of this element of instrument-making.
Figure 58
Each time I take this project into the world I ready instruments, pictures, and even my own clothes. These choices vary and relate to the week I am having, who I am going to meet, in accordance to the swarm of relations, and in an attempt to refresh the work’s potential. With the redistribution of possibilities for knowing and becoming through a process of enfolding already established in my practice, I saw the need to show the way an open artistic practice can be grounded in liberation. To do this I simultaneously took this project outside to intensify its nondeterminacy and

89 Which can be seen earlier in my process of instrument and picture making where different actions are produced in correspondence to shifts in the material conditions of the work and with the involvement of different people.

90 Adrian Heathfield and Tehching Hsieh, *Out of Now*, 159.
This engages a historical trajectory of performance art made possible by the work of Tehching Hsieh. Hsieh arrived on the New York art scene in the mid 1970’s and quickly became a prominent performance artist. From 1978 to 1986 Hsieh undertook five different year-long performances. These performances, such as Outdoor Piece (1981-1982) and Rope Piece (1983-1984), used rules to rigidly frame Hsieh’s activities. But in their reality, these performances obliterated any separation between art and life, and generated a mass of documentation images, sounds, maps and drawings, which in ‘Outdoor Piece’ showed the remarkable way in which these performances were opened up to the world. Hsieh asserted that ‘art is one way to live, an energy or power that gives you a way to be.’ From 1986 to 1999 Hsieh performed a 13 year plan, in which he intended to make art however not show it publicly. At the culmination of this work he presented a single A4
heighten the sense of being of the world, and engage ground in a new temporal and nomadic way, as a dynamic topological stability made up of what matters.

GROUND

Figure 60a

Figures 60b and 60c

sheet of paper with cutout newspaper lettering spelling out: ‘I kept myself alive. I passed the December 31st, 1999.’ This exposed the extent to which art and life had conflated and dissolved into one another in Hsieh’s practice.
The first blanket brown, golden edge (Thank you Jill Woods and Aimée Tankersley) (2012) which was produced as a ground for open blankets, offers an example of grounding open practice in a way that operates to nourish and celebrate a changing surface of the earth. I invited friends, family, colleagues, anyone who knew and wished, to sew any shapes they like into the blanket with the selection of ribbons and needles that I have. As can be seen in Figures 60a to 60d, this involves the shaping of a constellation of the ground that the blankets constitute. This fosters an articulation of open artistic practices as having a deep history at the same time as opening out radically and primitively in every way possible. And this is a queer ground for sure, as it continually embeds a notion that the matter of ground is not made up of

The speed of open artistic practices and their becoming is at its own pace and rhythm, not always churning away at the speed of light. This produces a dynamic stability, linking to what Bataille says: ‘Constant instability is as banal as total order. One can destabilize – or sacrifice – only that which is. Imbalance, sacrifice, are even greater when their object is balanced and complete. Such principles as these are in contrast to the moralities that resist change and tradition; they destroy the romantic morality of disorder as much as conservatism.’
steady units of matter (i.e. it is not a foundation), but instead it is joyfully made up of a multitude of changing forces, shapes and connections that matter. It is folded up, reworked, unpicked, and used for warmth.

‘It is not only that queer surfaces support action, but also that the action they support involves shifting grounds, or even clearing a new ground...
When we tread on paths... which we are not sure are paths at all... we might need even more support.’

The use of a sporadic and nomadic mode for spacetime in open blankets intensifies a posthumanist spacetime scale that is embedded in my approach to nondeterminate action. This spacetime scale involves the imperceptibility of action and its consequences. It also renders a circumstance for people, pictures, instruments and landscapes of action that joins and entangles in participation. This is embodied in my projects where each open blanket remakes a ground.

NOURISHING AND CELEBRATING A DIFFERENT GROUND

My work’s approach towards nourishing and celebrating open grounds is echoed in the fiction series His Dark Materials, 2000. In the series, Philip Pullman writes of a people called the Mulefa who populate a parallel Earth. The elephant-like Mulefa’s daily existence and ritual practices are deeply enmeshed with a giant type of tree and the volcanic surfaces of the planet they roam. The Mulefa people use the tree’s gigantic oil-secreting seeds as wheels to speed along vast roads produced by larva eruptions and the sloping of the earth. The percussive action of the seed pods turning on the rough ground breaks them open at the sides and the Mulefa plant them in the soil. The giant seed pods with which they grow as both particular bodies and a people, communicates the way that sculpture in my own practice is positioned as an active force, a congealing of agency – taking new, unknown shape over time.

The story of the Mulefa emphasises the significance of the body-instrument-

sensorial-world to being, paying as much attention to the sounds, sights, smells and weather of their environment as the Mulefa themselves. Seedpods are produced when a tree disperses its fruits; the seedpods then attract the Mulefa by secreting a sweetly smelling oil. As wheels, they exude a thunderous rolling-beating sound as the Mulefa’s feet spin them like bearings. My own works, such as open rattle (thank you Jill/Rick) and my project open blankets, look to employ a swarming of sensory connections, as a way of enfolding bodily experience into their entanglements within a world of forces. I seek this same kind of sensory experience in my own works, by positioning sculpture as action that enfolds a multiplicity of combined visible, audible, proprioceptive, tactile and olfactory sensoriums. This asserts that nonanthropocentric notions of action and cause require the positioning of bodies as entangled, and of the world. Marks, sounds, bodies, instruments, materials and surfaces are all phenomena that produce more phenomena, forming a world of differing materialities which extend well beyond a traditional notion of the corporeal, well beyond the humanistic notion of the artist, and well beyond any deterministic notion of action as the product of discreet entities.

KNOWING/BECOMING (onto-epistem-ology)

The Mulefa’s immediate, emergent bodily action with the seed pods also registers a rich knowledge of a particular kind. This links to Polanyi’s notion of tacit knowing. Looking at the Mulefa through this notion, the seed pods become instruments (a kind of probe, or even a kind of concussive earth rattle) that ‘impact’ the hands and feet of their bodies, and, as they roll down the sloping volcanic surface of the earth, they become aware of the contact of the seed pods with the ground. With this contact, the seed pods become matters which they feel through, touching the ground with new textures. Together the Mulefa and the seedpods actually make different sense of a surface of the earth as they travel. It is within the particularity and proximity of their bodies, the seeds and the ground that there is a phenomenal awareness of the contact, rhythm, force, speed and orientation of their combined action. Solidifying this kind of experience in his theory, Polanyi says:

Our body is the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge.

whether intellectual or practical. In all our waking moments we are relying on our awareness of contacts of our body with things outside for attending to these things. Our own body is the only thing in the world which we normally never experience as an object, but experience always in terms of the world to which we are attending from our body. It is by making this intelligent use of our body that we feel it to be our body, and not a thing outside.  

The way Polanyi deploys the body as instrument travels towards a world within which bodies are inseparably intertwined in their action and expression, which is made real by the Mulefa. Polanyi’s notion of tacit knowing also brings up the way our bodies ‘know more than we can tell.’  

A possibility for tacit knowledge is opened up in terms of the body-world action made visible by the Mulefa, the seedpods and their ground, and by my own work towards queer grounds that open all-around. Even though the world is in constant contact – when sensorial experience produces the intensities of involvement within a world – changes in proximity and distance between forces mean that we must work to nourish that which differentially matters. This cannot be everything all-at-once – as is the goal of determinism and anthropocentrism. When we give energetically in becoming becoming open all-around we can embrace the fact that we both make affirmative exclusions and ‘we know more than we can tell.’ I see this kind of knowledge is entangled in processes of instrument-making, picturing, in the production of bodies, and in the becoming of a world of phenomena of which they are a part. The stakes for this knowledge are open and so all action is (whether imperceptibly or visibly) consequential to what can matter. Knowing what matters in the field of imperceptible action and its consequences, could be a case of orientations within which beings know more than they can tell, giving us both relief and responsibility. Towards the end of his life Maurice Merleau-Ponty articulated bodies as ‘flesh of the world,’ as such we are capable of participating in a way that helps to nourish the becoming of the world in accordance to that which is affirmed.

95 Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, 15-16.
96 Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension, 4.
ALL ACTION COMES TO MATTER / NOT ALL ACTION COMES TO MATTER

This is a partial selection from the ongoing set of relations and connections being gathered for the project *open blankets*. This project aims to reposition a posthumanist approach to the way nondeterminate action comes to matter – articulating people as ‘flesh of the world.’ Paramount to this will be an ensuing discussion of the ethical fabric (involving the unknown consequences) of including bodies within nonanthropocentric action.

Figure 61
*tendency/tradition as ontologically primitive* (Thank you Kaylene Mulcahy and Craig Burgess)
Figures 62a and 62b

devotion, distribution (Thank you Craig Burgess)
Figure 63

*trepanning, opening* (Thank you Megan Dennis and Anna Parry)

Figure 64

*engaging a deeper time* (Thank you Jill and Norma Woods)
Figures 65a and 65b

*Jainism: carving reliefs into rocks, coconuts are used in offerings as a symbol of liberation, where the devotee is to perform duties without expectations.*

(Thank you Simone Slee and Craig Burgess)
Figure 66  
Nag Panchami, Festival of the Snake, Varinassi, India (Thank you Craig Burgess)

Figure 67\textsuperscript{98}  
Ragas: breaking the day up into segments of time with music.

Figure 68

*grounding open practices in liberation, as at its own multivalent rhythms and paces generated by its matterings*
Figures 69a and 69b

shaping the ground as a relief constellation of what matters (Thank you)
Figure 70
full sky

Figure 71
Yoga (Thank you Sarah Bunting)
Figure 72

*meeting the universe halfway* (Thank you Karen Barad)
Figure 73
breathing, combing, contact

Figure 74
open instruments
ETHICAL FABRIC OF THE WORLD AS ACTION (ethico-onto-epistem-ology)

The work *open blankets* and the Mulefa open up arguments for sculpture whereby posthumanist action is inseparable from bodily contact and sensation, through proximity. The orientating forces of both the world and the work of art are not based in the decision making of one artist or any notion of the individual, but instead are an entanglement of possibilities. In taking up these concerns here I can articulate my reinvestment in bodies as a way of advancing OSW’s work on posthumanist physical configuration. Bodily contact allows for a particular kind of knowing to occur. Barad expresses this knowing in a posthumanist manner as the way a ‘part’ of the world makes itself intelligible to another ‘part’ of the world. In my work and in the world of the Mulefa this is about the meeting of surfaces, people, forces, materials, and histories in a way that explodes with marks, percussive and concussive sounds, colours, twists, turns, pathways and connections that open up potential.

The Indian spiritual leader and philosopher of Advaita (nondualism), Nisargadatta Maharaj, speaks in a way that enriches this entanglement of bodies, instruments and worlds in knowing as he says:

The world itself is contact – the totality of all contacts actualised in consciousness. The spirit touches matter and consciousness results. Such consciousness, when tainted with memory and expectation, becomes bondage. Pure experience does not bind; experience caught between desire and fear is impure and creates karma.

I take Maharaj’s teaching on board in my reading of Gordon Bearn’s theory, which addresses such an open capacity for action’s nondeterminate contact as the ‘becoming desire ... without individuated desires.’ This is the desire of dynamic topologies.

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99 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 817.
99 ‘This ongoing flow of agency through which “part” of the world makes itself differentially intelligible to another “part” of the world and through which local causal structures, boundaries, and properties are stabilized and destabilized does not take place in space and time but in the making of spacetime itself.’
102 In his writing Bearn talks about the physically challenging architectural surrounds of Arakawa and Gins’s work to denote this kind of topology, where beings are immersed in a disorientating becoming.
which moves away from a desire for/towards objects/objectives whereby a human ‘subject’ is a separate intentional authority. In my work open blankets, the main tactic to propel a desire without desires is to employ and intensify the stable potential of a nomadic and sporadic spacetime by accommodating and taking part in actions that are clearly immanently and openly experienced. Bearn suggests that what this kind of desire does is plunge ‘us into sensual enjoyment: floating sensual in liquid corporeality.’

This is helpful to open artistic practice because it positions an ethical concern up front. How can practices encourage this liquidity of becoming? Bearn says that by ‘becoming becoming’ it is made clear that 'the body has a spherical kinesthetic-proprioceptive-tactile dispersive potential, tentativeness at the ready.' He suggests we must ‘wake up our flesh’ to this sphere of becoming. Protracting from Bearn’s theory and diffracting it through both Barad and Maharaj, I see that my project positions a spherical stance (its ethicality) towards any orientation for becoming. This allows the work open blankets to meet, make contact and know a larger world, grounded with a fully open future.

Karen Barad poetically associates this open future with the way each breath remakes the world:

What we need is something like an ethico-onto-epistem-ology - an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being - since each intra-action matters, since the possibilities for what the world may become call out in the pause that precedes each breath before a moment comes into being and the world is remade again, because the becoming of the world is a deeply ethical matter.

One instrument involved in open blankets encapsulates this notion from Barad, both physically and worldly. Stretching upon its ridges – its fluting – bamboo is
inseparable from the vertical and wet, bunching, rooting, and stretching tendencies which grow and form it. As I cut bamboo, it becomes abstracted from the rhythm of which bamboo tends and so comes to exist differently – this newly horizontal length is ripe with potential for other configurations and actions of which the tones cannot be anticipated. The wetness of bamboo’s inner vertical pipe to ridge paces comes to the wetness of the air of the flautist and the smoothness of their sound with the horizontal all-at-once. Each breath remakes what is possible.109

Figure 75

Through a process of handling bamboo, the instrument *transverse grasp flute* (2012) emerged. It enfolds a focus on grasping in pictures made from *processual rhythms*, *drawing as/of/with material densities* and the Indian Bansuri flute together in the production of something other. To cover the holes (now slots) this flute must be grasped with both hands, all the way around the bamboo. Full contact is required, making the hands become paw-like with no gaps between fingers. With each breath a

109 An interesting connection here is between Bearn’s spherical becoming ‘desire without… individuated desires’ and a particular kind of *vayu* (air) in Vijnana Yoga breathing practices where the breath is exhaled all-around.
moment of contact is made intense by the shifting of the fingers across the slotted air holes. Each finger rubs the other as they try to move independently but cannot for the sake of making sounds – the compelling drive to breath and to hold.

In combination with the infinite ways that the rest of the world makes spacetimematters - my practice makes spacetimematters, and I am compelled to see this as an immediate and constant responsibility. My flute shows this in the way it closely aligns to the Bansuri flute and a particular cultural tradition. Any melodies that transverse grasp flute might make, exist simultaneously indebted to the history of the Bansuri, but most predominantly to the possibilities of bamboo and of open practice. Rather than operating within fixed tendencies for material/cultural possibilities, tendencies are exposed as a deep temporal history of what matters. The Bansuri flute is what matters to the melodies of India. This fact encourages me to extend tendencies for action away from individuated intentions and desires, towards spheres of knowing and becoming; towards topologies of relations and connections in contact, and towards an agential entanglement of forces which help to orientate and decipher that which comes to matter.

CONCLUSION

By discussing the work of Karen Barad, this thesis has argued for a nondeterminate and posthumanist approach towards ‘action’ in art, life and their entanglement within a larger world. In advancing the work of Franz Erhard Walther, OSW, and Gilbert and George, I have affirmed and contributed a range of tactics, positions and ethics for such an approach. These consist of: instrument-making and picturing which focus on imperceptible forces, the nonrepresentational through abstraction and queerness, and the combination of differential human/nonhuman force-relations in the work of art to engender unexpected action; action improvisation which embeds particularity, possibility, responsibility and the participation and entanglement of bodies within the world; and, enfolding sets of relations and connections (titled all action comes to matter / not all action comes to matter) as a tactic of orientating what matters without deterministic intent. Together, these tactics and positions render an ethicality whereby

110 Giving relief.
111 Giving responsibility towards multiple people, instruments and histories of what matters.
action’s consequences upon knowing and becoming are unknown, compelling action to open all-around.

My projects have enacted the enmeshment of nourishment with celebration and liberation, seeing that this exposes action as constitutive of body-force-matter-world relations (action as sculpture). In doing so I have discovered that deterministic thinking and mastery can be overcome through a process of opening these relations all-around to new possibilities and their vital becomings.

In attempting to further engage with what OSW has achieved in their projects, I have renewed a focus towards repositioning sensuous bodies as integrally dispersive within the intertwined knowing and becoming of specific physical arrangements. The act of walking, carrying weight on my head throughout open blankets revealed that posthumanist action need not be perceived as devoid of ‘humanity.’ Through my practices of redistributing relations, I have articulated the possibility of overcoming anthropocentric notions of action (as human intention) by positioning bodies as flesh of the world. Through its pictures, its instruments, and its collective action within nomadic and sporadic circumstances, my work positions the world as thoughtful and the ‘human’ as worldly – bursting open all-around with potential.

BECOMING BECOMING OPEN ALL-AROUND

Mattering is simultaneously a matter of substance and significance, most evidently perhaps when... the smallest parts of matter are found to be capable of exploding deeply entrenched ideas and large cities.¹¹²
Karen Barad

I will craft my own drum.¹¹³ Suheir Hammad

The following three picturings expose an incipient process of readying the instruments, pictures, relations and connections for my forthcoming exhibition

¹¹² Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 3.
becoming becoming open all-around (2012). The aim of this project is to enact knowing/becoming open all-around by allowing the sets of relations produced by processual rhythms, drawing as/of/with material densities and open blankets to teem together in producing an unimaginable range of possibilities. It begins by engaging the sky, the ground and the side-by-side.

Figures 76, 77 and 78
sky drum, a new ground: small but consequential differences that matter
Bibliography


Appendix

SCULPTURAL THINKING

In the paper Herder’s Sculptural Thinking, Dr Rowan Bailey characterises sculptural thinking as a process of making whereby forms are grasped in a sensorium of interactivity. By interpreting Herder’s writing as an historical ground with which to push this way of thinking into the future, Bailey recognises that the very characteristics of any thinking is that it inherits from the past, in the present; while keeping a driving, shifting motion into the future. The particularity of Bailey’s sculptural thinking is that it takes a pragmatic approach towards the world, where reflection is made possible by our bodily experience of material relations and the interconnection of all of our senses. This mode of thinking Herder frames in the term ‘taking-awareness’ (besinnung).

Bailey’s motivation for considering sculptural thinking is that it holds the possibility of informing an approach towards life. Bailey asserts that in a time where ‘cold’ enthusiasm for concepts is the life-blood of our populous, the grounding of concepts in the ‘warmth’ of sensorial encounters with matter is misplaced. We forget that in grasping the body as a body, the vitality of our concept of that body is intensified. The concept cannot be untethered from the specific material relations which form it. The process of her sculptural thinking is given the role of engaging our conceptual thinking as an activity made possible by grasping the forces of materiality. By using processes of making sculptural works as experimental openings that engender action I have hoped to push this thinking further towards a wordless “tacit knowledge”. For this project material relations are not only something which enables conceptual thinking in a pragmatic sense, but rather, this thinking is the array of material relations that are formed within this project. Meaning, rather than one process of experience leading to another, i.e. sensorial encounters with matter leading to conceptual processes, this thinking asserts a material, relational, active and tacit or experiential nature all-the-way through.

Bailey’s approach tries to employ the term sculptural thinking as a process working between a philosophical lexicon of the senses and sensory experience itself. As such, she pushes this process towards language, suggesting that by ‘taking-awareness’ we are engaging in an act that uses language as a productive tool to solidify or condense sensations, and that this is a language of the sculptural. This is articulated by Bailey as an ‘indisciplinary’ reluctance to accept disqualification from any discourse, so-as-to engage in a language where we alter and shift the regions of knowledge we have inherited from the past, cutting across and working with the tensions built-up between them. Bailey wishes to overcome the participation in abstract reasoning without reflecting on the teeming activities of the sensing body. Encouraging this is the fact that Herder stood against the rift of mind from body famously articulated by Descartes’ cogito. I would like to take up Bailey’s sculptural thinking

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1 Rowan Bailey, “Herder’s Sculptural Thinking” (Parallax 17, no. 2, 2011): 71-83.
2 Rowan Bailey, “Herder’s Sculptural Thinking.”
and disorient its trajectory bound up in language both by looking to the Karen Barad’s notion that concepts are specific physical configurations of the world,\(^3\) and by the activity of the sculpture research project becoming becoming open all-around (2012). I wish to argue that this thinking has no need to go towards language, acting instrumentally to vitalise linguistically centered concepts. Instead, as a sculpture project emerges, alters and maintains its open topology of activity and orientation, it becomes clear that this thinking process is strongly experiential, sensorially tacit, material, relational, and productive of actions and marks actually as formative sculptural thinking. This thinking is in tension alongside other already given modes of practice because it disperses thought into the world (away from ‘human’ brains) and so functions openly, nondeterminately and nonanthropocentrically.

In another account of sculptural thinking, Maria Hynes describes the it as a process that is actualised through action in the present. This mode of thinking works in the passage between two virtual pole positions: the chaos principle and the form principle. The chaos principle is that which is infinitely determinable while the form principle is the appearance through form, of difference. Hynes takes up the expansion of the sculptural field in the late 20th century - as traced by Rosalind Krauss - as a central alteration in the practice of sculpture, and the enabler of this particular notion of sculptural thinking. In the late 1970’s, sculpture practice began to focus concern on the spatiotemporal rather than the previously embraced perception of sculpture as the art of space (Hynes goes on to clarify that this does not mean that time was not a concern for sculpture previously, but that time was simply spatialised). Hynes places a marked emphasis on the ability of processual sculptural work - that arised in the 70’s - to take up its own kind of thinking.

In her chapter Sculptural Thinking, Hynes lays out an argument for this notion as a vital differentiation and distribution of qualities that could be a mode of thinking adequate to life. This notion of sculptural thinking positions life as a generative force in which ‘the human intellect is “only an emanation or an aspect”\(^4\) and pulls away from a dualism of subject/object separative dialogues in favour of a virtual/actual dynamic. Hynes prefers that thought be seen as inventive and describes the way in which forms jump temporarily from the virtual as they are actualised. This is a way of thinking that is more adequate to the genetic character of life because it lets go of doctrines that are confounded by human attempts at capturing life in favour of expressing life through alteration. This frees people from the weight of attempts towards anthropocentric mastery over the work of art, and joyfully embeds them as differentially entangled and dispersive forces in the production of expressive actions as thought. As has been discussed in the main essay, to encourage and embed the inseparability of differential human/nonhuman forces in the work of art, my practice uses processes of instrument-making whereby the actions that are produced by the instruments impact and become entangled with further instrument and bodily formations. To do this in a diverse manner this project involves the improvisation of actions by other people. At innumerable junctures family, friends, colleagues and newcomers have all

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\(^3\) Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 54.
been involved in the production of actions and instruments of the project. This makes a place for an
experiential process that implicitly involves the sculptural thinking of bodies as material forces within
the work of art. This opens to differences produced by many converging forces all at once.

Hynes cites Henri Bergson to say that this concept of life must have a thought process that is capable
of thinking ‘time as invention’. Rather than our empirical apprehension of familiar experiences that
form a scientific symbolic layer over “the life hidden beneath”, we can enable a thinking through
sensations that embraces processes over subjects and objects. Hynes points out the importance of
seeing that the power ‘of the principally processual sculptural work... is its “alteration,” the way
it varies and thus its being in time.’ Thinking sculpturally is framed here as an openness to a new
understanding of form, as material reconfigurations actualising from the pure potential of a virtual
dimension. This involves a new understanding of chaos; as that which is infinitely determinable
(nondeterminate), rather than lacking in determination. We merely have to take up or accept the reality
of our already implicit participation in a dynamic of alteration to begin thinking sculpturally. I argue
that this thinking process is the action that occurs in the practice of engaging simultaneously with and
as participant within the region or landscape that artistic practice both constitutes and produces.

Bailey pushes the mode of thinking sculpturally into a productive force aimed towards sculptural
lexemes rather than clearly define it as a material, physical and sensorial thought. In this trajectory
for sculptural thinking, language has its own productive force. In this vein, Bailey is trying to vitalise
our ‘conceptual’ presuppositions of the world. The character of thinking that Bailey describes helps to
underline the misleading separative logic of ‘conceptual thinking’ as something achieved from material
encounters. As a process of altering what we have inherited from the past, the sculptural thought of
my own art project links and encourages the genetic character of sculptural thinking that Hynes has
grasped, and pushes this towards a materially, relationally productive process. The trajectory of this
thesis takes the guts of Hynes and Bailey’s definitions for sculptural thinking (involving an adequacy
of specific material encounters to life and the inventive character of this) and aims this towards the
spacetime-matter-centric, with a focus on the very wordless material reality of this kind of thinking as
sculptural. This is a matter of tacitly knowing and becoming entangled within a world already made
from physical thought in process.

5 Maria Hynes, “Sculptural Thinking,” 156.
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