Momentum: Experiential Development in Music Composition

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Abstract

*Momentum* is an experiential, cumulative music composition and blogging project, conducted throughout 2012. For 366 consecutive days I collected and recorded sonic material that comprised musical and non-musical field recordings, intentional and incidental found sounds, snippets of musical works, and improvisations. I then sculpted and layered the recordings utilising a digital audio workstation and an arsenal of audio editing tools. The outcome is a four hour-long sound-art work. I invited contributions to the project, and as a result more than 60 people from all over the world collaborated on *Momentum*, providing recordings to be included in the project.

*Momentum* was conceived as an exercise in experimental and experiential composition. The project was created sequentially and chronologically, with new musical material being introduced and intermingling always with the existing material at the end of the work. I lived *Momentum* as I created it; it became a part of my everyday life and the project and my lived experiences influenced one another.

The goal in conducting *Momentum* was to explore cumulative compositional processes via a method of self-imposed disciplined practice. This involved building, over one year, hundreds of micro compositions that were then disassembled and recomposed into one musical work in 12 movements, one for each month of the year. Each completed movement is 15-30 minutes in length. Via a blog and other online platforms my audience were able to engage with both the day-to-day processes and practices involved in the smaller pieces as well as the larger monthly movements as they were completed.
Momentum investigates the results of a disciplined and habitual approach to art making; a non traditional and community oriented compositional method which is self-derivative, chronological and directly cumulative. Momentum was created within strict guidelines, via a process whereby each day’s work was partly derived from and informed by the previous day’s work, but where the majority of the creative material was unknown in advance. Momentum examines the role of audience in the creation of a body of work, through transparency of process and by opening this process up to feedback and collaboration. This exegesis is reflective of the process that I used to develop Momentum; the art and research framework grew and developed simultaneously.

Momentum has since gone on to encompass a 30 minute album, created cumulatively over one month in Istanbul, a 4 day and night live performance event in the Melbourne Fringe Festival, and an ongoing, online community sound art collective. The work-in-progress was (and remains) accessible via several online sources, and the audio is free to listen to, download and re-purpose within the confines of a Creative Commons License.1 I continue to invite feedback, comments, audience participation and derivative works via the music site SoundCloud2, my blog3, email, Facebook4, Twitter5 and other social networking media.

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1 "Creative Commons - Attribution-Noncommercial-Sharealike 4.0 International - Cc by-Nc-Sa 4.0," http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/.
Statement of Authenticity

This is to certify that:

This exegesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University, and is at least 40,000 words in length.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this exegesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made.

Selected (musical) material drawn from this exegesis that is the original work of the author has been previously published during the course of completing this work.

N. Grant

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Introduction

This exegesis and the accompanying creative work are intertwined. They developed alongside one another and reflexively informed one another throughout the period 2012-2014. In this exegesis 'Momentum' refers to both the research and the creative work.

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Art critic Paul Ardenne asserts that the words experience and experiment are bound up together through etymology, as: “The notion of ‘experience’ (from the Latin experientia) stems from the term experiri, meaning ‘to try out,’”6 and the Oxford dictionary defines experiment as to “try out new ideas or methods.”7 Experience, in this sense, claims Ardenne, refers to the process of going through something, a trial whose purpose includes “broadening and enriching the knowledge resulting from it.”8 As a musician and composer I am interested in the kinds of processes, observations and lessons that are derived from practical experience, those that will further my work, help me refine my voice as an artist, and allow me to reflect on my art so that I may continue to grow and develop.

I therefore proposed an exercise in experiential and experimental composition via a cumulative compositional project, undertaken over a 12-month period. The accompanying research is intrinsically linked with the development of this project, titled Momentum, with constant overlapping between theoretical research and practical application. One guided the other; the two are osmotic and constantly informed each other on a daily basis.

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8 Contemporary Practices: Art as Experience, 12.
Every day for the year 2012 I built on my previous day’s work, in a large scale improvised experiment utilising recorded sounds as collage and sculptural material. *Momentum* is collaborative in that dozens of friends, artists and audience members also contributed recordings to be used in the work. The result is a multi-layered composition that continuously shifts as layers of sonic material fade and phase. Each day as new material was added some of the previous material was discarded, so that the composition did not get exponentially bigger but fluctuated depending on how many layers of recorded sound were present at any one time.

Each day’s musical material exists as a small musical work in its own right, is self sufficient with its own individual quality, but also forms part of a greater experience. *Momentum* developed chronologically, with new material always being added at the end, and being woven in with the last few sounds that had been previously added to the piece.

As parts of the composition were added and taken away different musical elements came to the fore; the work was simultaneously transforming and being transformed by itself. Looping recorded material and keeping it active in the composition for a few days at a time enabled me to capture my work in order to reflect upon it and provoke fresh insight into my artistic practice.

Details of this process were published and documented online with recordings made available via a blog and sound-hosting site, updated daily. The purpose of this was to make my creative process as accessible and transparent as possible to a potential audience. A private journal helped me to record my own thoughts and insights about *Momentum* along the way.

The purpose of this project was not only to compose and record a piece of music but also to pay attention to and become familiar with my own processes of music composition, uncovering tacit knowledge about the work and its creation. For a performing artist the opportunity to gain this kind of perspective is a significant
one. As jazz critic and author Ted Gioia states, “In no other area of creative endeavor, is there so little distance between the artist and his work of art.”

One of the reasons for creating *Momentum* was to develop my digital composition skills to the same level as my existing skills as a performing and recording artist. Having worked professionally as a percussionist and improvising performer I wanted to increase the frequency and quality of my employment as a composer separate to these other skills. The best way that I saw to do this was to practice consistently for a lengthy period, to seek feedback throughout, and to engage in a process of “doing and discovery by experiment.”

My aim in was to consolidate my skills of digital manipulation and widen my compositional palette, utilising a large project to thoroughly test and implement all my observations along the way. Over the course of 2012 I incorporated *Momentum* into my daily routine – it became an important part of my life and vice versa. The disciplined approach that led to this, the transparent and cumulative way in which *Momentum* developed, and the experiential and collaborative nature of the project are the subjects of this exegesis.

In line with Jennifer Mason’s qualitative research method I chose to create *Momentum* in a naïve way, first setting out to conduct the project then building a relevant methodological framework for investigating the work as it took shape. When I began I didn’t have a concrete research framework or set questions in mind that the work would answer. The value of beginning with this naïve approach meant that I could follow where the work led me, as I was creating it, observing and reflecting along the way.

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In addition to building on my existing skills as a composer I wanted to investigate the effects on my creative practice of working collaboratively in a transparent and disciplined fashion, and to determine whether this might have further value. The research questions therefore became: what issues would emerge out of this process? Could I stick to it? How would the online platforms work? And would others contribute?

Furthermore, *Momentum*, as it developed, asked:

- What is the effect on the development of the artist/composer of creating transparently, and collaboratively?
- What are the implications of practicing art making in a disciplined and also cumulative fashion?
- Is it possible to make a work of art within fixed parameters whilst improvising on a large scale, with constantly evolving and mostly unknown material?

I investigated the effect it had on me, as a creative individual, to experience the dichotomy between a very disciplined approach and a constantly changing set of inputs, of coming to the process of creating, daily, without actually knowing what new material I’d be adding to the composition that day. I observed the effects of communicating with my audience at every stage of the creation of *Momentum*, and invited them also to contribute to the work.

Conducting *Momentum* in this way produced a doubly beneficial process; my goal was to have the experience of engaging with my work on a daily basis, the products of which became rich fodder for investigating both the projects themselves and my compositional processes. As Derek Bailey writes in *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*, “the experience itself becomes something from which we can learn and in so doing learn about the object of that experience as well.”12

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In her introduction to *Practice As Research*, Estelle Barrett proposes, “that artistic practice be viewed as the production of knowledge or philosophy in action”.\(^{13}\) Through *Momentum* I created a research method and framework for my research by systematically reflecting on my work while I was creating it. Following a practice-based research model, *Momentum* documents the process of recording a piece of music over the course of 2012, with a smaller piece being constructed each day and month. From these smaller pieces I drew together the raw material that now makes up the first *Momentum* composition, with a focus on reflexivity in compositional development.

The *Momentum* concept subsequently manifested itself in a number of ways throughout 2012-14: The initial, yearlong composition (from herein on referred to as the 366 project) was created and shared online throughout the 2012 calendar year\(^{14}\) and then exhibited as a gallery installation in March 2013\(^ {15}\). The experience of creating and completing this project led to my undertaking a month-long recording and blogging project in Turkey in July 2013\(^ {16}\), plus a four day and night composition and live performance project for the Melbourne Fringe Festival in September 2013\(^ {17}\). I then formed an online (ongoing) field recording and sound art collective in November 2013.\(^ {18}\) There is another gallery exhibition of *Momentum* planned in Christchurch, New Zealand, in late 2014. There are also recorded CD outcomes of all the works. This exegesis follows the development of all stages of *Momentum*; the individual projects will be detailed further in the **Method** chapter.

In *Momentum*, cumulative composition - the concept of using an initial composition as a basis for the next stage of composition, which in turn acts as an element in the following stage and so on - was a core element of the project. The initial project developed as a daily practice of cumulative and consecutive composition and re-composition using this concept; a yearlong musical composition created by mixing

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\(^{16}\)"Momentum”.

\(^{17}\)"Momentum Project's Stream on Soundcloud,” http://soundcloud.com/natgrant.

and re-mixing audio samples utilising digital, electronic processing of instrumental and found sound recordings, improvisations, field recordings, and pre-existing sounds - some submitted by my collaborators for this purpose.

Precedents to this kind of work are compositions such as Alvin Lucier’s *I am Sitting in a Room*¹⁹, William Basinski’s tape pieces²⁰ and other works that involve repetition and subtle change over time. These particular compositions deal with longer timeframes in the presentation of creative work. Notably, in the case of *Momentum* the work was created as well as presented over a long period of time. Yvonne Rainer’s dance work *Continuous Project - Altered Daily*²¹ and Barbara Campbell’s *1001 Nights Cast* project²² also contain elements that parallel this research. Both were developed cumulatively and explore issues of transparency of process as well as multiple and shifting authorship.

Philosopher John Dewey²³ and performance artist Allan Kaprow’s²⁴ arguments for the reintegration of art and life resonate with *Momentum*, whereby everyday objects and experiences were captured and documented in the creation of the work. As *Momentum* became part of my everyday routine it took on board everyday things in my life, such as locations journeyed to for reasons unrelated to the project. *Momentum* shows process as part of the presentation of the artwork, but unlike in the aforementioned examples the process of creating *Momentum* didn’t constitute the entire completed work.

Somewhat similar in concept to *Momentum*, there are myriad ’365’ type art projects that exist online, documented in part on Noah Scalin’s *Make Something 365* blog²⁵. By formalizing this model of creative practice through the accompanying research, by linking each of the 366 initial *Momentum* tracks and by

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documenting my process of creation and reflection I endeavoured to set
*Momentum* apart from a lot of these examples, which are in various stages of
completion.

*Momentum* can be linked to the point in the development of experimental
composition where music concrete, electronically generated music and
minimalism intersect. Parallels can be drawn between the way in which
*Momentum* was constructed, digitally cutting and pasting snippets and loops of
audio together, and the music concrete works of Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry and
their contemporaries.\(^{26}\) The difference between these works and *Momentum*,
apart from the era and the technology, is the deliberately consecutive method of
composition used to create *Momentum*.

Additionally, the cumulative process of composing *Momentum* can be seen as an
extension of minimalism, of looping, influenced by the gradual process music of
Steve Reich, whereby musical material is repeated and developed in a drawn out
fashion. These connections and other defining characteristics of the *Momentum*
projects will be elaborated on in the *Momentum in the World* chapter.

The *Momentum* projects utilised several online and digital technologies that are
suggestive of the time in which I am working. For example, the SoundCloud site
was established in 2007\(^ {27}\), and Facebook in 2004\(^ {28}\). The various online platforms
used allowed a particular level of accessibility to my work, for my audience and the
creative community who followed and contributed to the projects. These methods
of delivery allowed the audience access to the work as soon as it had been created,
enhancing the possibility of feedback and collaboration, which forms an integral
part of the *Momentum* model.

When I began *Momentum* I couldn’t be sure which elements of the projects would
be important and pivotal to my research. What has since emerged are a number of
vital issues that have shaped and formed the framework for this exegesis. These

\(^{27}\) "Soundcloud," http://soundcloud.com
include the relevance of the timeframe that *Momentum* was created within, the cumulative and transparent way in which I conducted *Momentum*, and the ways it became a part of my everyday life.

There are also issues involving discipline in arts practice, open access to an artistic process and the possibilities of opening work up for audience feedback and involvement. These will be addressed in later chapters, and these chapters will also detail the new knowledge created by conducting *Momentum*, including an adapted practice-based research model, and modified definitions of the terms ‘experiential composition’ and ‘cumulative composition’.

These issues are presented henceforth in order of importance and relevance to the projects, however there is a certain circularity to all of the issues brought about by *Momentum*, that all influence and have effect on one another. I could not have achieved the same depth of reflection on my work by conducting a project that went for a week or a month that I did by consistently making and reflecting for a year. I may not have seen the year through without applying discipline to my creative practice. The work would not be the same without the 60+ contributions from others, and the critical and supportive audience feedback received throughout the projects. I may not have completed the initial project without the audience support that conducting *Momentum* online garnered. Without this support I may not have been buoyed to create more projects after the conclusion of the 366 project.

Thus all of the following chapters support and make reference to one another, and are presented in the context of the whole which comprises all the above issues, much like the structure of the musical works themselves.

*Momentum* refers to elements of the process, goals and form of the musical works created in its name. This title reflects the cumulative nature of the project, the discipline involved and the impetus to maintain it. There is an autobiographical component to each of the *Momentum* compositions, as conducting the project became an integral part of living each day.
The Oxford Dictionary definition of ‘momentum’ best fits its use in this instance: “the impetus and driving force gained by the development of a process or course of events”. Conducting Momentum entailed the creation of an immense artistic project, culminating in three vast sound art pieces (366, Turkey and Live). The completion of each project relied on consistent perseverance, continued investment in the process and enthusiasm and drive to continue to strive to create each day. The goal was completion of the initial Momentum project, and grew to include the subsequent production of two further cumulative sound works. A sense of direction came from the cumulative nature of work, and was influenced by daily interactions with my environment, sound and other people.

Maintaining inspiration and artistic drive was imperative to the completion each of the Momentum projects. In part, a catalyst for this was built into the form of the work itself; each day's piece began with the previous day’s results – a ready-made springboard for the next stage.

Momentum will be of specific interest to composers, electronic and sound artists, and other musicians working in contemporary music; my areas of enquiry are relevant to current practice particularly in relation to sound art and music integrating digital processing. In addition, this work will offer broad insights into collaboration and contemporary compositional practice for the non-specialised reader and listener.

This practice-based research identifies, analyses, discusses and examines issues that arise in producing creative work that is experiential, cumulative, transparent and collaborative in process. This has had an expansionary effect on my artistic process and in so doing offered new pathways into these types of creative processes for the future. The skills I have developed throughout the projects will be applicable to people across and beyond artistic fields; the habits I have developed and the links made between discipline and productivity are applicable

to everyone; they have, as Richard Sennett writes in his 2008 book *The Craftsman*, "implications for more ordinary experience."³⁰

**Note on Language**

Throughout this exegesis I quote regularly from some of the more than 400 *Momentum* blog posts that I wrote throughout 2012-14. The observations made there and my descriptions of my process and collaborators have proven insightful and are an important part of this written work. Similarly, the private journal I kept during this time has been invaluable in analysing and critiquing *Momentum* and is often quoted here, also.

The language used in both these texts is informal and sometimes colloquial. They were created this way so that I could express myself freely throughout the creation of the *Momentum* projects, to try to capture my most honest thoughts and feelings about my work without cloaking them in academic language.

Quotes from these sources, therefore, retain this quality, in the hope that they may best convey the thoughts and reflections they represent.

Methodology

This chapter initiates my discussion about the overarching process of analysis and reflexivity that creating Momentum entailed. A more specific description of my daily processes in conducting Momentum will be given in the following chapter: The Momentum Method.

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Momentum draws on observations and reflections made throughout a yearlong process in 2012 (plus a month and subsequent 4 days in 2013) of recording, composing, blogging, and collaborating. My ongoing reflections on the projects and my compositional processes are geared towards the generation of new knowledge that is of benefit to others and myself.31 Momentum is auto-ethnographic32 in that it is, in part, an autobiographical work, and a process that allowed me to reflect critically upon my creative practice, by positioning myself within the work and reflexively analysing it while I was creating it. By working in this way I have been both “the researched” and “the researcher”33.

Specifically, I conducted a reflexive composition and research project, taking existing practice-based, qualitative and auto-ethnographic research methodologies and adapting them to my work. Conducting Momentum involved constant “self-scrutiny” as I sought to understand my role as a composer and researcher in a wider context.34 Throughout Momentum observations about my creative process directly affected the work; research influenced practice and vice versa. The nature of Momentum was entirely reflexive, as Jennifer Mason states in Qualitative Researching: “...qualitative research involves moving back and forth between different elements in the research process, and the researcher should not assume that they can deal with only one element at a time.”35

31 “Australian Postgraduate Writers Network,” http://writingnetwork.edu.au
34 Mason, Qualitative Researching, 5-6.
Momentum comprised direct observations and intense study of my activities in a number of settings, communications and interactions with others, and opportunities for reflection through formal and informal note taking, blogging, journaling and other documentation of my creative process. As a performer and composer I am continually developing my creative product and reflection is an important and natural ingredient in this process. Reflecting on my work and my actions critically and analytically provided insight into the experience of music composition as a cumulative and generative process of collaboration, transparency, and discipline in art making, and initiated a dialogue regarding the wider implications of these elements on my art and my life.

The research questions of this project are focused on understanding compositional processes, disciplined and habitual arts practice, and collaborative arts practice from a close perspective of simultaneously creating and researching, analysing, developing, composing, improvising, and recording artistic outcomes.36

Momentum: 366 involved creating a piece of music over one year but also a piece of music every day and then every month out of each day’s creation. This resulted in a constant zooming in and out between the daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly aspects of the project. This reflexive method of investigation helped to pinpoint little things that could otherwise go unnoticed. For example a small sound sample may seem trivial at the time but may later become pivotal to a piece or album or entire work. By revisiting every day, week, and month I found I was able to observe these little things and make more informed and conscious decisions about my work and my process. The method for creating the resulting Momentum projects followed the same patterns and technical and creative processes as the initial project, but with different timescales.

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Throughout 2012-14 I collected data relating to my compositional processes and the experience of creating *Momentum* via a public blog and private journal. My analysis of this data comprises self-reflection and writing that explores my personal experience of conducting *Momentum*, and connects this to a wider context in terms of electro-acoustic music and compositional approaches. This analysis investigates the written material as well as the audio and images that were created, included (and discarded) throughout the projects. The different mediums (words, images and music) influenced one other.

It is important to point out that I defined the philosophical context for this work whilst the work was being created. In research regarding the creation of art, the art itself is often made within a pre-articulated philosophical framework. However, I began *Momentum* with no filters other than to explore the breadth of experiential, experimental, transparent, and collaborative composition. To begin with I looked at the data in a naïve way, not through any particular theoretical framework, and instead focused on simply conducting the project. I wanted to steer clear of contextual issues that might have coloured the authenticity of the project, and was wary of imposing filters that might influence or hold back the work.

Rather than being created *within* a particular philosophical framework, *Momentum* was created, and along the way a malleable framework began to form around the work, shifting alongside developments in the composition. Undertaking *Momentum* involved using myself as an experiment in developing a methodology that best fit my work and experiences. *Momentum* developed a “fluid and exploratory character”\(^{37}\) which, according to Jennifer Mason, demonstrates “that an all-encompassing research design cannot necessarily be completed before the research is begun.”\(^{38}\)

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\(^{37}\) Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 9.
\(^{38}\) Ibid.
Author Joan Didion claims that she writes, “...entirely to find out what I’m thinking, what I’m looking at, what I see and what it means.”39 And Stephen Nachmanovitch writes in Free Play, “The word create comes from “to make grow”, as in the act of cultivating plants ... We grow or evolve a set of rules to incorporate the unfolding of our imagination.”40 As Momentum grew I found out what it was about, why the work was important, and I built a framework around it, adjusting along the way to best suit the way the composition was evolving.

Blogger and artist Lucas Ihlein describes a process of reflexivity in his own PhD research that resonates with Momentum, whereby he installed a “framework for social and aesthetic interaction which enabled documentation and reflection to occur in a co-emergent way.”41 In his thesis, Blogging As Art, Ihlein cites John Dewey, who also espouses this kind of reflective and reflexive approach, writing about a process where “Retrospective reflection is then used as a basis for a deeper understanding of the ongoing cycle of experience in which 'doing and undergoing' are in relationship with one another.”42

Mason writes, “Qualitative research should be strategically conducted, yet flexible and contextual. Essentially, this means that qualitative researchers should make decisions on the basis not only of a sound research strategy, but also of a sensitivity to the changing contexts and situations in which the research takes place.”43 Similarly, in The Craftsman Richard Sennett observes that “understanding of what one was doing”44 tends to appear “only slowly, after the fact of doing it.”45 My approach of conducting Momentum, and applying and adjusting a research framework along the way, is in keeping with these philosophies.

40 Nachmanovitch, Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art, 108.
41 Lucas Ihlein, "Framing Everyday Experience: Blogging as Art" (Deakin University, 2009), 61.
42 Ibid., 76.
43 Mason, Qualitative Researching, 5.
44 Sennett, The Craftsman, 199.
45 Ibid.
The nature of *Momentum* involved trying to find something that I wouldn’t otherwise be able to find if I hadn’t conducted the projects. *Momentum* allowed me to be both artist and researcher, engaged in a reflexive process of creating a cumulative work that reflected on itself as it was accumulating. This “oscillation between action and reflection”\(^\text{46}\) was vital for an in depth analysis of my art and process, which is why I decided to conduct two further *Momentum* projects throughout 2013. By remaining engaged with my methods of cumulative composition and reflexive analysis I was better able to seek insight into my work, and better poised to place my arts practice within a current philosophical and aesthetic framework.

Lucas Ihlein took a similar approach in conducting his own creative research and writes of the “oscillation between action and reflection”\(^\text{47}\), between creating one’s own work and simultaneously situating oneself within that work and within a larger body of practice and research. He references Donald Schön’s theory of reflective practice, developed in his book *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*\(^\text{48}\). Schön makes links between tacit knowledge (“knowing-in-practice”\(^\text{49}\)) and conscious behavior, labeling this concept “reflection-in-action”\(^\text{50}\). Schön writes of this reflexive process spiraling “through stages of appreciation, action, and reappreciation. The unique and uncertain situation comes to be understood through the attempt to change it and changed through the attempt to understand it.”\(^\text{51}\) *Momentum* was named for this kind of process, and was conducted in this way, with a constant spiraling back and forth between action, reflection, and the implementation of new knowledge.

\(^\text{46}\) Ihlein, "Framing Everyday Experience: Blogging as Art," 8.
\(^\text{47}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{49}\) Ibid., viii.
\(^\text{50}\) Ibid., ix.
\(^\text{51}\) Ibid., 131.
A contemporary of mine, percussionist and composer Charles Martin, refers to Sonia Krüger's *Ethnography in the Performing Arts* in his Masters thesis *Mobile Computer Music for Percussionists*. Similarly to the way in which I conducted *Momentum*, Charles documented his process and discoveries throughout a creative project, then utilised an ethnographic method (what he calls "an active and subjective method") to draw conclusions from this data whilst situating himself within his project. Krüger asserts, "The open-ended nature of the ethnographic approach is particularly suitable for active discovery and exploration." Charles, like me, found this kind of open-ended exploration, an approach to art and research without a restrictive pre-conceived overarching framework, to be the best way to discover how to analyse data by simultaneously making and reflecting.

This particular combination of tested arts research methodologies is appropriate for analysing the data generated by *Momentum*, because the focus is on my subjective experience of creating a number of musical works in a disciplined fashion, in a very public way, as part of my everyday life, and in collaboration with many others. The process of self-reflection explores my personal experiences and connects them to wider cultural and social situations. I have used these observations to gain a deeper understanding of my own practice and where it fits within electro-acoustic composition and performance in Australia in 2012-2014.

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The Momentum Method

In conducting Momentum: 366 my initial process was to establish a recording every day for the calendar year 2012. I recorded musical instruments, found sounds, and made field recordings using a combination of a Zoom H1 digital recorder, an iPhone application called iTalk, and a pair of SE1A pencil condenser microphones.

These recordings took the form of .wav and .aiff files, from several seconds to many minutes in length. My process was to listen to the samples, choose which parts to work with, and reject parts that were not suitable for either quality or aesthetic purposes. Some recordings were too noisy, i.e. the mic was too close to the sound source or, if recorded outside, it was too windy. However on occasion a noisy or windy recording would still be my choice because the other qualities of the recording were to my liking. This was an on-the-spot decision that I made each day, weighing up issues of aesthetics, personal taste and vision in terms of the creative outcome.

Using Ableton Live software on my MacBook I edited the recorded material according to the above criteria. This included looping or deleting parts, fading sound clips in and out, adjusting volume, gate and EQ, or cutting and pasting parts of several samples together to make a new clip. I then dropped the new clips into a pre-saved live ‘set’ that also included material from the previous day or two. The Ableton software in particular lends itself to compositions and live performances that utilise looping.

I added digital effects to some of the recordings to change the pitch or tempo, applied delays or reverb, and adjusted EQ levels. I worked at completing one track each day, bringing a fresh recording and adding it to my work from the two or three most recent days. I sometimes made duplicates of a particular clip, adding

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different effects to each and pasting into the mix at different points, or layered them over one another. When I was content with the finished track, which was generally 1 – 3 minutes in length, I saved and converted the file to the lossless .flac\textsuperscript{57} format, and posted on SoundCloud with a brief description and an accompanying image. I uploaded a different image each day, all taken on my phone.

Using this method I created short, daily tracks that were individual pieces in their own right. These tracks were then disassembled into individual samples and remixed into monthly movements of the completed 366 project. The chronological order of the samples - be they found sounds, traditional, or non-traditional instrumental recordings, and the respective digital effects were preserved in this process, but were remixed into a new track with the aesthetic focus being on a new cohesive piece rather than simply stitching thirty or so daily pieces together.

When at home my process for mixing each track was to use the same pair of stereo speakers, at the same volume, each day. When away from home I used headphones, and compared levels with the previous day’s track to maintain some continuity in terms of volume across all the recordings. All of the music files, images and related documents were backed up on two external hard drives: one at home and one at my studio.

Each day of each project I posted an online ‘snapshot’ of where the piece was up to on SoundCloud. Once the track and image were uploaded, I embedded the music player on my blog, with a more detailed description of the source sounds, and my daily experiences and compositional processes. I also included comments on any effects that were used, and any other accompanying thoughts, perhaps regarding ideas behind a particular sound source or something I had been reading about.

The online delivery of the project via SoundCloud, my blog, Twitter, and Facebook allowed me to share the project with my audience each day, and easily receive feedback and contributions. For example, on Day One of the 366 project I recorded toy sleigh bells, looped and pitched down one octave. I also use two small gongs

and a hand-made shaker I’d purchased whilst on tour in the US in 2011. Along with an image of the shaker, I posted a link to the website of Chad Scott, the instrument builder who made it.\textsuperscript{58}

On Day Three Hundred and Four (October 30, 2012) my blog post reads:

\textit{Living in Melbourne means several false starts as far as the seasons go. But it was definitely warm enough to put the fan on and break out my thongs today ... I recorded myself walking on concrete around the side of my house to the washing line, then duplicated the recording so there are two of me, walking out of sync. Plus timpani from yesterday with more EQ experimentation: this time I took out some of the lower frequencies, making them sound more tinny, like they were recorded in a tin can rather than a large carpeted room.}\textsuperscript{59}

Some days, friends and other musicians helped me to make a recording of something; on Day Seventy Nine (March 19, 2012) Swiss percussionist and composer Fritz Hauser gave me a special private performance on the gong that he used for his ‘Schräfur’ performance at the Melbourne Recital Centre the previous week.\textsuperscript{60} And on Day One Hundred and Nineteen (April 28, 2012) five of my cousins’ children rode around the yard in Northern NSW ringing their bike bells for me. Each of the bells had a different pitch and tone. Afterwards we listened to the recording together with each of them trying to distinguish their own bell.\textsuperscript{61}

At other times people sent me their own recordings via email and a drop box on the SoundCloud site. I made sure that everyone agreed to have their sounds manipulated and posted online and that they were aware of the implications of a Non-Commercial Creative Commons License.

\textsuperscript{58} Grant, "Momentum".
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
Some of the contributed samples were field recordings or sounds captured specifically with my project in mind; on Day Nine (January 9, 2012) a percussionist friend sent me an email with a recording of some vertical blinds in her new house, tapping against an open window. She made the recording on her phone and, having never done this before, expressed a huge amount of excitement at having picked up on the interesting sound and at being able to contribute to my project.\(^6^2\)

I also received recordings from performances or rehearsals that other artists had thought might capture my interest; trumpeter Peter Knight and Sydney-based saxophonist Andrew Brooks sent me a few minutes from a recording they made at rehearsal on April 4, 2012 (Day Ninety Four).\(^6^3\) Additionally, I asked all contributors to either send me an image that they were happy for me to publish online, or to let me take a photo when I was recording them; Peter sent me an image that his son Quinn created on his iPhone, and allowed me to post with the track for that day.

For each recording that was contributed to the project I conducted the aforementioned processes of listening, choosing, discarding, editing, and manipulating it to include in that day’s mix. If any sounds came from someone else I posted an acknowledgement on SoundCloud and the blog as well as a link (if applicable) to that person’s work elsewhere on the web. I noticed that I knew most of the contributors personally. But I did meet a number of new artists through this project, who heard about Momentum either through mutual friends, social media, radio interviews, SoundCloud, or the ABC pool site\(^6^4\).

When the blog post for each day was completed, I alerted people following me on Twitter. Sometimes I posted the track on my personal Facebook page, my music Facebook page, or my website. My audience also had the option of subscribing to receive email updates on the project each day. This process took between one and four hours each day. At the time of writing, in November 2014, more than 11,000 people had listened to Momentum either on SoundCloud, the blog site, or Facebook,

\(^{6^2}\) Ibid.
\(^{6^3}\) Ibid.
and over 600 tracks had been downloaded; the blog site had been viewed more than 11000 times by people in 10 countries, and SoundCloud by people in 32 countries.

I decided to pause at the end of each month during 2012 to mix the individual movements of the 366 project. I did this for two reasons: firstly, I felt it gave me some perspective on where the work was heading, form-wise; even though I was listening each day to the previous day’s recording it was beneficial to recap and revise regularly along the way. This process of regular revision provided me with the opportunity to observe and reflect on where the work was and had been, aesthetically, and how it was developing overall as a coherent large-scale sound work. Also, the process of creating Momentum was quite time consuming, which is another reason I chose to revisit the work at the end of each month, rather than waiting until the end of the year when I would have had to put 4 hours worth of music together.

I committed to not utilising individual sound sources more than once, unless the circumstances were particularly different. This challenged me to find a wide variety of sounds to include, rather than resorting to the same sound sources so regularly. The kind of expanded listening that this process yielded resonates with John Cage’s ideas surrounding radically changing one’s musical habits to be open to hearing any sound as music and to including these sounds as valid material in musical works.

In March 2013 Momentum: 366 was presented at the George Paton Gallery in Melbourne, and I conducted the project overseas in Turkey in July. The live shows brought Momentum to the stage for the first time, with four consecutive performances in Melbourne for the Fringe Festival in September 2013. Finally, CD outcomes of all three projects were released in 2014.

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65 Screenshot. See appendices page 145.
66 Screenshot. See appendices page 147.
67 Screenshot. See appendices page 145-6.
69 "George Paton Gallery - Umsu - University of Melbourne Student Union".
The exhibition of *Momentum: 366* in the George Paton Gallery allowed me to test the possibility of installing the work in the real world, where it had previously only existed online. Just as I layered sounds over the course of 2012 to create this cumulative work, each of the 12 movements of *Momentum: 366* were presented simultaneously in the gallery. These sound sculptures, each 15-30 minutes in length, were each played on a loop through small, directional speakers, in designated listening booths. Listeners had the option to focus on one particular movement at a time, or to move around the space and experience sounds from different parts of the project mingling with one another.70

Following this I continued the process of cumulative musical composition through a month long self-directed residency in Turkey and surrounding regions in July 2013. I recorded sounds each day, manipulating and editing them to produce an album-length (30 minute) sound work, *Momentum: Turkey*. This environment provided my project with human, natural and mechanical sounds, ranging from the densely populated, industrialised Istanbul to the caves of Cappadocia, and included samples of street musicians performing both modern and traditional musics.

By drawing on an environment outside my usual workspace, I was able to recontextualise myself physically and psychologically to re-approach *Momentum* in a unique audio environment. Creating this work in Turkey provided a contrasting experience to creating in Australia; the cultural, geographical and musical landscapes are incredibly diverse and different to what I was used to, and I was able to stretch myself artistically in this particular environment, enriched with a new pallet of sounds.

In September 2013 I performed *Momentum: Live*, as part of the Melbourne Fringe Festival. Over four nights I gave consecutive performances utilising digital manipulations of field recordings made each day in and around Melbourne. These combined to form a third, 80 minute stand-alone recorded work in four movements.

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70 Image: See appendices page 143.
In *Blogging As Art* Lucas Ihlein draws on the work of philosopher and aesthetician Arto Haapala, particularly drawing attention to “the tension between the familiar and the strange.”

Haapala claims that we don’t ‘see’ our regular environment in the same way as a new place, because in a new or strange place everything is different; in our normal environment we’ve seen (and heard) things so many times that we almost stop noticing them. “For this reason,” quotes Ihlein, “we often have to make a special effort to really see the visual features of things surrounding us (Haapala 2005, p. 48).”

In this way both the *Turkey* and *Live* projects were important, in terms of positioning myself somewhere new where I had the opportunity to see and hear the world afresh, but additionally to be forced to look around and listen to my home town again and to try and draw on familiar sites and sounds that may normally be more in the background. “A walk,” writes Nachmanovitch in *Free Play*, “following your intuitive promptings, down the streets of a foreign city holds rewards far beyond a planned tour of the tried and tested.” Throughout the *Momentum* projects I aimed to capture this same sense of alertness to the everyday world around me, of living with “eyes and ears wide open.”

In response to recorded contributions that I was still receiving in late 2013 I decided to set up a *Momentum* collective on the SoundCloud site – allowing my audience access to source sounds as well as completed tracks, and encouraging everyone to make something as well as contribute sounds. I felt that this was a way to keep the project alive, and maintain and build on the communal and collaborative elements of *Momentum*.

The final stage of the project was to bring *Momentum: 366* into tangible form, in a limited edition, 4 CD box set, with just over four hours of music in 12 movements. This was released in early 2014, and followed by the release of two single discs, from the *Turkey* and *Live* projects.

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72 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
**Timeframe and Timescale**

*Momentum* was created over a lengthy period of time but with regularly occurring deadlines, which resulted in a frequent juxtaposition of timeframes throughout each of the projects but especially in the 366 project.

Stephen Nachmanovitch describes the process of making art as “shaping the whole ... taking the results of many inspirations and melding them together in a flowing structure ... The most ephemeral thoughts and feelings are gradually shaped into hard copy that is worked over, painted over, edited and refined before the public sees it.”

Throughout each of the *Momentum* project I did this every day; I set myself the challenging task of creating the form of the work as I created the work, and the incubation and preparation period for presentation of each of the daily tracks was contracted.

By paying attention to both the small and large scale elements of the work, in small and large-scale timeframes, I was able to pinpoint little things that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. By revisiting every day, week and month I wanted to be able to catch these little things and acknowledge them – I will investigate this more in the **Discipline** chapter.

(Note: the *Live* project unfolded in a slightly different way. Being made up of only four parts, and also being a live performance project, I didn’t do any kind of assembling or editing of the tracks after I made them – they were released as is.)

I chose to carry out the 366 project over one calendar year (366 days – 2012 was a leap year). I did this in order to create the work within bounds that were already recognised, a manageable amount of time and long enough to answer my questions in regards to discipline, cumulative composition, transparency, and collaboration. I invested a year, initially, to conduct the project, in order to have a long period of time to reflect, and a large body of work to review. Similarly, I felt that one month

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76 *Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art*, 108.
in Istanbul was a realistic time to be away from home, a long enough time to make an album-length recording and to effectively put my Momentum model into practice overseas, and that four live performances were an adequate test, also.

In Blogging as Art, Lucas Ihlein compared his two month long blogging project with John Cage's experiential art work 4'33''. Ihlein writes, “Bilateral Petersham's longer temporal frame facilitates attentiveness to a broader range of experiences than those to be had within the confines of a concert hall.” In the same way my Momentum projects, resulting in more than five hours of recorded compositions, have created more musical material to investigate than a singular (30 minute long, for example) CD recording project.

One of the few requirements of Momentum was that I would add something new every day. I didn't want to impose too many rules on the project in advance, as the point of creating Momentum was to see what I discovered by doing it and engaging with my work regularly. Furthermore, I found that by simply carrying out the project, further decisions that needed to be made became apparent. For example, on the 11 day of the 366 project I decided that I would mix the work at the end of each month. At that stage I felt that otherwise the work would get too big, that I wouldn't be able to keep very good track of the work as a whole and that there would be way too much editing to do at the very end.

Ihlein introduced a temporal constraint to his blogging and art project, utilising the existing calendar demarcations:

*The overarching duration of two months was divided into a series of smaller frames mapped directly onto each twenty-four hour period. These daily temporal frames allow the process of paying attention to step in time with the ordinary activities of living, allowing me to focus on the "now" rather than trying to make sense of the distant past or future.*

77 Ihlein, "Framing Everyday Experience: Blogging as Art," 83.
78 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 11th January 2012. See appendices page 152-3.
79 Ihlein, "Framing Everyday Experience: Blogging as Art," 83.
Within the larger 366 project but separate to the daily and monthly timeframes were some aesthetically different temporal sections. Along the way different themes appeared in terms of the types of sounds that I was recording or that were being contributed. There are sections of the 366 project where I recorded creaky doors for several consecutive days. There was another week or so where polystyrene and sounds of packing materials featured. Some of these mini sections were inspired by contributions (the creaky door from David Cooper Orton on Day Two Hundred and Eighty – October 6, 2012), others appeared serendipitously (the packing materials from a number of parcels delivered in the same week in June 2012).

By breaking Momentum: 366 up into manageable smaller time frames as the work was created, I was able to pay close attention to many elements of the project. I was able to reflect on what I was doing in the moment, then several days, weeks, and also months later. It took practice to be able to shift perspective in this way, and engage with the different timeframes. Keeping the last few day’s musical outcomes in mind helped me to sculpt the larger piece and informed what I would record next. Drawing out the process of creating and investigating the work imitated a slowing down of this process and encouraged more attention to detail. In my journal on January 22, 2012 I observed:

*Slowing things down, frame by frame, like time-lapse. The process is similar to processes in nature: suddenly a fruit or flower appears to the human eye but it has been slowly growing, a tiny bit each minute, hour, day.*

In The Craftsman Richard Sennett writes about being able to expand “powers of concentration from the short- to the long-term.” With practice, and as Momentum developed, I got better at doing this – at being able to achieve perspective and envision the whole project whilst simultaneously focusing on what I was recording day to day, and also being aware of how the piece was being formed that week or month. By comparing journal entries from January and July 2012 it can be clearly

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80 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 22\textsuperscript{nd} January 2012. See appendices page 157.
81 Sennett, The Craftsman, 173.
seen that my confidence in this regard grew over time and with consistent practice:

Not sure if I really like today's track, but I'm trying not to worry too much. Other days I've felt unsure about the track, then listening back the day after I find things to interest me. Sometimes taking some time away or a few steps back from work lets you see it in a different light. I think being close to your art and in touch with process is good but distance offers another, just as valid, perspective.

January 25, 2012

I am getting a really nice feel for the monthly durations of this work now (even though they are just parts of the whole). Doing the monthly mixes has meant that I feel I am dealing with (and can deal with) a manageable amount of material. At the start of the month it feels big and expansive, towards the middle it feels manageable then almost before I know it it is the end and I'm mixing. Then starting the next day (even though as far as the tracks are concerned it's a continuum) and starting a new monthly folder and creating a new folder in that called '1' feels really fresh and I have renewed energy.

July 18, 2012

Bayles & Orland espouse the benefits of being able to zoom in and out on one's work with ease. In Art & Fear they liken viewing an artist's sketchbook to staring at a tree stump: “Sometimes you need to scan the forest, sometimes you need to touch a single tree – if you can't apprehend both, you'll never entirely comprehend either. To see things is to enhance your sense of wonder both for the singular pattern of your own experience, and for the meta-patterns that shape all experience.” Reviewing a growing body of work as it was being created allowed

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82 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 25th January 2012. See appendices page 158.
83 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 18th July 2012. See appendices page 179.
me to do what Nachmanovitch describes as the important “step back from time...”
to “have a look at our life and art from the long view, from perspectives that
telescope large amounts of space and time.”

In his project *Bilateral Petersham* Lucas Ihlein observes, “The combination of an
overarching duration with a series of daily temporal frames produces a powerful
effect on consciousness and perception.” This combination of temporal frames
has allowed me greater perspective and sharpened my view of both my art and my
creative process. In conducting *Momentum* I have developed what I deem to be a
very valuable skill in terms of being able to focus on my current work whilst
simultaneously keeping the larger framework of the week, month or yearlong
project in mind.

85 Nachmanovitch, *Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art*, 149.
Momentum in the World – Placing my Work in a Larger Context

*Momentum* is an electro-acoustic sound art composition that explores intersections between improvisation, chance, and intention in the development of sound as a sculptural medium. Each of the *Momentum* compositions allow interactions between artist and audience and between human and natural environments. For the purpose of placing *Momentum* in a wider context, I will here identify a number of existing artworks, compositional methods, and concepts that belong to a similar tradition. My projects cross over at various points with existing electronic, minimalist and music concrete works – utilising digital technology to manipulate acoustic recordings and stepping outside standard ideas of tonality and meter. This list is not exhaustive however I have endeavored to include works that I feel resonate most with *Momentum* across a number of styles and disciplines, and comparisons with artists, ideas, and compositional approaches that best aid the location of my own work in relation to other contemporary arts practices.

Process Art and Time Based Art

The process loop of musical composition and reflection that I conducted can be likened to art involving or based upon experience and observation. Art occurs as experience and process, and these perspectives are inexorably linked by a reliance on time. The compositional process I am describing finds parallels not only with experiential art but also with process and time-based art forms. Process art “emphasizes the ‘process’ of making art (rather than any predetermined composition or plan) and the concepts of change and transience.”87 Though the term ‘time-based art’ is a recent development, the practice is not and includes those works that are “dependent on time for the maturation or completion of the experience,”88 such as sound, video and performance art works.

Concrete, Minimalism, Electronic Music and Looping

*Momentum* belongs to an aesthetic tradition that includes musique concrete, minimalism and electronically generated music. Musique concrete or concrete music “refers to sounds (objects, discrete sounds) derived from the world and from synthesis brought together into a collage or sound sculpture as a structure to be experienced through listening.”99 Pierre Schaeffer was at the forefront of this technique, and “In the late forties (he) began to listen to common sounds – trains, bells, humming tops – and to experiment with these sounds with a curiosity and pragmatism … He recorded sounds on disc loops, cut off the attach and decay or sounds, ran things backwards and at different speeds.”90 These pieces were presented both as pre-recorded and performed works. Throughout each stage of *Momentum* my daily process involved a concrete-like composition and re-composition process using loops and samples of audio material, and digitally altering, layering, and manipulating them in order to sculpt each track.

At the time that Schaeffer and his contemporaries were first experimenting with splicing tape together, there was a strong distinction between these recordings of audio that were recorded and then manipulated, and sounds that were generated electronically.91 In the 21st century however the definition of the term ‘electronic music’ has been broadened and covers sounds both generated and manipulated electronically.92 In this modern situation *Momentum* may be seen to encompass elements of both concrete and electronic music.

The cumulative process of composing *Momentum* is similar to the use of extended repetition as a means of generating movement in the gradual process music of minimalist composers in the tradition of Steve Reich. In these slowly evolving works a repetitive “process is set up and loaded [and then] it runs by itself.”

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91 Ibid.
According to Michael Nyman in his book * Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, the overall decisions in these works “are made, the programme set ... Reich does not ‘interfere’ in any way with the procedure.” The difference between Reich’s gradual process works and *Momentum* is that in Reich’s compositions the compositional material is pre-determined, whereas in the creation of each of the *Momentum* projects the material was sourced and decided upon on a daily basis, as each of the projects evolved. Despite setting up a process by which to approach *Momentum* each day, I took on more agency than a repeating tape loop, for example, making conscious decisions at every stage about the form and content of the work.

Minimalism, concrete, and electronic music may all involve looping – the repetition of material that can be built on, manipulated over time, fade away, or combinations all three. Originally, looping was executed via the creation of physical tape loops, and is now possible to achieve utilising many different software and hardware tools. Since 2006 I have employed looping in my processes of performance and composition, via a number of these different non-tape (hardware and software) tools. The repetition of musical material features throughout *Momentum*, also, as material is looped and changed within each daily mix and also when material is repeated on subsequent days. On Day Four of the 366 project (January 4, 2012), a Twitter follower suggested a connection between my previous looping ventures and my reflexive and experiential new project, *Momentum*. He described looping as “a moment to reflect on the music as it happens ... creating a 3rd space in which to listen to your own music...”

Part of the reason why looping is such an integral part of my creative process, and why I am so drawn to minimal and process music, is my desire to sit with sounds, spend time with them and listen and observe as different elements change and come to light with repetition. This links in with the reflexive nature of *Momentum*; I was able to reflect as I was creating over a long period of time and to feed my observations back into the work.

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93 *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, 131.
The processes of looping, repetition, and gradual change that occur throughout *Momentum* resonate with the kind of works Alvin Lucier and William Baskinski were producing in the 1960s and early 2000s, respectively. Both composers utilise tape loops and audio decay in their works. However, similar to Reich’s process of pre-determining a process that was then set in motion, these composers also set something in motion, the outcomes of which were pre-determined as part of the work. Although the outcomes are similar, the presentation of *Momentum* and the use and treatment of musical material evolved alongside the creation of the work and were not pre-determined. Lucier and Basinski both work with the concept of disintegration, of tape loops decaying after being played, repeated and recorded over many times; the musical material utilised in *Momentum* loops and morphs but is also added to over time.

**Comprovisation**

A more recently developed description of the kinds of processes used to create *Momentum* is Michael Hannan’s adoption of the term ‘comprovisation’. In his 2006 paper *Interrogating Comprovisation as Practice-led Research*, composer and researcher Hannan95 describes comprovisation, for him, as a term “to describe my practice of making new compositions from recordings of improvised material, either performed by myself or by other musicians under my direction.”96 *Momentum* straddles both this and the music concrete concepts, repurposing musical material initially created by myself but also including recordings made by others with no direction from me.

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96 "Interrogating Comprovisation as Practice-Led Research," (Australia: Southern Cross University, 2006), 1.
Momentum is simultaneously performance, composition, and sound sculpture. There are similarities in the way sound artists such as Bill Fontana work, using “the urban environment as a living source of musical information...”97 – making and manipulating field recordings and creating “installations that use sound as a sculptural medium.”98 Parallels can also be drawn to works by Australian artists Ros Bandt99 and Leah Barclay100, who respectively utilise acoustic instruments, found sounds, recorded materials, and technology in the creation of hybrid and collaborative performances, installations, and recordings. ‘Sound work’ is a term that may be used to describe Momentum, in the way visual and sound artist Steve Roden defines as where “singular source materials such as objects, architectural spaces, and field recordings, are abstracted through humble electronic processes to create new audio spaces, or possible landscapes.”101

Experimental composition

Momentum may be viewed as an experimental composition, in that it was not traditionally formed or notated. My process of creating Momentum was in line with Michael Nyman’s definition of the work of an experimental composer – someone who is “…by and large not concerned with prescribing a defined time-object whose materials, structuring and relationships are calculated and arranged in advance, but are more excited by the prospect of outlining a situation in which sounds may occur, a process of generating actions (sounding or otherwise), a field delineated by certain compositional ‘rules’.”102 Momentum can be described as an experimental music practice that is also research: “manipulating our experience of the world and commenting upon it.”103

98 Ibid.
102 Nyman, Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond, 3.
Chance Operations

There were chance processes that I employed in the composition of *Momentum* that may be linked somewhat to aleatoric music and the chance operations utilised by John Cage,\(^{104}\) Marcel Duchamp,\(^{105}\) and others. Throughout 2012 I developed the process of saving digital effect settings within Ableton and dropping recorded sounds into different tracks with pre-existing effects chains. Sometimes I left them there and sometimes I moved them or tweaked the effects but it made for some interesting sonic results, some that I may not have ever tried otherwise; this functioned as a useful extended creative and imaginative technique. Richard Sennett writes about anticipating ambiguity as a way of working, calling “...making a move that we know will produce an ambiguous result” a “decisive step.”\(^{106}\)

In John Zorn’s anthology *Arcana III Musicians on Music* composer Earle Brown comments on aleatoric processes, saying “Well, aleatory is a word that Boulez used in an article a long time ago which means throwing of dice and so forth... Cage was literally flipping coins to decide which sound event was to follow which sound event and that was to remove his choice, his sense of choice...”\(^{107}\) When I used chance as a compositional tool in the creation of *Momentum* it was to reveal combinations of processes that I may have not thought of on my own. I didn’t decide to simply or blindly accept the results of these processes; I used them to spark ideas and if I liked the results I chose to work with them but otherwise not; nothing about the process was set in stone; it was used as a catalyst, to see what came out.

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\(^{104}\) “John Cage :: Official Website,” http://johncage.org/.
\(^{105}\) “Marcel Duchamp World Community,” http://www.marcelduchamp.net/.
\(^{106}\) Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 231.
Discipline (habit, reflection, everyday and every day)

The following are examples of artworks where discipline was demonstrated in the completion of a large-scale work, or a large number of consecutive works.

German guitarist Michael Peters created his MY2K project in the year 2000 – a sound diary for every day of that year with recordings posted online each day alongside a description of the sounds recorded. On the project website Michael cites his goal as “…to create and record 10 seconds of music on each day of the year … either a composed piece, something improvised, or just a recorded environmental sound … At the end of 2000, the musical diary consisted of 366 short pieces of music - all in all, about an hour … The idea for this diary came from Karsten Schulze, a musician from Düsseldorf/Germany.” The sound sources and kinds of musical material used by Michael in his project correlate to the types of sounds and music that appears throughout Momentum. However the two projects differ in their artistic concepts – MY2K functions as purely a sound diary with 366 separate entries. Momentum, although made up of hundreds of separate parts, functions as a large work with parts that are all connected.

Freelance floral designer from Washington, DC, Keith Stanley, began his 365 Days of Ikebana in July 2011, and successfully completed the project in July 2012. He wrote on his blog of his reasons for undertaking such a venture: “…something to get me motivated to do more work and do it on a daily basis. My intention is to start small, do it every day, and hopefully develop some solid work habits and learn to begin to work outside the box.” These goals align with some of my reasons for creating Momentum in the way that I did – to acquire the habit of practicing my art daily, to push myself, and to achieve a large goal by breaking it into a lot of small, manageable parts.

An exhaustive list of ‘365’ and ‘every day’ projects is available on US artist Noah Scalin’s Make Something 365 blog.¹¹⁰ Momentum featured on the Make Something 365 blog in November 2013.¹¹¹ The difference between Momentum and many of the other projects on the aforementioned blog site is that Momentum was conducted and researched in a very formal way, in order to study and observe elements of my compositional process in addition to creating something every day.

American alternative rock band They Might Be Giants¹¹² established Dial-A-Song¹¹³ in 1983, a hotline that fans could call to hear an exclusive song by the band, often changed daily. This answering machine service operated until 2006. There is now a website that archives all the original tracks that featured on Dial-A-Song, and a 52 track double CD of selected tracks was released in 2002.

**Audience Interaction and Collaboration**

The following are examples of artists who invite audience contribution and collaboration in the creation of new works.

Pop musician Imogen Heap’s *listening chair*¹¹⁴ project encourages her audience to submit ‘seeds’ of ideas for songs via a video upload function on her website, with the chance that Heap may include these ideas in her work. These seeds may be concepts, lyrics, or sound recordings; Heap’s project examines inspiration and attempts to tap into what her audience is thinking and feeling. In Heap’s project, as in Momentum, there is a particular spirit in which audience members contribute their thoughts, ideas, and recordings. Audience members agree to contribute with the full knowledge that their contributions may or may not be used, and may be manipulated, chopped up, or distorted.

¹¹⁰ Scalin, "Make Something 365 & Get Unstuck”.
¹¹³ They Might Be Giants, (Dial-A-Song: TMBG).
Performance artist Barbara Campbell’s *1001 Nights Cast* (2005-08) project was created in conjunction with her audience in every stage. For 1001 consecutive days Campbell prompted her followers to write a short story, based on a news article she chose each morning, then at night she would broadcast a contributed story and retain a written record of the event on her website. 243 individual authors took part in the project over a nearly three-year period.\(^1\)

Another project, *Soundscraper*, conceived by composer Thom Blum and first executed in San Francisco in March 2014 is “live crowdsourced soundscaping”\(^2\). Analogous to a live version of the collaborative element of *Momentum*, this project calls for specific recorded contributions from participants, who sign up to ‘perform’ their recordings via live streaming, alongside others from around the world. Different sections of the work may call for recordings of household objects, field recordings, conversation, or ambient sounds in specific environments. When streamed live the recordings are mixed by a separate participant, making this project very much like *Momentum*, the main difference being that the sound sources in *Soundscraper* are decided and prescribed to potential contributors in advance. The “maiden voyage” of Blum’s project was two hours in length and contained recordings from more than 20 participants.\(^3\)

There are a number of online creative communities where sharing work regularly or committing to producing a set amount of work facilitates motivation. Examples are the *Illustration Friday* site\(^4\) that poses a weekly challenge to followers to create a new illustration on a given topic, with one week to complete the illustration and upload it to the site. Each Friday a new topic is posted and the operators of the site have built an enormous community of illustrators and their resulting work. Additionally, the *RPM Challenge* site\(^5\) makes a similar proposal each February, where recording artists are challenged to record an album in 28 (or

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\(^1\) Campbell, "2001 Nights Cast".

\(^2\) Ibid.


\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) "Illustration Friday," http://illustrationfriday.com/.

\(^6\) "The Rpm Challenge," http://rpmchallenge.com
29) days. Participants are encouraged to “get busy and stop waiting around for the muse to appear” and to “get the gears moving.”

Learning to Love you More is a broader online motivational project; from 2002 to 2009 over 8000 people responded to artists Miranda July and Harrell Fletcher’s calls to participate:

Participants accepted an assignment, completed it by following the simple but specific instructions, sent in the required report (photograph, text, video, etc), and their work got posted on-line. Like a recipe, meditation practice, or familiar song, the prescriptive nature of these assignments was intended to guide people towards their own experience.

Challenges like these engage with the community and use collective power to motivate people to do and make things. They espouse the kinds of reasons I had for conducting Momentum in the first place: “Don’t wait for inspiration,” scolds the RPM site, “taking action puts you in a position to get inspired. You’ll stumble across ideas you would have never come up with otherwise, and maybe only because you were trying to meet a day’s quota of (song)writing. Show up and get something done, and invest in yourself and each other.”

121 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
124 "The Rpm Challenge".
Open Access – Creative Commons - Blurring of Authorship

Just as audience members contributing to *Momentum* didn’t know how their contributions would be utilised, by opening *Momentum* up to contributions I relinquished complete authorship of the projects. The following are examples of other artists who have created art works with a similar blurring of authorship.

In her dance work *Continuous Project - Altered Daily* (1969-70) Yvonne Rainer provided various sections of movement and choreographic material that could be executed in any way and in any order by the performers. Ambivalent towards hierarchy, Rainer encouraged her dancers to cooperate, collaborate, and change the work, as it was being created and performed. She “experimented with the possibilities of choice on the part of the performers, giving them the options to break a prescribed section, to repeat or continue a section, or to ‘do your own thing’.”

Open source black metal band Nahvalr has a crowd sourcing process for collecting musical material that is similar to *Momentum*. The band invite recorded contributions via their website, resulting in unseen collaborations between dozens of fans, audience members, and fellow artists on each release. They describe their process as “several people, operating anonymously around the globe, have their work hacked, chopped, distorted, fused and recorded over to create something altogether new.”

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125 Banes, "Grand Union: The Presentation of Everyday Life as Dance," 83.
126 Ibid., 43.
127 Ibid., 44.
128 Ibid.
Online Documentation

Many artists and non-artists alike make habits of posting elements of their work or life online regularly. I noted this in my journal in July 2012, observing friends on Facebook who always posted a photo when they did a certain thing, for example a friend in California who uploads a regular photo of his Friday night dinner with his daughter. Another friend takes one photo at every performance he attends. Others consistently share, film, record, or photograph different moments or events that act as important markers in their lives and creative journeys. For artists, sharing unfinished work and receiving feedback along the way can act as good motivation to keep going or to finish a project.

Why?

The process of conducting *Momentum* allowed me to engage with my artistic practice every day, inviting the possibility of new knowledge, new skills, and new collaborators to stretch me and take my work to unfamiliar places. The other artists cited above give a variety of reasons for conducting their own work, and these reasons intersect at various points with my own motivations for creating *Momentum*. These reasons include the desire to rigorously practice and hone my craft, to experiment with particular methods of composition, collaboration, performance, and publication, to engage with my audience, and to create a large-scale work in a disciplined fashion by completing small tasks regularly.

*Momentum* may not fit neatly into any particular compositional or stylistic box. It was and remains an experiment, an exploratory work using a variety of tools and methodologies, and demanding “new kinds of perception and new ways of appreciation.”

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Cumulative Composition

A distinctive characteristic of *Momentum* was that each incarnation of the project was created in a cumulative fashion. The disciplined way in which I went about creating the works, the attention paid, and the habits that grew out of this are vital to the concept and this research as a whole, but the cumulative compositional method is what makes *Momentum* stand apart from other ‘one-a-day’ projects. In the initial 366 project I created a new, short musical composition every day (the daily mix, for the purpose of blogging and sharing my process with my audience as I went along). Each day’s work built on the previous day’s work and I kept in mind that the daily pieces would form part of a greater whole. Knowing this, but not having made any particular plans about where the work would go, creatively, over the course of the year, allowed me to build on and adjust the work as it evolved - taking cues from contributors, my own lived experience, and the world around me by listening and observing the whole time, and readjusting my expectations with each new addition.

The cumulative form of *Momentum* mimics processes in nature. Like sedimentary layers of rock, or sap that seeps out and hardens in layers on a tree, each new musical cell that I created appeared on the day of inclusion, then on the subsequent days was absorbed into the work as a whole. Similarly, new technology builds upon itself and upon previous iterations of itself, incorporating existing technology into new paradigms. Each new loop and layer I created as part of *Momentum* contributed to the evolution of my artistic practice.

Visual artist and writer Wendy Richmond describes a similar process in regards to her studio practice in her book *Art Without Compromise*: she proclaims a studio session successful when “…each step evolves from the previous one … by the time I leave,” she writes, “I have made something very different from what I had expected”. Similarly, the *Turkey* and *Live* projects grew out of the 366 project and although they stand alone as works in their own right they developed very

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much out of the initial project. Bayles and Orland agree, stating, “What you need to know about the next piece is contained in the last piece. The place to learn about your materials is in the last use of your materials. The place to learn about your execution is in your execution.”

In each of the projects I aimed for each day’s mix to be a small, standalone piece. As smaller parts of a larger composition, different daily mixes tended to function differently. Some sounded distinctly like the start or end of a section; others acted more as transitional sections within the larger work. Some increased in tension, some decreased. I weighed this issue in my journal on Day Ninety Six (April 5, 2012):

Music vs sound ‘stills’. Some days (like today) I feel like my pieces stand still, are almost like a snapshot, a musical version of the photo I post to accompany them. Other days (like Peter Knight’s from day before yesterday), feel like a completed piece in themselves. I don’t think one is better or worse, and perhaps it’s important that the finished product is made up of particular markers and stepping stones. At the time it always feels a bit weird though, as if someone who just hears the post from today might think my music is a bit static, or something. This is generally a fear I hold though. I love minimalism but I guess I realize that not everyone sees/hears it in the way I do, and if you’re not comfortable or excited by a sound, sitting with it for even ten seconds must be hard. I think.

The reality of working on something every day and cumulatively was that each day’s work functioned in a particular way, and the roles and context of each section of musical material shifted as the work expanded. Even though each track stood alone they all served different functions, musically, as part of the greater whole. My hope in the case of anyone listening to an isolated Momentum track was that any part of the work would stand up as a small musical work in its own right.

132 Bayles and Orland, Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking, 35.
133 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 5th April 2012. See appendices page 166.
In addition to this, the work, when posted online, was always accompanied by some kind of contextual explanation of the nature and scale of the project itself.

In Alan Licht’s book *Sound Art* John Cage is quoted as saying that the “...enjoyment of a modern painting carries one’s attention not to a center of interest but all over the canvas and not following any particular path. Each point on the canvas may be used as a beginning, continuing, or an ending of one’s observation of it.”[^134] I hoped that the daily *Momentum* tracks would be viewed and listened to in this way. The installation of the 366 project at the George Paton Gallery occurred in this way, also, as all the tracks were overlaid and played on a loop, so that no discernable beginning or end point was audible.

In each stage of *Momentum* the compositional material in the current work was always the starting point for future work, which was the starting point for the next work, and so on. Also, every day’s new material was completely unknown to me, the composer, beforehand, being sourced, composed, performed, or received from contributors on the day (or very close to the time) that it was included into the work. All three iterations of the project were created in the same cumulative fashion, whereby each day new sounds were added and some of the previous sounds were discarded or no longer included in the current mix or performance.

Each of the projects helps to make up a part of the *Momentum* series, and within each of the projects the musical material built directly on the previous material. This allowed for a high level of engagement with the musical material as each stage of the project was created and built on the previous stage. In my journal on Day Twenty Two (January 22, 2012) I commented: “I am like my own ensemble, on a large and drawn out scale – listening each day and responding.”[^135] Wendy Richmond describes a similar method, whereby actions in the creation of a work of art influence future decisions in the creation of the same piece. She describes her


[^135]: Journal entry, Nat Grant, 22nd January 2012. See appendices page 157.
own creative process: “the conversations, the influence, and the momentum are within the work: one step leads to another; one mark informs the next.”

‘Cumulative composition’ is the term I use to describe the way in which I created Momentum. My definition of a cumulative compositional method is one where a musical work is created in a very particular chronological way. This term has grown out of pieces I have made since 2007 – art works that are created or performed cumulatively and over a period of days, weeks or months, with each new section building directly onto the musical material from the previous section.

I identify this approach as vital to the way in which I work; it was this approach that was the impetus for creating Momentum in the first place, and the inspiration for naming it thus. Links may be made between the cumulative process of composing Momentum and the research that also comprises the Momentum projects: “Knowledge is additive and accumulative,” writes Richard Sennett, “…it builds up in time as people stand on the giants’ shoulders, like those human pillars in the circus.”

In pursuing this compositional method I found that it is the one that works best for me, most entices me to keep creating, and helps me to learn the most about my compositional processes. In my journal on February 21, 2013 I noted that, “I think the continuous aspect of this work might be something that ties a few things together. It can be argued that by working on something continuously that it’s easier to see small changes. Also for reflection, attention, habit, discipline.”

The cumulative nature of the projects and the relatively small goal of producing a several minute long track every day meant that I achieved a sustained creative output over a long period of time. In doing a little each day I didn’t burn out or use up all my creative energy at once, and I didn’t have to work up to having or finding that energy again the next day. British composer and electronic musician Daphne Oram likens maintaining creative energy to keeping an electrical circuit going in

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136 Richmond, Art without Compromise, 4.
137 Sennett, The Craftsman, 79.
her book An Individual Note, writing “...if we can feed the right sort of energy into the circuit and keep its vitality going...”\textsuperscript{139} By adding a little to Momentum each day I felt that I was able to maintain this energy and vitality.

The kind of work that comes of my process of cumulative composition is different to durational art works: though the completed Momentum projects are long in length, the duration of the works isn’t the focus - the cumulative nature of the works is. The works are all very much linked and were created in a particular, chronological, and deliberate order. The process is a kind of extension of minimalism, of looping, influenced by the music of Steve Reich, whereby the musical material is repeated as it changes subtly over time.

In the case of Momentum cumulative means chronological as well. One could spend a year composing and recording a piece of music, chipping away at it from all sides, like writing this exegesis, but Momentum was created very much ‘in order’, with new musical material being added always at the end of the existing work. Compositionally, however, each new day’s additions weren’t always forefront in the mix. Creating each Momentum composition cumulatively relates to the placement of new material along the compositional timeline, but not necessarily to the placement of that new material within the composition as it stood each day, in terms of prominence or dynamics. Momentum was created chronologically but sometimes sounds were added in small amounts, in the background, or underneath other sounds, only to emerge stronger at a later point. On Day Two Hundred and Thirty Five (August 22, 2012) I wrote about this in my journal:

\textit{Adding small or soft sounds to the mix, worrying about whether they're enough (like today, adding soft song birds to popping corn loops and layers). But who says each day’s addition has to be the top layer or the loudest sound? I like the idea of a reverse jenga type of situation, where I can sneak a little layer in the middle or underneath some big heavy ones.}\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{139} Daphne Oram, An Individual Note (London: Galliard Ltd., 1972), 8.
\textsuperscript{140} Journal entry, Nat Grant, 22\textsuperscript{nd} August 2012. See appendices page 183.
This kind of variety of treatment of new musical material is something that I became more comfortable doing and experimenting with as the yearlong project developed.

Working cumulatively to create each stage of *Momentum* benefited both the work and my research. I was constantly engaged with the parts of the composition I was creating, the parts that had come immediately before, and also some time before, enabling a great level of continuity in such a large piece, and a heightened awareness of my compositional processes. I found that creating cumulatively suited my creative process too, and I expressed a desire to keep working this way in my journal, early on in the 366 project:

“...the very process of doing this work cumulatively... I like working this way and I think I’d like to continue it in the future. Perhaps not every day but I would like to have work that’s always on the go, that has resting points at which I can share it with people but I keep building on it.”

Much as an artist’s individual projects are connected purely through being created by that person over a period time, the idea of a deliberately cumulative and ongoing work that reflected a part of my life and was also a part of my everyday experience really appealed to me. The previous day’s creation functioned as a springboard in terms of the musical material and also in terms of aesthetic, colour, and feel. This gave me a starting point for each day’s work, and knowing I would develop the work more the following day allowed me to concentrate on one iteration of the material at a time. These cumulative processes that I used to build *Momentum* were similar to processes I had used in earlier work, both in live looping and in durational performance works.

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141 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 19th March 2012. See appendices page 164.
Momentum was experiential in that I lived the work every day, as well as the reflexive processes of making, researching, and writing. The project blog, journal, sound recordings, and images serve as a combined sound, image, and text diary for the year 2012, plus the month in Turkey and four days and nights in Melbourne in 2013. On October 29, 2012, I noted the personal nature of the work in my journal:

>This work is very personal! I’m compiling images for the George Paton application, and there’s a picture of my fridge. Thinking back, there are photos of my cat, my groceries, my kitchen, bathroom, lounge room, studio, a couple of me, my groceries, my cooking/baking, eBay purchases. There are also descriptions of my daily activities: lessons with kids, family events, excursions and visits with friends, holidays/trips, gigs and other music-related work, pet caring.\textsuperscript{142}

On November 1, 2012 I noted that the daily mixes were representative of “moments out of my day ... Stationary even though they’re moving forward in time. Like the musical equivalent of a photograph.”\textsuperscript{143} Each of the Momentum projects is filled with memories, for me, of people, of the places I’ve been, and things I’ve done. As much as Momentum is a composition, a sound work, and a personal diary, it’s also a sound map of my world, life, and experiences for the times in which it was created. On February 21, 2013 I reflected on the recordings I’d made a year earlier:

>Thinking back to this time last year (and that fact that I sound mapped a whole year). Remembering the crickets at dusk, and the green grass out the front of my flat. Feels the same, smells the same. Pretty cool. Imbued with memories.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{142} Journal entry, Nat Grant, 29\textsuperscript{th} October 2012. See appendices page 190.
\textsuperscript{143} Journal entry, Nat Grant, 1\textsuperscript{st} November 2012. See appendices page 191.
\textsuperscript{144} Journal entry, Nat Grant, 21\textsuperscript{st} February 2013. See appendices page 201.
Momentum was also an experiential project for my audience - my aim in terms of publishing online and allowing contributions and derivative works was to push my engagement with my audience, and divulge as much about my art as possible for those interested in engaging with it. Some became regular contributors; others initiated their own projects in a similar vein (these will be detailed in the Derivative and New Works chapter). One frequent contributor, US percussionist Noah Demland, used Momentum as part of his high school teaching curriculum, to show his students an example of using digital tools in a compositional process. In January 2013 he emailed me to tell me about it:

“I also wanted to let you know that I used some of Momentum in my GarageBand 101 workshop today! I gave the kids a basic introduction to recording and using effects, so we listened to one of your pieces. Then I set them loose with laptops to wander the school in search of good sounds to record so they could make their own pieces. They were really into the one I played for them (I think 365?), and they had a good time running around collecting school sounds (some highlights: a combination lock, squishing a banana, slamming locker doors, and the toilet flushing).”

Momentum allowed me to find ways to connect with people over shared experiences that involved sounds – comparing Sydney and Melbourne trains, experiencing summer or winter and listening to air conditioners and heaters, interacting with babies, dogs, cats, and finding new uses for kitchen implements. The results of this will be discussed further in the Audience and Momentum chapter.

The undertaking of Momentum determined the themes and subject matter of the ensuing compositions. The aesthetics and content of the compositions were important but were considered equal to the exchange between myself and my method, and the "gesture of introspection, of punctual questioning, of

145 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 12th January 2013. See appendices page 199.
encounter." The daily dialogue between my life and interactions with others helped shape the composition and were equally as important as the musical material itself.

My understanding of this practice shifted over time, and grew with each degree of investigation, as did the work itself. Through a daily engagement with experiential music composition I hoped to encounter and strengthen my own self-awareness and compositional processes. What I found was that the experience of creating *Momentum* was the most important thing, to me. Everything that I learnt and discovered and am now able to articulate about the concept came out of the process of making and living the work.

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...it might be claimed that improvisation is best pursued through its practice in music. And that the practice of music is best pursued through improvisation.

Derek Bailey\textsuperscript{147}

**Improvisation**

Creating *Momentum* involved collaborating with the unknown on a daily basis. Each day of each project I made decisions about what kind of sounds would be added – often this decision was made upon hearing something unusual or interesting throughout the day. The subjects of the recordings sent in by my collaborators were completely unknown in advance, as were some of the collaborators themselves. The need to find something new to record every day required me to constantly “...improvise with the material at hand, calling up resourcefulness and inventiveness...”\textsuperscript{148}

I took a chance inviting others to contribute to *Momentum*, knowing that I may be sent recordings that would clash, aesthetically, with the existing material in the composition. I did receive recordings that challenged me, compositionally, and at those times (especially at the start of the 366 project) I was concerned that the entire composition wouldn’t be consistent. This forced me to find new ways to incorporate these different recordings into the work in order maintain a consistent character.

For this purpose, I particularly approached artists and acquaintances whose work already resonated with me to contribute to *Momentum*. Those artists who approached me about contributing also produced recordings that consistently fit the aesthetic of what I was doing. This can be attributed either to luck or to participants first listening or becoming acquainted with my own work and aesthetic before selecting sounds to record and send. Additionally, and potentially


\textsuperscript{148} Nachmanovitch, *Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art*, 80.
due to all the different types of contributions I received, the nature of Momentum was all-inclusive, and the breadth of different sound sources and digital manipulations grew with each project.

Derek Bailey writes of the word ‘improvisation’, saying “There is a noticeable reluctance to use the word and some improvisers express a positive dislike for it. I think this is due to its widely accepted connotations which imply that improvisation is something without preparation and without consideration, a completely ad hoc activity, frivolous and inconsequential, lacking in design and method.”149 He goes on to use it anyway, “firstly because I don’t know of any other [word] which could effectively replace it, and secondly because I hope that we, the other contributors and myself, might be able to redefine it.”150 My reasons for using the term here are similar. For me it is the best way to describe the process of daily experimentation and risk taking that creating Momentum involved, and my own definition is derived from my experiences of performing in situations where there has been no fixed form or content, in “…premeditated act[s] of non-premeditation…”151

I have experience as an improvising performer; most of the music I have presented in public since 2010 has been improvised. Being open to these kinds of performances has allowed for collaborations with dozens of other improvising artists, both Australian and international. After years spent learning notated music, the freedom of playing in my own way has been incredibly liberating. The experiences that came before are important, but I have found where I want to be, creatively, within performance environments that are either improvised or devised by myself. I don’t get nervous anymore or worry about getting the notes ‘right’, or losing my place; I can lose myself in the music instead.

In performance and in my compositional projects I have developed my own improvisational language; I collect ideas and material to work with and incorporate into this vocabulary. “The improviser can also look for material which

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150 Ibid.
151 Zorn, Arcana III Musicians on Music, 62.
will be appropriate for, and which will facilitate, improvisation,” writes Bailey. “…It forms part of the search for whatever is endlessly variable.” Momentum opened my practice up to include any and all sounds as potential compositional material, in keeping with and extending beyond my previous understanding of the philosophy of John Cage as detailed in the Momentum Method chapter.

I collected sounds for Momentum as I would acquire percussion instruments and found objects for a performance; if a sound caught my attention throughout the day that I thought might be well placed within the project I would try to record it to include in the work; I would try to imagine how new sounds could fit within my existing practice. Some of these were instruments and objects that I manipulated and repurposed in the same ways as I would in performance, others were stand alone sounds that I simply captured and manipulated digitally afterwards.

Nachmanovitch writes about the end of concert improvisation in the 19th century, when “composition and performance became progressively split from each other, to the detriment of both. Popular and classical forms also became ever more split from each other, again to the detriment of both.” He cites the reappearance of improvisation in Western music in the 20th century, “…notably in the field of jazz.” In Free Play he asks the reader whether they are going to blindly believe everything they are taught about music, art, science, and daily life, or “… am I going to try things out for myself and see what’s really true for me?”

The large scale, improvised experiment of Momentum involved trying things out to find the best way for me to work and to approach my art making. In conducting Momentum I gave myself cart blanche to try things out, to experiment, to incorporate anything and everything into my work, and to see what happened, to approach people to collaborate with: to unapologetically put my art first for a whole year. Nachmanovitch describes the improvisational process as “… our quest

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153 Nachmanovitch, Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art, 8.
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid., 12.
to learn to speak with our own voice.”156 *Momentum* gave me that opportunity. Improvising gives me that opportunity, and working on that every day gave me confidence to speak up with that voice, and to listen to it also.

Similar to how I might approach a live improvised performance, I began *Momentum* with a single idea, listened to the work I was making, responded to it, and repeated this process over and over, letting the work lead me and not trying to force it to go or develop in any particular direction. It was a huge risk embarking on something that I did not have a solid plan for, aesthetically. Creating *Momentum* required me to be completely open to chance, change, and opportunity, to embark on something not knowing how it would turn out, and to not hang on to any expectations I had about this.

“The heart of improvisation” writes Nachmanovitch, “is the free play of consciousness as it draws, writes, paints, and plays the raw material emerging from the unconscious. Such play entails a certain degree of risk.”157 There turned out to be great value in my risk taking, resulting in a large compositional learning curve, opportunities for new collaborations, and experiences I would not have had otherwise. “Stepping into the unknown”158 every day throughout the creation of *Momentum* meant that I achieved a huge amount, compositionally and creatively; I made connections with a lot of people, met new friends, creative colleagues, and collaborators.

The exploratory journey of creating *Momentum* allowed me to do what Nachmanovitch describes as freeing “ourselves from arbitrary restrictions and expand[ing] our field of action.” He speaks highly of the action of play – “play makes us flexible ... Play is the free spirit of exploration.”159 I allowed myself to play and to experiment, with sounds, with recording, editing, and compositional techniques, and my practice grew stronger and more diverse as a result.

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156 Ibid., 41.
157 Ibid., 9.
158 Ibid., 23.
159 Ibid., 43.
Carrying out *Momentum* in this way required a particular set of skills, reminiscent of improvisation, and the ability to be open to “moment[s] of discovery, in which all possibilities reside.”\(^{160}\) The result of carrying out this process more than 400 times was that I completed *Momentum* feeling like I had the ability and the freedom to be able to manipulate any kind of sound to make my art. Each day I applied the flexible approach that I was developing to my work, making decisions and adjusting the framework if necessary. One thing I underestimated was the finished length of the 366 project. I initially imagined a one hour-long piece made up of 5-minute movements – one for each month. On Day Twenty (January 20, 2012) I wrote in my journal:

> *Given my concerns re: the enormity of the project, I really am interested to see how mixing ‘January’ goes… I have a feeling that I’m trying to make each day too different, to keep my audience interested, but that when I mix the month down into a 5 minute-ish piece there will just be too much going on. It’s good I’ve decided to mix monthly though. This way if I’m right then February and onwards can be much simpler and slow moving – perhaps at the cost of ‘interest’ but in the best interest of the project as a whole.*

The mix for the month of January came in at 20 minutes! I was surprised but I realised that the work was going to turn out differently to how I’d planned, and I adjusted accordingly. “In planning we focus attention on the field we are about to enter,” observes Stephen Nachmanovitch, “then release the plan and discover the reality of time’s flow.”\(^{161}\) I made my plan then let the compositions develop as they needed to. I let expectations go when they weren’t relevant anymore; conducting the projects the way I did allowed me to do this. I hadn’t promised a record label one 30 or 60 minute CD, or an audience a one-hour performance. *Momentum* was mine and I was completely free to let it be however it turned out.


The form, like the duration of *Momentum*, was improvised as it was created. Derek Bailey draws attention to the fact that experimental and exploratory composition is regularly criticized for not following standard musical forms, of the “...importance attached to form by those people concerned with composed music. Even in those parts of contemporary composition where the earlier types of overall organization no longer serve, a great deal of ingenuity is exercised in finding something upon which the music can be 'based'.”\(^{162}\) I had imagined, as stated earlier, that the long form of the 366 would be easily listened to or played in one sitting. This changed as the work grew to just over four hours in length; *Momentum* “made its own form”\(^{163}\) which, as percussionist Frank Perry says, meant “the freeing of form that it may more readily accommodate my imagination.”\(^{164}\)

The way in which I conducted *Momentum* mimicked, or came close to mimicking, the interaction that occurs between a performer and their audience: the closest that I have achieved to this interaction away from the stage. I sent my work out into the world each day; by improvising and immediately publishing each *Momentum* track I took a chance on how my audience would react, and whether I would gain or lose followers along the way.

As the projects progressed more and more tracks were being listened to and downloaded on SoundCloud: I can see this from the site statistics. I don’t know who listened and I imagine it’s possible that I lost audience members along the way but the size of the audience increased – it is also possible that people were coming back to listen again and also sharing the site within their own circles. I took a chance that my audience would grow or at least stick around. The feedback I got from my audience was that the work was at the very least engaging or the concept was interesting, and people came back to check in. This propelled me to keep creating and to keep sharing.

\(^{163}\) Ibid., 112.
\(^{164}\) Ibid.
Derek Bailey writes of the dangers of trying to please one’s audience: “When the musicians note a positive reaction from the public,” he observes, “they are tempted to reproduce the effect which provoked this reaction and consequently one can understand how the rapid deterioration of the music performed could occur...concerts change gradually into a music-hall number from which inspiration is excluded or is transformed into a commercial method.”

I didn’t experience this. The feedback I received and increasing traffic on the online platforms that hosted *Momentum* encouraged me to continue to conduct *Momentum*, and to continue to be myself in the creation of my art.

Seeing what I could achieve through the creation of *Momentum* made me want to try more things, and learn more. It stopped me from thinking I couldn’t do certain things. It made me want to try my hand at tasks I’d always dreamt of doing, and to continue to practice these things if I enjoyed them and wanted them in my life.

Improvising on such a large scale stretched my skills and my imagination, and took me into unchartered territory in terms of my creative practice. This process allowed me to “begin to experience creativity and the free play of improvisation as one with [my] ordinary mind and ... ordinary activity.”

Improvisation served as an important approach and technique in the composition of *Momentum*. Within the whole scope of the project I regard *Momentum* as a composition, whereby improvisational processes were utilised in the sourcing and crafting of sonic material. The ways in which I sourced sounds to record for the project and treated these sounds, digitally, occurred within a larger practice of improvisation, exploration and experimentation. Each published track, however, was crafted in a deliberate and compositional way, edited and gone over to adjust, manipulate, and sculpt the real time source material into something concrete.

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165 Ibid., 44.
You will never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of your success is found in your daily routine.  

John C. Maxwell

Everyday and Every Day

At the onset of this project I was interested to find what could be discovered about my art and creative processes through every day examination, through the practice of doing something again and again, initially for 366 days in a row, and observing my compositional habits and the resulting musical work through a reflexive process of action and reflection in a disciplined and cumulative daily practice. There was a continuous routine and circularity to conducting Momentum. Each day I conducted a number of steps in a particular order; I recorded, edited, mixed, blogged, and shared the work. The next day I would begin again with this process. The architect Renzo Piano describes this circular metamorphosis of practicing and creating: “you do it, you redo it, and you redo it again.”

By creating in this way I was able to make a large-scale project by working methodically and adding to the work consistently over a long period of time. As a result I gained valuable insight into my process because of a continued and long-term engagement with the work. By contrast, in another work created simply over one year there may have been stops and starts in productivity – perhaps periods of great inspiration and much composition and development of material, and other drier patches or periods where one was too busy with other work to dedicate time to the composition. Momentum developed not only cumulatively but also regularly and methodically.

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168 Sennett, The Craftsman, 40.
There are several important elements here – the fact that I worked every day on each of the Momentum projects, the incorporation of Momentum into my everyday life, and my use of ordinary everyday objects and experiences as inspiration and material for the projects. Creating Momentum became part of my daily routine and the sounds chosen reflected my moods, thoughts, and actions on a given day. The work ran parallel to my life and is autobiographical in that sense. The sounds that I chose to record, photos I took, my blog and journal posts reveal a lot about my personality, my habits, and my way of living.

Some of the goals of working every day on Momentum were to deepen my engagement with my work and reveal new knowledge about my practice through regular action and reflection. As a result of incorporating Momentum into my daily routine the projects engaged regularly with this routine and with my everyday life. There is a movement of artists and thinkers who strive to re-connect art and everyday life – John Dewey and Allan Kaprow, amongst others. I believe that what I am doing is different to these people, i.e. they are trying to bring art and everyday life closer (moving art from the museums into everyday life).

In creating Momentum I challenged myself to make art every day in an attempt to refine my technique and closely observe my habits. The online format allowed me to share my work widely and immediately, but I didn’t see it as taking my art from the concert hall to the masses, or a similar analogy, because I already shared music like this, as millions of artists do every day. The ‘every day’ element in my research refers to the disciplined manner in which I approached Momentum, the connection between my own work and my everyday existence, and a consistent engagement with the cumulative and reflexive processes of research and composition.

By working on Momentum every day I was able to become aware of how past, current and potential future material fit in the context of the whole work. On Day Thirty Three of the 366 project (February 2, 2012) I noted in my journal: “The toy accordion is so out of tune but I guess if I don’t record any other pitched material
for a while I might just get away with it.”169 By engaging with the work and revisiting the most recent parts regularly I was able to keep the sounds, form and aesthetic from the last few days in mind when making each new track and when selecting future sounds to record.

By drawing on everyday objects and experiences as the material for Momentum I hoped to show my audience that these everyday sounds and objects may form the basis of an art work, and to inspire a similar appreciation in them – showing, explaining, and allowing people to understand how my work is made and why particular materials are used. This reminded me, also, that despite the scale, complexity or depth of an artwork, the tools and materials can be quite simple. The benefits of working so consistently on Momentum included these kinds of observations, that became apparent from engaging regularly with the creation of and reflection on the project.

On Day One Hundred and Eighteen of the 366 project (April 27, 2012) I was staying with a friend who had a particularly noisy dishwasher, which I promptly recorded to include in that day’s track. As I uploaded the track I mused on the blog about including what I felt was such a mundane sound in the composition:

"I've been thinking about all the mechanical and household sounds that have been featuring in this project - worried that my choice of things to sample has been getting lazy, mundane, ordinary... But I realise that part of my reason for undertaking this project was to incorporate the acts of recording and mixing music into my everyday routine - a routine that involves a lot of mechanical sounds! The kinds of sounds that are the background to most people’s days: fridges, washing machines, clothes dryers, computers, fans, dishwashers. So I'm in a different environment for a few days, one that has a dishwasher! And different birds to the ones I hear at home..."170

169 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 2nd February 2012. See appendices page 160.
170 Grant, "Momentum".
I reflected further in my journal that day, “I feel that I am being true to what I set out to do, which was to make this project part of my everyday activities. Perhaps what I need to do now, in terms of my art, is push myself to use and manipulate these sounds in new and different ways.”\textsuperscript{171}

There is a link between improvisation and the every day element in the creation of \textit{Momentum}. Practicing my craft in a disciplined and habitual way and pushing myself to find new ways to make and manipulate music were amplified by the fact that I did these things every day. As I noted in my journal on May 9, 2013, \textit{Momentum} involved “Getting to a place that I’m unfamiliar with, but doing it everyday.”\textsuperscript{172}

Things I noticed by engaging with the work every day included details of the form and aesthetic of the work I was making, and observations about how with practice I was able to achieve the kind of perspective on the work detailed in the \textbf{Timeframe and Timescale} chapter:

\begin{quote}
I’ve noticed a shift in both the kinds of pieces I’m making, and also their form. I’m really enjoying using darker and noisier sounds, finding pitch if I can but not focusing on it, or texture even, anymore. The field recordings are changing the way I make music, I think. The form is not so predictable either, with samples coming in and out, and effects accumulating (or vice versa) (for example a variable delay that gets faster/slower/has more/less repeats etc\textsuperscript{173}
\end{quote}

\textbf{April 15, 2012}

Not all my thoughts and observations along the way were so confidant, but having to press on meant that I couldn’t dwell too much on these concerns. I noted them and re-visited at a later point.

\textsuperscript{171} Journal entry, Nat Grant, 27\textsuperscript{th} April 2012. See appendices page 170.
\textsuperscript{172} Journal entry, Nat Grant, 9\textsuperscript{th} May 2013. See appendices page 207.
\textsuperscript{173} Journal entry, Nat Grant, 15\textsuperscript{th} April 2012. See appendices page 167.
Reminding myself that it’s ok to have slow moving tracks, and to let something repeat (i.e. Noah’s doorknob) for awhile before it fades out. I think I’m suffering from being too close to my music again, and too familiar with the sounds and processing – by doing it every day I think perhaps subconsciously that it’s in danger of getting boring if I linger too long.\footnote{Journal entry, Nat Grant, 4th December 2012. See appendices page 193.}

December 4, 2012

I became concerned along the way regarding the quality of tracks I was publishing each day. Maintaining \textit{Momentum} meant putting in several hours each day and at busier times I couldn’t afford to go over and over a mix until I thought it was ‘perfect’. I wanted to put quality art out into the world every day – at the time it was difficult to always tell whether this was the case.

\textit{Technology – instant – complacency...}

Doing this every day – the work will remain online for the rest of the year and beyond. So I am creating something small each day which can be accessed almost instantly. But the work needs to be credible (to me), to have the longevity to hold up over a long period of time. Different to if I was uploading a track each day that would only be available for that day then taken down.\footnote{Journal entry, Nat Grant, 12th February 2012. See appendices page 161.}

Feb 12, 2012

I kept on regardless, because that’s what I had committed to do and in hindsight I’m really happy with all the compositional choice I made along the way.
Community

There are examples in other fields of different approaches to doing something every day in order to focus on a new skill, try a new way of living or to instill new habits. There are individuals who take a photo a day every day for a year. There are also online and offline communities that organise around taking challenges where people commit to do squats for two weeks, try veganism for a month or buy a 30 day yoga pass. The reasons and motivations for doing these things this way may vary but engaging and mobilising communities for motivation is an effective way to kick start change or to develop something new.

In her book *High Sobriety* Australian journalist and health reporter Jill Stark documents her year without drinking alcohol. She refers throughout to Chris Raine’s *Hello Sunday Morning* blog, an online community and refuge for those interested in giving up booze for one, three or 12 months. Stark writes that she was struck by this “network of young people all enjoying life and achieving their goals … and blogging about their experiences.” She observes, “public commitment was the key to the movement’s success, helping to keep people accountable, and therefore boosting their chances of making the distance.”

Another project, similar in its goals to *Momentum*, is that by Karen Chang, a designer and program manager who challenged herself to learn to dance in a year. She committed to dance every day and filmed her progress. The time-lapse video of her year of dancing appears on YouTube and is a testament to commitment and cumulative practice. Karen went on to co-found a website called *giveit100.com* that allows users to share videos of 100 day challenges that they set themselves. You can view all the videos of people before, during after their challenges – aiming to lose weight, learn a new skill, or share something with

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178 Ibid.
someone they love every day. In explaining her motivation to start this site, Karen references many of the reasons I had for creating *Momentum*: “When you watch someone perform or score the winning point - you’re only seeing a brief moment of glory,” she writes,

> What you don’t see is thousands of hours of preparation. You don’t see the self-doubt, lost sleep, the lonely nights working. You don’t see the moment they started. The moment they were just like you, wondering how they could ever be good.

*We made Giveit100 for you to see that moment. Everyone starts a beginner.*

*When I look back at old videos of my dancing - they’re so bad, I cringe. But I also feel something else: Woah. I’ve come a long way.*

*A child doesn’t notice when she’s growing taller. It’s the same way when you’re learning something. It happens so gradually, you hardly notice you’re getting better. We made Giveit100 for you to capture the moment you start out, and every moment after that. One day you may look back and cringe. But that will be the same moment you realize: Woah. I’ve come a long way.\(^{181}\)*

\[^{181}\text{Ibid.}\]
A homely example that a student gave me: she said that using discipline and not waiting for inspiration feels like someone who owns a bucket with which she hopes to catch rainwater. If she went out with the bucket only when she knew it was actually raining, she would certainly get some water sometimes. But if she goes out daily no matter what the weather she can catch the rain that falls unexpectedly. The curious truth . . . is that the writer who goes out with the bucket daily seems to provoke the rain.

Naomi Wolf182

Discipline

Throughout the process of creating Momentum I investigated how a disciplined and habitual mode of working affected my practice as a composer and improvising musician. Momentum investigated the concept of discipline, and the myth of inspiration as a divine state that artists must achieve in order to be successful in their creative output. The systematic way in which I approached all the Momentum projects challenged this notion, by simply getting to work creating something each day, as opposed to waiting for inspiration to strike.

Specifically, Momentum analyses the effects of discipline and reflexivity on an arts practice – the deliberate acts of creating and reflecting on my work every day. I set out to explore the different qualities of discipline arising out of the process of creating Momentum, and to reflect upon these during and after the musical works were complete. I set out to find whether the discipline of creating and maintaining something every day for a year resulted in a particular quality of work, and whether (and how) this impacted on my arts practice and my life.

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Disciplined and habitual processes in art making are tried and tested methods. Gustav Mahler worked this way, each morning at 6am making his way to his composing cottage in the woods.\textsuperscript{183} Nick Cave also describes the process of writing songs, holed away in his office, of being disciplined about his work hours, regardless of when inspiration might strike.\textsuperscript{184} Playwright Tennessee Williams wrote every day from the age of 18, a discipline he practiced until the end of his life. He made a point of writing every day, no matter what.\textsuperscript{185} And philosopher Immanuel Kant is said to have taken a walk down and back the same street at the same time every day.\textsuperscript{186}

Psychoanalyst and social philosopher Erich Fromm\textsuperscript{187} wrote of the practice (and mastery) of an art requiring discipline. He surmised "discipline should not be practiced like a rule imposed on oneself from the outside, but that it becomes an expression of one’s own will."\textsuperscript{188} One of my aims in conducting the Momentum projects was to analyse the findings of applying a disciplined and reflexive approach to my compositional processes – elements that I felt were vital to achieving my initial goal of creating something each day for a year. Initiating Momentum involved setting a clear goal that was worked towards consistently; recording, mixing, blogging, and all the other daily Momentum tasks became routine; discipline became habit. The link between habit and discipline was vital to the successful execution of Momentum.

Here, ‘discipline’ is defined simply as the practice of doing “something in a controlled and habitual way,”\textsuperscript{189} where ‘habit’ is taken to be “a settled or regular

\textsuperscript{183} John Sandell, "Mahler’s Summer Composing House, Klagenfurt: Photos from a Musical Rail Tour in Central Europe," http://www.johnsandell.co.uk/grandtour/klagenfurt-mahlerhouse.html.
\textsuperscript{187} "Erich Fromm," http://www.erichfromm.net/.
\textsuperscript{188} Erich Fromm, \textit{The Art of Loving} (Harper, 1956), 93.
However, contrary to Fromm’s initial statement, there were times throughout the Momentum projects where I did need to push myself in order to maintain my goal of creating something every day. Surprisingly, I found it more challenging not actually doing the work, but sitting down to start it; once I began there wasn’t any problem with finishing that day’s track and blog post.

Similarly, in his book The War of Art, Steven Pressfield writes about procrastination and the resistance to getting work done. He gives the example of writers: “It’s not the writing part that’s hard. What’s hard is sitting down to write. What keeps us from sitting down is Resistance.”

Therefore the discipline I imposed on myself was that of sitting down to work every day in 2012, a task which became easier as the composition grew larger, as I became more invested in the project and could see the benefits of working in such a systematic way. Some days it was more difficult than others to get started, but I needed to push through in order to achieve my overarching goal; the end result was dependent on all the little parts along the way. Completing each day was vital to realising the overall work; Momentum: 366 was all 366 parts, Turkey was all of its 31 parts and Live all four.

I wrote about this discipline in a blog post on April 19, 2012:

I've been thinking, reading, and writing a bit about the discipline involved in this project - the committing to doing something every day element. It hasn’t been a struggle for me to commit to this project, even though it sometimes takes up a lot of physical time and mental energy. Yet I wouldn’t say I’m a particularly disciplined person. But if pressed, I have to admit that there are certain things I’m very committed to: being vegan, being an artist, caring for my loved ones, for my cat... Yet nothing, not even the slowly expiring membership, can get me to the gym more than once a month at the moment, and the huge pile of books sitting patiently and ominously on my desk groans

with each new addition that I also 'don’t have time' to look at.

What I’m trying to say, I think, is it’s about priorities. I want to be a better artist, a better musician and a better composer. So I’ve committed to spending every day for a whole year taking a really good look at my process, and practicing my art in a very formalised way.¹⁹²

The discipline involved here was tied in with my commitment to prioritising Momentum for a set period of time. Discipline was enforced because I wanted to do the work every day to complete this project – Momentum was something I was really passionate about and was committed to seeing through. “Any action can be practiced as an art, as a craft, or as a drudgery,”¹⁹³ writes Stephen Nachmanovitch in regards to focusing attention and being willing to engage with your work and your passion. I enjoyed practicing and stretching myself; I enjoyed the routine of Momentum as part of my everyday life.

It is important to make a distinction here: that the disciplined practice I am referring to is specific to the process of creating Momentum; I was disciplined in the way I went about organising the project which did not stifle my creative freedom in any way. The set timeline and pre-arranged process for collecting and editing sounds (the ‘how’ of Momentum) allowed me to concentrate on the content (the ‘what’).

Establishing a set form and overarching process in creating Momentum allowed me freedom on a daily basis to make creative choices regarding the content of the work. It meant I was improvising on a large scale, interacting with indeterminacy each day, in terms of instruments, materials, time, and space. As Wendy Richmond suggests in Art Without Compromise, “collect your experiences, tools, resources, and confidence so that you have a strong foundation. Then, let go.”¹⁹⁴.

¹⁹² Grant, "Momentum".
¹⁹³ Nachmanovitch, Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art, 10.
¹⁹⁴ Richmond, Art without Compromise, 10.
As I went about creating Momentum I made a number of decisions about how I would conduct the projects, and attempted to adhere to these decisions with as much rigor as the other disciplined elements of the projects. However, I adjusted these decisions along the way if they weren’t enabling me to work better, to work smarter, or to be more creative. For example on Day Two of the 366 project (January 2, 2012) I wrote in my journal about the Momentum blog: “I think I will try to include a link every day (as in, somewhere I’ve been, an instrument I’m playing, some kind of inspiration) – outward from the page. Will reserve judgment though – don’t want to make any rules for myself at this point, too much pressure…” Surely enough, I was right and found this resolution became quite forced, and I discarded it after a few days.

The discipline involved in creating Momentum existed in terms of the execution of the plan and not imagination or creativity. I put in place a framework that dictated the start and end dates for the project, and how frequently I would add to the piece, but everything else was left as open as possible, in order to experiment and refine my practice, and to find the best possible way to go about the project. Not knowing what I was going to be making my art with on a daily basis kept the project fresh and exciting and challenged me in many ways. On May 5, 2013 I noted in my journal that discipline in some areas of the projects allowed me “greater freedom in others … in terms of imagination.” I found that having to come up with a new sound to record each day forced me to “change my style and open up new ways of doing things.”

Despite the structured approach, and due to the creative freedom I allowed myself within this structure, the project didn’t always turn out as planned: as mentioned previously, I had envisaged the complete 366 work as being around one hour in total length. In my journal on Day Thirty One (January 31, 2012) I noted: “The [January] mix is 20 minutes, not really what I was expecting! But I didn’t feel like I could make it much shorter and be happy, artistically. I can always shorten it later on though and it feels good to have this much done, and to be doing so much of this

195 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 2nd January 2012. See appendices page 150.
196 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 5th May 2013. See appendices page 205.
PhD just by spending a few hours each day. There’s no way I would have the discipline to work on it everyday otherwise.”

As I built Momentum I realised I didn’t want to doctor the length of any of the tracks. Part of the process of letting the work become truly itself was embracing however long or short the tracks turned out to be.

Regarding the content for Momentum I only made one rule - to not record the same sound more than once. I reviewed this rule throughout the initial yearlong project, when similar sounds appeared in very different and contrasting situations. For example, I recorded rain on my roof on Day Four of the 366 project (January 4, 2012), then again on Day Three Hundred (October 26). I reflected on the differences between the sounds, and decided that I had made the initial rule in order to extend myself, not constrict myself. The entry from my blog on October 26 reads:

I knew when I recorded rain on January 4 that I would probably regret it later on, as I had set myself the rule of only recording things once for this project. But this afternoon while rain was pelting on my kitchen window I decided that that was Summer rain, in the bathroom, in the morning. And this is Spring rain, in the kitchen, in the afternoon. Also, it’s my project and I can break the rules if I want to, so I did.

The flow on effect of following my one rule was that I stretched myself, to find new and different sounds to record and include in the project, and new and different ways of manipulating these recordings: “A huge struggle in any creative work…” notes Wendy Richmond in Art Without Compromise, “…is the pressure of coming up with something new, insightful, and unusual.” The task of finding something ‘new’ to add to Momentum: 366 each day was challenging, but I observed that this became easier over the course of the year, as I expanded the kinds of sounds I was using for the project, and the number of different ways I could use them. As the year went on I acquired new tools, directly as a result of the process of creating

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197 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 31st January 2012. See appendices page 159.
198 Grant, "Momentum".
199 Richmond, Art without Compromise, 22.
every day and having to incorporate every sound (including external contributions) into one coherent artwork. I noted this in a journal entry on Day Seventy (March 10, 2012):

The few days that I've been stuck for an idea, so far, in this project, it seems that shortly thereafter some cool sound has presented itself to me. I already considered myself an astute listener, but I think I am listening to the world even more closely now.

I don’t think that I am more inspired; I think I am just more attuned, listening harder, practicing more...

Additionally, thinking about finding 366 unique things to record on the first day was quite daunting. But as the project started to take shape the more closely I listened and the more sounds I found. I observed that I was listening more intently to the world and environment around me. There were certainly challenging points along the way, where I was uncertain of the originality of all these ‘different’ sounds. On June 28, 2012 I wrote in my journal:

At one point I think I wrote here that having to find new sound sources every day was a good challenge for me. And it has been but in a way having to find new ways to treat similar sound sources has been equally as challenging (and cool). For example Noah sending me similar samples to ones that I’ve recorded – they’re great but all metal things are starting to sound the same – I’m having to find different effects, using them in different ways: a combination of flanger, delay, panning, eq, and reverb (exploring some of Ableton’s pre-made combined effect racks)

Concerns regarding maintaining discipline appeared frequently in my journal at the beginning of 2012, but less so as the year and the project went on. There are many entries where I questioned my ability to be original, diverse in my choices, to

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200 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 10th March 2012. See appendices page 163.
201 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 28th June 2012. See appendices page 177.
carry out the entire project, and maintain a disciplined approach to the daily tasks. I learnt along the way that this got easier, not harder.

What is particular to Momentum is that with each stage of the project I didn’t know exactly what I would be recording each day, what people would send me, and therefore what I was going to do with any potential sounds. What makes these projects stand out is the dichotomy of the discipline involved in creating Momentum and the randomness of not knowing what with: materials, subject matter, or contributions. Like improvised theatre where subject matter and props are sprung on the performers at the last minute, integrating these materials was a challenge I was constantly faced with. I did know what sounds had come immediately beforehand in the composition, and therefore what I would be adding to; this, on occasion, informed my decision regarding what to add the next day, as well as how I would treat any new material.

This dichotomy between a disciplined approach and a mostly unknown set of inputs had the effect of stretching my compositional palette and widening the scope of both the recorded material used and digital tools utilised to sculpt the sounds.

On Day 9 of Momentum: Turkey (July 9, 2013) I observed the results of this in my journal:

> I feel that the year of experimenting and having to find new sounds in the world, wherever I was and whatever I was doing that day, has really freed me up to hear and find material wherever I am ... I feel like the first year of ‘Momentum’ really prepared me well for the next stages of my compositional development.²⁰²

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²⁰² Journal entry, Nat Grant, 9th July 2013. See appendices page 212.
How was discipline demonstrated and what effects did it have on the project and elsewhere in my life?

Discipline was demonstrated in the overall process of creating *Momentum* - through my initial commitment to compose every day for a year - as well as in the daily processes: for example, the way I chose musical material to record, edit, and include (or exclude) each day, mixed and uploaded the tracks, and wrote a blog post and journal entry. On Day Sixty Two of the 366 project (March 2, 2012), I made the following observation in my journal, about a decision regarding my recording process:

... *due to the nature of this project, and that this is the first time I've really used field recordings, I've developed a particular way of doing so. I can’t afford to leave the zoom [digital recorder] somewhere for an hour then trawl through the recording and pick out the bits I like. I need to really listen to what I’m recording and sub-consciously set a one and a half minute limit on individual recordings, even though I might make two or three on any given day. This way I know what sounds I’m after and, to an extent, what I’m getting; the extra time and concentration to set things up in the first place save me a lot of time later.*

Streamlining this process allowed me to make the best work possible in the time that I could dedicate to *Momentum* each day (between 1 and 4 hours). Having an outcome goal each day meant I couldn’t procrastinate too much or put off publishing something. I couldn’t give in to what Bayles and Orland label “the fear of the unknown: not having a clear idea of what the final product will be and wasting valuable time in a state that feels aimless and amorphous, without any sense of accomplishment or progress.”

The framework of *Momentum* allowed me to reflect on how I was progressing and where the composition was at, but not to dwell on these things: I was really being forced to be with my work, to spend time with it and let ideas settle, unfold, and

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reveal themselves. But I didn’t have time or allow myself to get into a state of too much uncertainty because I had to produce and publish work so consistently. On March 24, 2012 I wrote in my journal about the reflective nature of *Momentum* and how this was feeding into all parts of my practice:

> Really getting into field recordings. I feel less like a performer and more like an editor. But no less an artist. I used to think of everything I created in terms of performance, but I’ve noticed my perception shifting with more recording and less performing. The craft of production is where my focus lies now, and it’s changing my perception of performance too. Each is influencing the other, whereas before the majority of my experiences were with live performances so it influenced my recordings. It was very much a one way situation, now it feels more balanced.204

By the middle of 2012 my journal entries show that I was growing in confidence:

> Dynamics! I’m getting bolder, with everything. I’m noticing today especially (with the Styrofoam) that I’m playing with dynamics, and cutting up the samples, rather than having long loops that fade in and out. Todays track has a bed of pitched down (3 octaves) bowing foam, then three samples of breaking and bowing foam that come in and out at different levels in short, stunted sections (i.e. a move away from smoothness and eveness).205

**June 12, 2012**

> I’m getting more confident in the daily process so the raw material I’m mixing at the end of the month is more polished so I don’t have to spend as much time making things fit. Really happy with this one.206

**June 30, 2012**

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204 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 24th March 2012. See appendices page 164.
205 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 12th June 2012. See appendices page 175.
206 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 30th June 2012. See appendices page 177.
The lessons learnt from *Momentum* extend beyond the initial 366 project to other parts of my practice. This is why I chose to conduct the *Turkey* and *Live* projects, to expand my compositional palette and apply the *Momentum* model to different locations and situations. Completing the initial *Momentum* project, a mammoth exercise in discipline and creative mind and skill stretching, made me feel like I could tackle anything, and that with practice I could improve at any task.

*Momentum* exposed, for me, the naivety of thinking I was no good at something, simply because I had never tried it or tried once and found it difficult. Creating something every day for a year gave me confidence, through experience, to try new things. And conducting *Momentum* in such a disciplined fashion had a flow on effect to other areas of my life. I noted this in my journal on day Thirty Two (February 1, 2012):

> Doing this every day, committing to something then achieving it, is making me feel really good about myself. I want to do it, some days I feel like I can’t be bothered but when I’ve written the blog post and uploaded the tracks I feel like I’ve accomplished something, even if I haven’t done anything else ‘productive’ that day. And it makes me want to do other things, like go to the gym or research or reading. *Momentum*...²⁰⁷

This entry also highlights the manageability of this enormous project when broken up into 366 smaller sets of tasks. By completing a little each day I was able to achieve my goal. The deliberate planning to create *Momentum* one step at a time, the regular routine of creating something small every day, with enough time to consider each new addition, was more effective, I feel, than trying to tackle the entire composition and research project all in one go, and helped to avoid the dangers of becoming overwhelmed and giving up.

²⁰⁷ Journal entry, Nat Grant, 1ˢᵗ February 2012. See appendices page 160.
Later in 2012 I did something that I had attempted to do half-heartedly several times before and given up straight away each time – play guitar. On Day Three Hundred and Twenty Eight (November 23, 2012) my blog post reads:

I never thought I would be interested in playing guitar, and I thought that I had tried to get interested and failed. Then a friend suggested I start with electric, use one string and play with a delay pedal (similar to how I started looping, back in the day). This intrigued me and today I bought my first electric guitar, raced home and plugged it straight into a Boss delay pedal. I love it! I added an octave fuzz pedal which made it even better, then as I was turning up the ‘fuzz’ I noticed that this great radio interference was coming through the pedal and out my amp…

Having achieved so much already, I felt completely open to experimenting, to trying new things, and was able to think much more outside the box about approaching this new instrument at this point in the project. On November 25, 2012 (Day Three Hundred and Thirty) I blogged:

For better or worse, and in the spirit of pushing myself to try new things, here are my first attempts at a guitar track… I’m approaching it fairly tentatively for the moment, playing single notes and affecting them each a little differently until I figure out what I like. I made about 8 short loops each with one note or sound, and added varying amounts of delay, distortion, pitch shifting and panning. I also manually shifted a few of the notes with a wammy bar and a borrowed slide…

Momentum taught me to look for ways to try new things and to find ways to get tasks done that resonate with how I work best, and what interests me most. In October 2013 I noted in my journal:

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208 Grant, "Momentum".
209 Ibid.
I need to practice clarinet for the Falls Festival gig but I’ve been putting it off and putting it off. I decided today to mic up the clarinet and put it through a couple of effects pedals. And I practiced! It doesn’t matter really what I play at the moment, it’s just a matter of getting some chops back so I can play for 50 mins ... I feel like having done ‘Momentum’ I am now making decisions in other parts of my life about what works best for me – what do I need to do or more importantly how can I go about or approach something so that I can get it done in a way that works for me/suits my working and creative style.210

Through engaging with my artistic practice every day I noticed changes in other areas of my life, creative and otherwise. Knowing there were other benefits to ‘getting the work done’ each day helped to do so.

I put a lot of thought and effort into constructing the framework for the compositions first, before beginning each Momentum project. This did change along the way but the structure created from the start took out a lot of worry and guesswork throughout each of the projects. I knew when each of the projects would start and end, and that each day I needed to find sounds to record, and ways to incorporate the new recordings into the existing work. Everything else, including track length and aesthetic of the pieces, developed as the works were created and were the subject of much reflection but not daily concern. When it looked like the framework or decisions I had made might stifle the work, I shifted things. Being open to change was crucial to seeing Momentum through. “Discipline is crucial,” writes Stephen Nachmanovitch, “…but we do not attain it by stiffening up.”211

Momentum taught me to be prepared, and to be prepared to be flexible. “‘A plan is like the scaffolding around a building,”212 writes dancer and choreographer Twyla Tharp,

210 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 21st October 2012. See appendices page 221.
211 Nachmanovitch, Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art, 141.
But once the shell is in place and you start work on the interior, the scaffolding disappears... It has to be sufficiently thoughtful and solid to get the work up and standing straight, but it cannot take over as you toil away on the interior guts of a piece.\textsuperscript{213}

Habits are the peripheral vision of the mind. Churning away just below the level of conscious decision-making...\textsuperscript{214}

Making and Reflecting - Discipline and Reflexivity - Habit and Routine

In order to complete each of the \textit{Momentum} projects, it was important to maintain the discipline of creating something every day, to the point where the actions involved became habitual. \textit{Momentum} involved conducting a daily recursive dialogue between making, writing, and reflecting. According to Richard Sennett "Every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking; this dialogue evolves into sustaining habits, and these habits establish a rhythm between problem solving and problem finding."\textsuperscript{215}

Discipline is intrinsically linked to habit and routine. Throughout 2012-14 I conducted a recursive process whereby I simultaneously imposed discipline on my creative practice in order to nurture habit, whilst investigating the finer points of this process in order to learn more about my art and my compositional processes. Jennifer Mason states "qualitative research should involve critical self-scrutiny by the researcher, or active \textit{reflexivity}."\textsuperscript{216} Close inspection of each day's processes allowed deeper investigation into the work, as well as my artistic processes and goals.

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{214} Bayles and Orland, \textit{Art & Fear: Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Artmaking}, 100.
\textsuperscript{215} Sennett, \textit{The Craftsman}, 9.
\textsuperscript{216} Mason, \textit{Qualitative Researching}, 5-6.
The disciplined way in which Momentum was approached helped to form part of a reflexive process, that of creating and reflecting on the work consistently and simultaneously. A constant process of action and reflection allowed me to go back and find how I achieved a particular sound or result, in order to use it in a new situation. Richard Sennett quotes Japanese music educator Suzuki Shin’ichi in describing, for musicians, the experience of playing something unexpected or pleasing, followed by a “difficult and agonizing struggle to answer the questions ‘what exactly did I do? How can I do it again?’” He describes a process of moving “backward from sensation to procedure ... reasoning backward from consequence to cause.” This is the kind of reflexivity I practiced throughout each of the Momentum projects.

By engaging with my practice every day I became aware of habits and processes that I hadn’t previously noticed. Working in this way, constantly making, doing, reflecting, re-thinking, re-listening, and adjusting my thoughts and observations allowed me to “... look into a number of facets, then keep returning to them from different angles as the view becomes deeper and more complete.”

In Art Without Compromise Wendy Richmond describes a creative practice as an independent set of habits and procedures. She asserts that such habits are “self-motivated, self-judged, self-generated, and self-rewarded ... a commitment to a routine that leads to revelations.” Throughout 2012 I developed and practiced the habit of creating and continuing my work each day. As the year went on and as Momentum became more and more a part of my daily life, I became more confident that setting myself the task of developing a disciplined practice whilst creating a large-scale artwork had been the right thing to do, in terms of wanting to really hone my craft. I set a clear goal that I worked toward every day for a year. Recording and blogging became part of my routine; discipline morphed into habit: an “activity, exercise, or a regimen that develops or improves a skill.”

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218 Ibid.
219 Nachmanovitch, Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art, 12.
220 Richmond, Art without Compromise, 22.
Others have found similarly: Noah Scalin’s *Make Something 365* blog is full of stories of inspiration – of artists, artisans, writers and others making a commitment to do something every day, of breaking through the fear and difficulty of the commitment to, and seeing the benefits of, habitual practice. For those who successfully complete an initial yearlong project, like Scalin himself or ikebana artist Keith Stanley, this initial project often springboards into more related projects (just as *Momentum* did with the *Turkey, Live* and *Collective* projects). Scalin began by making a Skull-A-Day\(^{222}\) in 2007, has since published books on his project, on the *Make Something 365* concept, and maintains a blog full of other people’s projects. Stanley turned his *365 Days of Ikebana* into a book and teaching practice, and continues to post new work regularly on his website.

*Momentum* involved reflexive processes in terms of audio editing, whereby I acquired new skills as the projects progressed which I then applied to future sounds in new ways. All of the *Momentum* projects involved going back over old knowledge, skills and processes, and adjusting, adding new knowledge, skills and processes. I wrote in my journal on Day Two Hundred and Three (July 21, 2012) about finding a new use for the digital EQ effect that I had used for only one purpose up until that point:

*EQ! Finally found a use for it other than getting rid of unwanted noise! Using some clips from DCO’s contribution as drone loops, started dropping out certain frequencies of a particular chord that was very bottom heavy, to ‘reveal’ the higher frequencies throughout the piece. It was like a slow shifting of chords but using the same material. Very cool, and very usable in the future and in performance too.*\(^{223}\)

Twyla Tharp writes about her experiences of preparing to make creative work: “In order to be creative you have to know how to prepare to be creative,” she says: “...No one can give you your subject matter, your creative content; if they could it would be their creation and not yours. But there’s a process that generates


\(^{223}\) Journal entry, Nat Grant, 21\(^{st}\) July 2012. See appendices page 179.
creativity – and you can learn it. And you can make it habitual.”

Creating Momentum enabled me to find the ways and the situations that best suit my creative working habits. The circumstances that allowed me to be the most productive and creative included breaking a large project into a lot of small, manageable tasks, having a specific order for daily tasks, being organized with portable recording equipment, having a system for cataloguing the data I was collecting, and having small, medium and long term goals that fed into one another. Finding the best way for me to work and be creative also involved a reflexivity of knowledge and skills, feeding back into Momentum as I was creating.

On August 8, 2013 I reflected on my experiences to date in my journal:

*Breaking big ideas into small tasks, making them manageable and achievable. To think of Momentum now doesn’t phase me, because I’ve done it, I’ve shown that I can do it and I know I did a bit each day and I could definitely do it again (like in Turkey – I knew what I was in for). It’s a good blueprint for future projects.*

I developed habits that allowed me to do my best work, and to work in the easiest way possible. One habit I developed while mixing at the end of each month, which took 2-4 hours of my time, was to do the mix – do something else for half an hour or an hour then go back and listen/tweak. I repeated this if necessary. Sometimes even listening to different music acted as enough of a palette cleanser for me to be able to go back and finish the mix, trying different ways of listening with fresh ears until I was satisfied with the results.

The initial 366 project allowed me to practice the reflexive processes of discipline and habit in art making so many times that when I arrived in Turkey and embarked on a month long project after having been away from Momentum for 6 months, all the skills and habits formed during the initial project came back to me very quickly:

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225 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 8th August 2013. See appendices page 216.
Having done this all before … I feel like I can plan a bit better for how I want the whole thing to pan out – the length, the kinds of sounds etc, without being restrictive but just having a better idea in my mind of how to go about making this album so it will turn out a particular way. For instance, I want to show my version of Turkey, and not include really clichéd sounds …

Arrangement … I started with a streetscape type of thing which I EQ’d throughout to change into a low drone. Then I brought three samples of people protesting with pots in and out, but with a little space in between so it wasn’t just layers of different rhythms with no breaks. I think it flows and breaths better now.\(^{226}\)

**July 1, 2013 (Turkey, Day One)**

The writing in this particular journal entry is very assertive, and I wrote here with much more certainty and authority about what I was doing than earlier on in the 366 project. In Turkey I felt comfortable with my routine very quickly upon starting work on the project again:

_Todays mix was easier, already, after only one days practice I can feel my skills and intuition returning. I guess if you put in the work, all the hours as I did last year then it doesn’t take as long to get back ‘in shape’, so to speak._\(^{227}\)

**July 2, 2013 (Turkey: Day Two)**

Back in Melbourne two months later for the Live Fringe Festival shows, I discovered that I was again able to easily re-engage with the organisation and discipline that I had developed whilst conducting the previous projects:

_Habit - even doing this for four days, I’ve gotten into a groove and worked out a comfortable schedule of recording/editing/preparing for the show. I know_

\(^{226}\) Journal entry, Nat Grant, 1\textsuperscript{st} July 2013. See appendices page 211.

\(^{227}\) Journal entry, Nat Grant, 2\textsuperscript{nd} July 2013. See appendices page 211.
how many sounds and images I need/want, how much time I need to edit and prepare the material and then relax before the show.\textsuperscript{228}

Sept 22, 2013 (\textit{Live: Day Four})

“Experienced researchers ...” state Booth, Colomb and Williams, “... loop back and forth, move forward a step or two before going back in order to move ahead again, change directions, all the while anticipating stages not yet begun.”\textsuperscript{229} On Day One Hundred and Seventy Three of the 366 project (June 21, 2012) I observed that I was learning new ways of approaching my compositions, and thinking differently about how I was creating:

\emph{I’m starting to anticipate what things might sound like with added effects, while I’m recording acoustic sounds. For example today I was playing with a box of metal washers and making fairly continuous sounds. Then I imagined what it might sound like with a bit of delay and so started to drop the individual washers into the box, adding a more rhythmic element led by my imagination of what it would sound like with delay. The electronics are beginning to influence my performance/improvisation before I’m even at the computer...}\textsuperscript{230}

The disciplined and reflexive processes inherent in \textit{Momentum} link to elements of transparency, audience access, and collaboration; a reflexive process existed not only within \textit{Momentum} but also between the work, my audience, and myself. Wendy Richmond gives precedence to habit and discipline, writing “Your commitment provides nourishment for you, and, whether you know it or not, for others.”\textsuperscript{231} I wanted, through \textit{Momentum}, to be able to engage and interact as much as possible with my audience. Inspiring this audience to make recordings, to listen to the world in new ways or to begin projects of their own was a flattering and wonderful bi-product of the projects.

\textsuperscript{228} Journal entry, Nat Grant, 22\textsuperscript{nd} September 2013. See appendices page 217.
\textsuperscript{230} Journal entry, Nat Grant, 21\textsuperscript{st} June 2012. See appendices page 176.
\textsuperscript{231} Richmond, \textit{Art without Compromise}, 22.
As I conducted the projects and shared the results and process online, people listened, shared, commented, gave feedback, and offered recordings that informed the next stage of the work. The intermingling of my own observations and those of audience members and contributors then engaged with future observations and so on. These cyclical processes moved forward alongside the projects, and my “journey of public discovery” enriched my work and informed my audience.

Just as Lucas Ihlein shared his own blogging project with "an emerging community of readers," I developed Momentum with a community of listeners and contributors. Some used my work as a starting point for something new of their own, others went on to create original projects with a similar concept or aesthetic. The reflexive nature of my relationship with my audience throughout the Momentum projects is one that Ihlein describes as a “spiraling cyclical evolution, in which comments and contributions from readers feed back into lived experience, providing further opportunities for interactions, and reflections on experience.”

The routine I created around Momentum meant I repeated certain actions until they became instinctual. Richard Sennett writes, "When we speak of doing something "instinctively," we are often referring to behavior we have so routinized that we don’t have to think about it. In learning a skill, we develop a complicated repertoire of such procedures.”

Throughout the 366 project I likened this kind of instinct and habit to that surrounding the brushing of one’s teeth. Something we all do every day is so much a part of routine that it doesn’t take a great deal of effort, as an adult, to remember to do. On occasion, however, most people will forget, if only once or twice, to brush their teeth. The one day in 2012 (Day One Hundred and Forty Three – May 22) where I had recorded a sound but completely forgot to blog felt like this, and throughout that day and the next I was talking and thinking about the project, but the action of doing it had become so instinctive that I didn’t even notice I’d

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233 Ibid., 86-87.
234 Ibid., 43.
235 Sennett, The Craftsman, 51.
forgotten. From then on I set an alarm to blog each day but I didn’t forget again.

The next day, Day One Hundred and Forty Four (May 23, 2012), I did two mixes and two blog posts. The first reads: “I can’t believe that I forgot to blog yesterday!!”

*It feels crazy, to have done something so deliberately for 142 days straight, then to just forget! I wonder if the process of recording/mixing/uploading/blogging has become imbedded in my daily routine now, and so has become like other things that I forget to do once or twice a year, like brush my teeth...*

Anyway, I’m shocked but it’s not the end of the world. I made this recording yesterday, incorporating a fluro light at work that’s being held together with gaffa tape, and makes random clicking noises - mixed with some heavily processed Autumn leaves.236

**Attention and Tacit Knowledge**

The next step I took with my new instinctual practice (and back and forth throughout each of the projects) was to dissect the actions involved in order to better understand my creative process. “To create,” writes Nachmanovitch, “we need both technique and freedom from technique. To this end we practice until our skills become unconscious.”237 Undertaking *Momentum* involved making work in order to learn about it, in order to better articulate what I was doing which is a vital skill as an artist when preparing for new projects, conducting research, pitching for grants, festivals or galleries.

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236 Grant, "Momentum".
Through consistent documentation and reflection throughout the course of the projects I discovered elements of tacit knowledge implicit in my compositional process. By repeating actions involved in composition until they became instinctual, then systematically undoing those ‘unconscious’ processes I have been better able to understand my art and the ways in which I work. Through the creation of *Momentum* I accrued a set of tools that can be adapted and applied for revealing tacit knowledge and engaging more rigorously in all kinds of processes.

What I set out to do in simultaneously creating and reflecting upon the process of creating *Momentum* was to pay as much attention to tacit knowledge as to self-conscious awareness, for the purpose of learning as much as possible about my compositional processes. Discipline was imposed in order to nurture habit and create a routine around making something each day. Richard Sennett writes, “In the higher stages of a skill, there is a constant interplay between tacit knowledge and self-conscious awareness, the tacit knowledge serving as an anchor, the explicit awareness serving as critique and corrective.”

The Oxford Dictionary defines tacit knowledge as “The informal understandings of individuals (especially their social knowledge) which they have not verbalized and of which they may not even be aware, but which they may be inferred to know (notably from their behaviour).” Oxford claims the term is derived from Michael Polanyi, “the modern philosopher most attuned to tacit knowledge,” and Richard Sennett also cites Polanyi as someone who recognized that “by arousing self-consciousness” workers (and artists) are “driven to do better.”

Sennett writes of "...the absorption into tacit knowledge, unspoken and unmodified in words, that occurred there and became a matter of habit, the thousand little everyday moves that add up in sum to a practice.” Through a repeated process of reflecting while doing in all stage of *Momentum* I tried to reveal some of these little everyday moves, so that I could make more informed

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240 *The Craftsman*, 51.
241 Ibid., 77.
decisions and more accurate observations about the kind of art I was making. The discipline imposed on myself to complete these moves every day was simultaneously accompanied by a close investigation of all the same moves, to better understand and uncover tacit knowledge in my compositional processes.

Focusing consistently on what I was doing, and what I had previously been doing throughout the construction of *Momentum,* required a lot of attention. By focussing my attention on my process, I hoped to become more aware of tacit knowledge regarding my practice. For Lucas Ihlein, whilst conducting his blogging project he “came to realise the vital role played by *attention* in the generation of an artwork which seeks to produce a more integrated relationship with life.”²⁴² He found this as a result of his project, whereas I set about my project with the intention of paying close attention, in order to bring to light elements of my creative practice of which I was previously unaware.

Creating *Momentum* meant working in a certain way, noticing how I was working and perhaps changing things depending on these observations of my process. Working with material over several days allowed a high level of engagement with the material and also enough distance to observe patterns and habits within my compositional processes. On Day Nine of the 366 project (January 9, 2012), for example:

*I've noticed a trend in the tracks I'm uploading. It's something I knew already but is very clear now that I'm doing this every day... I'm alternating pitched and non-pitched material in a very methodical way. For example, on one day the track with start with pitched material, add non-pitched then finish with pitched again. The next day I'll start with non-pitched, add pitched, fade out the pitched stuff and finish with non-pitched. It's a very ABA or BAB kind of system (or even AB or BA, but quite predictable). I want to try something different in the next few days and see if it gives me more ideas for arrangements.*²⁴³

²⁴³ Journal entry, Nat Grant, 9th January 2012. See appendices page 152.
When Ihlein writes about refining and sharpening attention “in a way which brings greater focus and intensity to the often invisible or unnoticed processes of living”\textsuperscript{244} I can draw parallels between his project and mine. In the introduction to his thesis he notes the important transformative role played by attention in deepening the relationship between art and the aesthetics of everyday life. For me, there was the important role played by attention in uncovering tacit knowledge in my artistic processes. I set about my projects with the intention of paying close attention, to bring greater focus and intensity to the often invisible or unnoticed elements of my artistic process.

Just as Ihlein quoted Arto Haapala in his discussion of attention and our environment and how we stop ‘seeing’ things that are around us all the time, Richard Sennett comments on tacit knowledge and the processes we go through most each day as the ones we probably think about the least. He posits that we can be surprised when we dredge “up tacit knowledge into consciousness ... surprise is a way of telling yourself that something you know can be other than you assumed.”\textsuperscript{245} This “embedding”\textsuperscript{246} of skills, information and practices into tacit knowledge is vital in everyday life, however the temporary undoing of these things is paramount to understanding exactly what they are and why and how we do them, and \textit{Momentum} brought to light parts of my creative process that I wasn’t previously - consciously - aware of.

By paying particular attention to my process on a daily basis over a long period of time I began noticing change on small and large timescales. Late in January 2012 I started to notice subtle difference in the overall feel of the tracks I was making:

\textit{The last couple of days have felt more melodic, or ‘musical’, for want of a better expression. They feel more natural and less process-based, even though the process has been very similar. I cut the music box melody into little bits,}

\textsuperscript{244} Ihlein, "Framing Everyday Experience: Blogging as Art," 6.
\textsuperscript{245} Sennett, \textit{The Craftsman}, 211.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 50.
Bringing them in and out so the form has been less static and straightforward.247

January 24, 2012

Later in the year I observed quite a significant change in the sounds I was choosing and in the ways I was compiling and processing them. I can see that later in that year I also wrote much more specifically and confidently about what I was and wasn’t doing, feeling, or hoping to achieve on the blog and in my journal.

Selecting tracks for radio national, and the ones earlier in the year seem much more static. They don’t move nearly as far or fast as they do now. My aesthetic has shifted a little but my skill set has increased massively. There is so much more that I can say now. Almost as if my criteria for my work has changed. So I can listen to the tracks from March and say yes that’s nice but it’s not representative of where my work is at now. It’s representative of where my work was at in March, which is different.

Things have become more rhythmic: at the start it was all long sustained sounds that faded in and out gradually. As time went on I got more bold in terms of more rhythmic (and rhythmically affected) sounds and silence/space between sounds. Dynamics and levels/layers also.248

November 26, 2012

Most notably, conducting Momentum made it clear to me what the most important thing is about my art and it’s making: the making - the process and experience of making music, sound art, composed works and other stylistic definitions that Momentum might fit within. I am invested in how my work turns out, how it sounds, feels, how an audience and collaborators react and interact with it, but most important to me is the making and doing part. My music is not driven by

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247 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 24th January 2012. See appendices page 158.
248 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 26th November 2012. See appendices page 193.
concepts but by experience. I believe this is why I have been so drawn to minimalism, to live looping and ways of making music that accentuate process, and why such a large part of *Momentum* involved sharing my processes with my audience. What my work is most about, for me, is the process of making it, whether in a live or recorded setting. Conducting this research has allowed me to articulate this, and to see this in effect throughout all the performance works and recorded music that I have made as an independent artist.

**Documentation**

As a performing artist I have often found it useful to record and document my practice sessions, collaborations, and performances for the purpose of reflection, both immediate and ongoing. I have achieved this through audio and video recording, as well as through written scores and journals. Recording thoughts, practice sessions and performances in these ways is a means for audiences and artists alike to capture and spend time examining what may otherwise be temporary or fleeting – like a event that occurs “... in time – vanished as soon as it was executed.”

Through my *Momentum* projects I extended this analogy, documenting my process every day for a year, a month, and four days, respectively, for the purpose of continual observation and reflection. This facilitated a constant dialogue between the work I was creating and the ways in which I was experiencing creating something each day, week, month, and in the case of the 366 project across entire year. The online delivery also meant that my audience could listen on demand, in their own time, download the tracks, skip sections, or play parts again if they so desired.

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249 Licht, *Sound Art: Beyond Music, between Categories*, 120.
Each *Momentum* blog post and journal entry stood as a record of where I had been, what I had done, what had been recorded, if someone had contributed recorded material, and what kinds of editing had been done to the piece and the individual recordings that day. Both these resources, the photos taken each day, and the individual audio files from each day helped me to keep track of what I was doing.

The different types of documentation and reflection helped to influence and fill the holes left by the others. Perhaps it was not clear simply by listening to a *Momentum* track what the source sounds were or what digital processing had been applied. My blog posts aimed to fill some of this gap in understanding for my audience. For me, my journal was somewhere to reflect on the composition, images, contributors, blog, and project as a whole. All of these elements interacted to give as complete a picture as possible of *Momentum*, especially in the period of writing after the three main projects had been completed.

Throughout each project I maintained a rigorous process of saving and naming files of individual sounds, of each day’s mix, of each track within that mix, and also the Ableton project file so I could go back at any time and view the processing I used or check doubling up of material. Between all the methods of note taking, saving, and storing information and details I was able and it was easy to go back and review my thoughts and actions along the way.

Recording words, sounds and images in this way served to aid my memory, something that technology has made incredibly easy. My computer and the blog and SoundCloud servers hold all of *Momentum* in a way that I can easily access; they are “…ourselves enlarged … stronger, works faster, and never tires ...like a mirror in a fun fair, enlarging human memory to giant size.”\(^{250}\) Philosopher John Locke wrote about memory and forgetfulness, claiming “there being no moment of our lives wherein we have the whole train of all our past actions before our eyes in one view: but even the best memories losing the sight of one part whilst they are

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\(^{250}\) Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 85.
viewing another ...”\textsuperscript{251} This highlights the importance, for performing artists, and for me in this project, of documenting as a means of enhancing and jogging memory.

Over the course of 2012-14 I approached the project journal in much the same way as the projects themselves; the document itself became too large to tackle whole but I found that printing and cutting up the individual entries and dividing them into different themed sections helped narrow the analysis down into workable amounts. I could then go back over each section and insert quotes and observations at relevant points into this exegesis. By working methodically and breaking a large task into smaller, manageable pieces I was able to efficiently achieve a number of short-term goals that made up part of a larger one.

In conducting Momentum I worked towards articulating the things about my art that seemed merely intuitive and difficult to explain. Documenting every step of the process and constantly reflecting on the documentation helped make this possible. Lucas Ihlein conducted a similar exercise in his PhD project, observing that this kind of cumulative process where details are recorded at every stage along the way “slowly builds into an archive documenting its own emergence.”\textsuperscript{252}

I noted the benefits on being able to draw on previous journal entries on July 30, 2012:

\begin{quote}
The value of the journaling and archiving process: being able to go back to when I recorded Ash Higgs to see what effects I used, because I’d like to try something similar with David’s guitar.\textsuperscript{253}
\end{quote}

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In the **Methodology** chapter I explained the naïve approach I took to *Momentum*, whereby I began conducting the project without first imposing any particular theoretical framework, to let the work guide me in finding the best possible framework as I went along. I took a similar approach to going over my journal entries, wanting to see what was revealed along the way in terms of themes and ideas. Some new research chapters emerged out of this process, others became more or less important as time passed, but the methodical way of approaching all the journal data meant that nearly three years worth of thoughts and observations were all considered and given a chance to form part of this exegesis.

*Perseverance. If the best way to improve at something is to do it over and over again,*

*I have found a way to make art that incorporates this into the process and finished product.*

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**Practice Makes...**

I once worked with a music teacher who encouraged his students to develop technique and stamina on their instrument, and to know when and how to use these to full effect and when to hold back. He likened this to owning a Ferrari and being able to drive around smoothly and slowly, not just in top gear. Stephen Nachmanovitch writes similarly, “technique is not art, but having “technique to burn” means we can make whatever we want and whatever a given situation requires.” In creating *Momentum* I developed the skills to apply a wide variety of digital alterations to acoustic sound sources, with an equally large number of expressive outcomes. In practicing all these new and different techniques I also practiced the restraint of knowing when not to use them.

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254 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 16th April 2013. See appendices page 204.
255 Nachmanovitch, *Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art*, 44.
In Turkey, a lot of the field recordings I made, of buskers for example, were musically wonderful on their own and I wanted, in including them in *Momentum*, to retain much of the spirit in which they were recorded, letting the sounds speak for themselves.

Stephen Nachmanovitch writes that “Mastery comes from practice; practice comes from playful, compulsive experimentation.”256 Tied up with the improvising I did on a daily basis to create *Momentum* is the disciplined and consistent way I went about doing this, allowing for considerable practice of a great number of skills involved in improvising, recording, composing, compiling, and editing music. In his book *Outliers* Malcolm Gladwell gives credence to the “10,000 hours rule”257, a theory that to be elite in one’s chosen field takes at least this many hours of practice. Despite not making it anywhere near Gladwell’s 10,000 hours, I saw the benefits of practicing my craft, over and over, initially for one year throughout the 366 project. Refining my craft to the point of being able to edit sounds with ease and therefore being able to concentrate more on the art and expression became a routine that I enjoyed.

Extended practice combined with a disciplined approach opened up my practice as a sound sculptor to be able to include just about anything as a sound source in my music making. Being disciplined and putting in so many hours greatly enhanced my experience, skills and confidence – as Nachmanovitch writes “…we can acquire technique only by the practice of practice, by persistently experimenting and playing with our tools and testing their limits and resistances.”258 Each day I practiced improvising, composing, and developing these skills and the confidence that I knew what to do with them. This allowed me to approach new sonic material with a larger palette and arsenal of creative options for the future. On September 17, 2012 I noted:

> I’ve relaxed about the material. I have more of an ‘anything goes’ kind of mentality. Like just now collecting some pistachio shells for maybe tomorrow.

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256 Ibid., 73.
258 Nachmanovitch, *Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art*, 42.
It’s all about texture and what I can do with it, digitally. The sound source doesn’t have to be the whole story, it’s a springboard. 259

The combination of consistent practice within a disciplined framework meant that I practiced discipline as a skill alongside all the compositional ones. Behavioral economist Daniel Goldstein claims that "Self-discipline is like a muscle; the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets." 260 In creating Momentum I found this to be true. Additionally, in creating Momentum I combined practice and attention. “The signs of a person who concentrates in practicing” 261 writes Richard Sennett, "are concrete enough. A person who has learned to concentrate well will not count the number of times he or she repeats a motion at the command of the ear or the eye.” 262 He describes the event of practicing something on the cello “… I want to do a physical gesture again and again to make it better but also do it better so that I can do it again.” 263

Each day I practiced listening and being aware of sounds in my environment, resulting in a heightening of this awareness and the appearance of an entire new world of sound opening up to my senses. I practiced recording and editing these recordings every day, resulting in a streamlining of this process and much better crafted material to work with. “Practice gives the creative process a steady momentum,” writes Nachmanovitch in Free Play, “so that when imaginative surprises occur … they can be incorporated into the growing, breathing organism of our imagination.” 264 Improving technical editing skills allowed me to focus more on the creative work involved in composing Momentum. I was able to extend myself and the ways in which was using, manipulating and compiling musical material in order to make music that I found more interesting, more exciting, and more sophisticated.

261 Sennett, The Craftsman, 176.
262 Ibid.
263 Ibid.
264 Nachmanovitch, Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art, 72.
Doing more with less: At the start of the year I was very concerned with finding ‘instruments’ to play each day, interspersed with the odd field recording. As time has gone on I have become much more comfortable with the use of field recordings, and my palette in terms of manipulation of these sounds has greatly widened. I feel like I am no longer solely relying on the quality of the acoustic sound to ‘make’ the piece for that day. I have so many tools of manipulation now, and can bend many sounds to many different shapes. I am doing more with each sample as well, rather than just playing them from start to finish with fades. I am using less, in some cases (20 second loops, for example, duplicated and pitch shifted and phased).265

October 9, 2012

Taking a photo each day began as a mere formality, because the SoundCloud site has a space for an image with each track that is uploaded. By Day Forty Nine (Feb 18, 2012), however, I was noticing a shift in my skills in this area also:

I am hoping that by doing this everyday my skills as a musician/composer and recording artists will improve … When I took the photo for today (chain in singing bowl) I took a few then one at a different angle with different light and immediately knew that that was ‘the one’, similar to how I know that about sounds, but have never felt that way about a visual image or anything visual I’ve created or captured before now.266

February 18, 2012

Conducting Momentum involved practicing researching. I developed a more critical way of looking at my work through having to look at it regularly. I developed my technical skills and stretched myself creatively and academically through discipline and habit. Seeing the benefits of this combination of actions provided plenty of motivation to keep going, keep practicing and keep striving.

265 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 9th October 2012. See appendices page 188.
266 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 18th February 2012. See appendices page 161.
I am noticing that my music sounds different. It still sounds like me, but my cut/paste pieces (ie all the pieces in this project, ie not live/improvised) are starting to sound more relaxed, more free and almost improvisation-like in their craftedness. I feel like I am improving at my craft. I feel like I am edging towards that effortlessness that we all admire in ‘talented’ artists, who have practiced and practiced their art and can say what they want with relative (or perceived) ease.267

April 17 2012

I saw the flow on effects from practicing discipline through repetition throughout each stage of Momentum. On installing the project in the George Paton Gallery in March 2013 I observed:

Setting up the gallery, and seeing again that skill improves with practice.
Measuring, cutting and hanging the bubble wrap, getting up on the ladder, all got easier and quicker with practice. Even preparing for this exhibition has meant a lot of firsts for me: painting, getting on a ladder. I’ve got confidence now to try stuff I haven’t done before, and can see that with practice (repetition) my accuracy and confidence improves.268

Mar 5 2013

Richard Sennett espouses the benefits of “building skill through practice”269 in The Craftsman. He reasons that "going over an action, again and again ... enables self-criticism”.270 He encourages repetition, for students (and, I would argue, for professionals too), as "...the experience of studying their own ingrained practice and modulating it from within."271 In this way, practice and discipline are linked to reflexivity and the uncovering of tacit knowledge.

267 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 17th April 2012. See appendices page 168.
268 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 5th March 2013. See appendices page 203.
269 Sennett, The Craftsman, 38.
270 Ibid., 37-38.
271 Ibid., 38.
All the elements in this research are linked with the different types of ways in which discipline was a part of conducting the research and also creating the music that comprises all the \textit{Momentum} projects. The reflexivity of practicing recording, composing, blogging, researching, crowd sourcing, paying attention, and reflecting on all of these things allowed me to uncover important tacit knowledge about my art making that fed back into the reflexive process and to grow my artwork and my practice.
“Most people think that when they hear a piece of music, they’re not doing anything but that something is being done to them. Now this is not true, and we must arrange our music, we must arrange our art, we must arrange everything, I believe, so that people realize that they themselves are doing it, and not that something is being done to them”

John Cage

Audience and Momentum

Audience played a crucial role in all the stages of Momentum. By delivering each of the projects online I was able to instantly share my compositional processes, daily observations, and ongoing outcomes with a large audience. The online format of Momentum made it very straightforward for audience members to be able to contribute to the project, and to provide feedback on individual tracks as well as on the project as a whole. Throughout 2012-14 I collaborated with dozens of audience members, existing and new friends and artist colleagues, and was also able to facilitate collaborations between some of these people.

I encouraged my audience to be active, whether in following or contributing to Momentum. Listening online and being able to download the individual and monthly tracks made for a customisable audience experience; those listening at home were able to indulge in their own preferences regarding volume, equalization, time, place and space for listening.

The work that I was publishing online had the potential to become a kind of interactive sound installation in the homes of my audience. As active listeners and participants in Momentum my audience linked in with the reflexive processes of making, listening, noticing, incorporating contributions and feedback detailed in the previous chapter.

272 Nyman, Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond, 21.
As *Momentum* progressed I felt like I had cultivated a very active and engaged audience, and that I was “aiming at the fullest possible engagement of the listener and the testing of (their) perceptual faculties.”²⁷³ It was exciting to be engaging with people regarding my work so regularly and as I was creating it, and to have so much input from them. *Momentum* developed as a dialogue, not a monologue.

Early on in the 366 project I was humbled and delighted to have so many people prepared and willing to provide recordings for my project and to help me capture sounds on a daily basis. People were excited to be involved and it was exciting for me to have them participate. On April 15, 2012, I wrote about the experience of having friends improvise at a picnic to help me make a recording:

> Finally figured out how to time stretch in Ableton! Tried it out on the red bottle from yesterdays picnic. Was so great that Laura offered to help: her and Dave played with an empty glass bottle. I’m excited about this project but seeing my friends’ enthusiasm is really uplifting.²⁷⁴

Towards the end of the 366 project I reflected more on the generosity of the 60+ people who had contributed sounds to the project thus far. I realised that I took extra special care to produce work I was really proud of whenever someone else had contributed an element. I described this as my ‘gift’ to them, for participating. On December 9, 2012 I wrote:

> More on mixing other peoples’ sounds: it’s like a gift, and that’s one of the reasons I take so much care when including sounds contributed by other people. I want it to be just right for them. They’ve given me something and I’m giving in return.²⁷⁵

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²⁷³ Ibid.
²⁷⁴ Journal entry, Nat Grant, 15th April 2012. See appendices page 167.
²⁷⁵ Journal entry, Nat Grant, 9th December 2012. See appendices page 195.
Momentum had mostly one-to-many relationships – me with my audience, friends and those who followed or found the sounds and blog online. Opening the project up to contributions and feedback also resulted in many one-on-one conversations with fans and contributors in the real world and online about the work. I will detail the benefits of this situation in the following sections on transparency, collaboration and feedback.

Transparency. Showing Process

From my own experience as an artist and audience member I know that people are interested in how creative work is made, contrary to Bayles & Orland’s views in Art & Fear, that “to all viewers but yourself, what matters is the product: the finished artwork. To you, and you alone, what matters is the process: the experience of shaping that artwork.” Each of the Momentum projects suggests that it is of interest to my audience how I went about creating Momentum, that it provides insight into the artwork itself and my creative process.

“The private details of artmaking are utterly uninteresting to audiences” continue Bayles and Orland, “perhaps because they’re almost never visible – or even knowable – from examining the finished work.” This claim is unfounded, and contradicts all the elements that are in place all over the world, in galleries, in books, in essays, in documentaries, that delve into artists’ creative practices. I endeavoured to share as much of what I was doing and how I was doing it as possible whilst creating Momentum, and an engaged and interested audience grew around this process.

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One motivation for presenting *Momentum* daily via a blog and sound hosting site was to share the process of creating a sound work with an audience, *as it was happening* – not only after the fact, *in the form of a complete work, CD etc.* This kind of end result was always in mind, however "the moment of publication (the moment, that is, of engaging with the public) was not deferred to some future moment when the artwork was deemed to be complete."\(^{277}\)

A deliberate transparency of process combined with free and easy access to the work itself promoted regular conversation, feedback and collaboration with my audience throughout the entire process. Creating *Momentum* involved taking the audience along for the journey, and inviting feedback and engagement with my creative process.

Much of my work focuses on process as a part of the experience of performing or recording music. Like a real time ‘making of’, my art draws attention to a "selected aspect of experience"\(^{278}\), that of using sound as a sculptural medium, and of listening to the world always with the next stage of my project in mind. The *Momentum* blog site gave people the option to subscribe to receive an email with each new blog post. This resulted in audience members ‘following’ my progress each day throughout the projects, and coming to a greater understanding of the kinds of processes involved in creating my music than from merely hearing finished tracks.

I received comments throughout the projects describing the personal experiences of different followers, and new ways in which they were appreciating many of the sounds in their own environments. The online delivery of *Momentum* meant that if someone wished to contribute a sound to the piece, they could quickly and easily find out what the general aesthetic of the work was, see and hear the kinds of sounds that had been recorded and contributed already, and access the entire work to date, if they so wished.

\(^{277}\) Ihlein, "Framing Everyday Experience: Blogging as Art," 58.
\(^{278}\) Ibid., 64.
I consciously made the decision to blog and post a track each day in each stage of *Momentum*. I was interested to share my compositional processes with my audience; “...a kind of artistic and intellectual intimacy that lets other see how they reached a specific point, not simply that they did reach it.”279 As a result my audience were able to learn about my process and come to a greater understanding of my art and a greater engagement with their own sonic environments.

One particular contributor – a first time field recorder, emailed me in May 2013, saying: “Your soundscapes are altering our ways of hearing.” She thought it was a “Great idea to have lots of people out 'listening' more intentionally.”280 This woman was amongst others who kept contributing sounds after the initial, yearlong *Momentum* had concluded, which inspired the idea of creating an ongoing, online sound collective on the SoundCloud site where people can contribute source sounds but also where members can download each others’ sounds, re-mix them and post back to the group. This continued engagement has shown me that my audience is interested in my process, in contributing to the creation of new work and in an ongoing dialogue about art and process.

Having an audience who is engaged with my work and my process and has even contributed to the work adds value in terms of making a serious engagement with that audience, and was one of the motivations for conduction *Momentum* in plain sight. I am not interested in, as Bayles & Orland put it, my art remaining “the province of genius... something to be pointed to and poked at from a safe analytical distance.”281

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280 Email from Carolyn Rasmussen, May 10, 2013.
Making *Momentum* part of my everyday life and presenting the work so publicly made it very personal – for one year, one month and four days I let my audience in to my life and my studio practice. On Day Twenty One (January 21, 2012) of the 366 project I noted in my journal:

*What I’m doing (blogging/posting tracks/pics/links) is very personal. I’ve divulging as much as possible about my process for all the world to see. I’m exposing the process that occurs, usually, behind closed doors. Bands or musicians might take a year to make an album, but you only hear about it (often) when it’s near completion.*

*NORMALLY YOU DON’T GET TO HEAR WHAT MUSICIANS DO UNTIL YOU GO TO A SHOW OR BUY AN ALBUM (THE SAME MAY BE SAID FOR OTHER PERFORMING AND VISUAL ART FORMS?). IT MAY LOOK AS THOUGH NOTHING IS HAPPENING THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN THE FINISHED PRODUCT (MUSIC/PAINTING/PLAY/FILM ETC) APPEARS AS IF BY MAGIC.*

**Collaboration and Authorship**

The contributions of sounds from artists and audience members helped to expand my compositional palette. By engaging with other artists throughout the projects I was able to invite new possibilities to come in and stretch me, artistically. I was then able to take new skills I learnt whilst editing the contributed sounds and apply them in new and different ways to my own sounds, field recordings and percussion instruments. I welcomed contributions to *Momentum* over the course of 2012-14, and more than 60 people from all over the world contributed sounds to the projects that they were happy for me to manipulate.

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282 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 21st January 2012. See appendices page 156.
Throughout each stage of *Momentum* I was keen for other people to be involved. If someone has mentioned an interesting sound somewhere in their lives I’d request a recording and a photo. If other musicians expressed interest in the project I’d invite contribution. I was keen to have as many different people involved as possible.

From the beginning of the creation of *Momentum* I made it known on the blog, SoundCloud and social media that I was interested in others contributing sounds to the project. On the ninth day I received my first contribution, and five more before the end of the first month. This occurred more regularly throughout the year, and I received more and more external contributions to *Momentum* as the project progressed. In the first part of 2012 in particular I prodded a little in person and on social media to get people to contribute. It was exciting to be able to call on people to inspire me and help me get the work done.

The online nature of the project and the ability to send media files easily via email and dropbox made these collaborations straightforward and instantaneous. When someone sent me a sound I would usually incorporate it into the work straight away, meaning I could also send them the link to a daily mix with their sound included within a day or so. This made for several repeat contributors, as it was a fairly quick and also fun way to contribute and collaborate and hear a finished product without waiting months for an album to be released. Contributions came from ongoing or previous musical collaborators, from friends with no musical knowledge or experience, from followers on social media sites, from people who had learnt of the project by word of mouth, and from those who had found the project online or in other ways.

In addition to this there were inadvertent collaborations along the way between various contributors, as on occasion I would receive contributions to the project several days in a row. Sometimes these contributors knew each other, other times not, and at times I was able to introduce artists to each other in this way. For example on June 10, 2012 (Day One Hundred and Sixty Two), I incorporated sound recordings from two different contributors – Melbourne visual artist and my friend
Lily Mae Martin, and sound artist Greg Hooper from Brisbane, who I came across through the ABC Pool site. On December 16, 2012 (Day Three Hundred and Fifty One) I was happy to be receiving tracks from people who knew each other, and to be able to facilitate a kind of collaboration between friends.

*Putting friends together: coco and noah, leah, myles and rhys. It's been really nice to combine sounds from friends who know each other or have a connection in some way. It heightens the gift element for me.*

**December 16, 2012**

Conducting *Momentum* gave me the confidence to approach other artists and ask for a contribution. Given the small request, that there were no limits on the type or length sounds to be contributed (it could be as little as a few seconds), I felt able to ask, and most people obliged. New connections were made and new collaborations were borne out of this.

*Asking people for one sound or sample or to use something small of theirs – not such a big ask. For artwork or artistic processes that require input from other people it’s quite an economical way to go about collecting contributions. I don’t feel that asking people for one small sound and image is too much, and I am asking people I know well and people I’ve just met. I don’t feel like it’s too much of an imposition or assumption that they have lots of time to give.*

**December 19, 2012**

The snowball effect of people contributing to *Momentum* resulted in my decision to have each track in the month of December 2012 made up of others’ contributions. For the last 31 days I acted as curator, digitally manipulating, altering, and sculpting with sounds sent in by other artists and members of my audience.

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283 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 16th December 2012. See appendices page 195.

284 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 19th December 2012. See appendices page 196.
Since I called out on Facebook for contributions a couple of weeks ago I’ve accumulated quite a few, so I decided I’d really like December to be comprised solely of other people’s contributions. I like the cumulative, ongoing way of working, and that it also allows me to do smaller projects that can be planned or happen spontaneously, as a result of the process/project as a whole.285

December 1, 2012

Allowing others access to my work and the opportunity to participate enriched my art, helped me make new connections, and strengthened others. By relinquishing complete control and inviting new collaborators and new possibilities to come in and stretch me. I benefited, the work benefited, and others benefited too. The kind of collaborations that Momentum facilitated allowed for a kind of ‘third hand’ – the outcomes of my work with the contributions of others became someone that none of us would have necessarily done or thought to do on our own. 286

By allowing contributions I opened up the authorship and ownership of Momentum. By working so publicly I initiated a dialogue with my audience about my work, field recording, sound art as a larger concept, and the elements of discipline, habit and routine plus all the other areas I was researching as part of Momentum.

The online nature of all the Momentum collaborations allowed me to work with others on making music without having to physically work together in situations where personalities may get in the way of the work. This resulted in an end result that was very much focused on the art itself.

286 Charles Green, The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), x.
I have always endeavored to work collaboratively and *Momentum* has shown me more ways to do that and to include my audience in my process as well as the finished product. “Participation is the key,”287 writes Maja Kuzmanovic in *FLOSS + Art*, in relation to the opening up of art and software licensing, “and that means that not only the end result is shared, but the whole process.”288 The outcomes and benefits of working in this way mean I am excited to have people involved as a key element in creating new work in the future.

I have written here about the concept of multiple authorship, and the number of people who contributed single or multiple recorded sounds as well as images, their time and suggestions to help create *Momentum*. Ultimately, I see the work as a collaborative composition, curated by me. I initiated the projects and I produced all the finished tracks. I was simultaneously composer, improviser and curator throughout each of the projects, exploring and speaking with my own creative voice, with the input of skills, tools, and ideas from others. I have also mentioned previously that the final month of the 366 project was made up solely of recorded contributions from others, yet it fits, aesthetically within the rest of the work. Although the source sounds were out of my control, I applied all the other skills and tools that I had done previously, sculpting, editing, and making the sounds my own.

**Feedback**

As a student at school and university there is a constant feedback loop between one’s work, their peers, teachers, and mentors. It is liberating to leave this behind and feel like a professional artist but I think it is important to maintain this feedback loop in some way, even if only sporadically. Feedback from others is important for ongoing growth and development as an established artist, not just as a student. I hope to be the kind of artist who feels like they are always learning and always striving to do new, different, and better work.

288 Ibid.
Feedback throughout *Momentum* came from friends, strangers, family members, fellow artists, and contributors. Additionally, journaling, blogging, and reflecting throughout each of the *Momentum* projects meant that I created my own feedback loop as well, where I fed my observations back into the work and talked regularly about it with other people.

Bayles and Orland assert early on in *Art & Fear* that getting feedback is “the most direct route to learning about your own vision.” However, later on they suggest that one should have “an insulating period, a gap of pure time between the making of your art, and the time when you share it with outsiders...”

*Such respites also, perhaps, allow the finished work time to find its rightful place in the artist’s heart and mind – in short, a chance to be understood better by the maker. Then when the time comes for others to judge the work, their reaction (whatever it may be) is less threatening.*

I didn’t feel this pressure at all. I published my work online as I was creating it in order to share with people and get feedback. I was interested not so much in seeking approval but in initiating a discussion about process, discipline and collaboration. Instant and continuous audience engagement was vital to all the *Momentum* projects.

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290 Ibid., 40.
Open Resource

A significant component in the creation of each of the Momentum projects, and linked closely with their online delivery, was an element best described as ‘open resource’, whereby all of the daily, monthly, and live tracks were (and remain) accessible, and able to be shared, downloaded and utilised by anyone with an Internet connection. Momentum shares elements in common with the pre-existing definitions of open source, open culture, and open access but none are fitting to effectively describe my projects. Momentum isn’t open source because the ‘source code’ i.e. my audio editing files weren’t publicly available, open access refers only to scholarly research, and open culture to sharing knowledge and ideas in general, not in a specific project.291

Momentum sought to explore the ways in which artists engage with their audiences and communities via the networked world utilising non-traditional and community oriented approaches. Social networking and media platforms such as Facebook, SoundCloud, Bandcamp, and Twitter allow instantaneous interaction and data sharing. There are an abundance of different sites and apps that harness the collective knowledge of others in the fields of art, science, and technology to develop open source and open resource creative tools – tools that have become the “Swiss Army Knives”292 of contemporary artists and professionals.

For the purpose of transparency of process and the promotion of collaboration, all the (more than 400) Momentum tracks were, and remain, quickly, easily, and freely accessible to listen to and also to utilise for other purposes. This meant that as many people as possible were and are able to access and share the work, and perhaps also use some part of it as the basis for a new work of their own. I labeled this approach ‘open resource’, in that the audio resources are freely available to view and use but with the restrictions indicated by an Attribution-

NonCommercial-Share-Alike Creative Commons license.²⁹³ This means that anyone can download my work, and use it in derivative works, but not for commercial purposes. This applied also to any external contributions, and I always made sure that contributors were aware of the nature and restrictions of the Creative Commons license. In addition to this, I advertised that I would like to be informed of any external use of the music from the project.

The collaborative and open approach I took to creating Momentum produced multiple benefits: I received external contributions which expanded my compositional palette and took the work in new directions, requiring me to, on occasion, learn new skills, make new connections, share my new work and skills with my online audience, and reinvest the new skills back into Momentum and other parts of my life and arts practice.

For example of day 12 of the initial project I received a recorded contribution from a vocalist friend: a long loop of syncopated vowel sounds. Initially I wasn’t sure how these sounds would fit, aesthetically, with what had come before in the project. Being a percussionist myself I had never had the experience of digitally treating or manipulating vocal sounds. However by applying a fairly rigorous EQ and shifting the pitch of the recording I was able to shape it into something that fit really well with the other sounds around it. I learnt these kinds of lessons multiple times throughout the year, applying new techniques to manipulate recordings of voices, tuba, electric guitar, and other sounds and instruments that weren’t in my initial realm of experience.

The journal entry for that day reads:

_Lindsey’s vocal today. Wasn’t sure what to do with it or whether it would fit but I changed the pitch and made it fit quite easily. I feel like I am gathering_
‘momentum’ and I haven’t been at all stuck for a new sound or idea yet. Just adding one or two little things a day is looking to be quite manageable.294

The open resource format of *Momentum* is similar to how the ABC’s Pool site used to operate. Pool was an open, online community of artists and musicians who would upload work to the site that they were happy to share and to be repurposed by other Pool members. Subsequent works would be posted back to the site in an ongoing series of collaborations, sharing and reworking of artistic material. Pool operated for five years, with more than 8,000 artists contributing more than 25,000 creative works.295

Pool’s existence overlapped with the beginning of *Momentum: 366*, and I was able to promote and share the project there. On March 1, 2012 (Day Sixty One), I received a contribution via Pool. It was a sound recording and image of kookaburras singing in the early morning. I incorporated this recording into the mix on that day, and shared the track back to the Pool site. My track was then utilised by another artist who wrote and recorded some poetry that intermingled with it.

In August 2012 I received a contribution of data bending – an image fed through a computer’s sound card and turned into sound. This concept intrigued me and I went back and tried it myself with the kookaburra picture in October.296 I also contributed this track to the Pool site, writing on my blog that day “The spirit of Pool is that of encouraging collaboration and mixed media, so I really hope this piece will be added to by other artists in the future.”297 By opening up my project to contributions I was able to learn new technical skills that I could then apply elsewhere in my work, stretching me and taking the project in new directions. The contributions of others pushed me to develop new skills that I could then utilise elsewhere in my work, and the existing community of artists that Pool provided to

294 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 12th January 2012. See appendices page 153.
295 collective, “Pool”.
297 Grant, "Momentum".

121
springboard ideas and work off was really valuable in the development of my work at that time.

Another example of a project that is open and collaborative in this way is the Whole World Band app298, a collaborative song writing application for iOS that allows musicians to build on existing song sections, contributed by other musicians and bands for that purpose. Users can pick an existing recording session and play along, video their new addition to the song and submit it, or upload their own original songs and let others add to them.

The rise in recent years of crowdsourcing for everything from company start-ups to art projects and grassroots political campaigns has occurred alongside other developments in social networking and participatory culture. I was able to harness the power of the engaged audience I developed throughout 2012-13 to pre-sell a box set of 4 CDs from the 366 project. I raised $1000 ($200 more than my target) in a little over a week on the Indiegogo site.299 A lot of people who purchased the CDs were active members of my audience throughout the previous 2 years, and they were as excited as I was to see the online project make a foray into a physical product.

A number of different artists have created new works based on *Momentum* and utilised parts of my tracks in projects of their own. For example:

Frank Dodds, a Sydney based sound artist, came across some of my music on the ABC Pool Site. Frank re-mixed track Fifty from *Momentum: 366*, along with a work of mine from 2011, and a field recording from another Melbourne artist, Pry.\(^3\)\(^0\)\(^0\)

The sharing and inspiration went both ways with North American percussionist Noah Demland, who contributed a number of sounds to *Momentum*. Noah and I also have a history of online collaboration, so when I recorded the sound of an empty chip can, and stumbled upon a beat that I thought he would like, I sent it to him. He added some other snack-themed sounds to create a short piece, which he then shared on SoundCloud.\(^3\)\(^0\)\(^1\)

Another American artist, dancer CoCo Loupe, has incorporated some of the *Momentum* tracks into her own performances. On April 28 2012 CoCo and Eve Hermann performed a new dance piece called *We Practice*, in Columbus, Ohio, with accompaniment from four of the *Momentum* tracks, mixed with poetry by Jane Hirshfield.\(^3\)\(^0\)\(^2\)

Sydney based musician Matt Wakeling\(^3\)\(^0\)\(^3\) started his own month-long composition and blogging project after hearing me interviewed on Radio National in November 2012.\(^3\)\(^0\)\(^4\) For the month of January 2013, Matt wrote and recorded a short piece every day, and he invited recorded contributions to his project. All the pieces in

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\(^3\)\(^0\)\(^0\) This work was previously hosted at [http://pool.abc.net.au/media/dream-turn-pool-mixmash](http://pool.abc.net.au/media/dream-turn-pool-mixmash)

\(^3\)\(^0\)\(^1\) This work was previously hosted at [http://soundcloud.com/the-quiet-north/snacky](http://soundcloud.com/the-quiet-north/snacky)


\(^3\)\(^0\)\(^3\) Matt Wakeling, *St Jambience - Processed Guitars, Noise, Radio and Other Stuff,* [http://stjambience.wordpress.com/](http://stjambience.wordpress.com/).

Matt’s 31-day project are free to listen to and download on the SoundCloud site and there is more information on the project on Matt’s blog.305

I heard a great interview with Nat Grant (Melbourne based percussionists/sound artist) on The Music Show this week. She was at the tail end of a year long project where she recorded some music every day for a year, with the goal of assembling a large scale work at the end of it. She blogged and collaborated throughout the process.

I liked the idea so much that I’m going to blatantly copy it...well, just for a month, anyway.

So, from January 1st, 2013, I’m going to write and record some short pieces, and post them on the audio page of this site each day. They will be free for download via soundcloud.

I’m not after fully realised pieces...more like beats or melodies or fragments of whatever that you are happy to have included in this project.306

A number of different artists have created new works and/or utilised tracks from *Momentum* in different ways. Visual artist Lily Mae Martin began a regular sketching project, inspired by *Momentum*, in January 2012. The project was a sketch-based diary, documenting her life and her family in Berlin.307

*My friend and the wonderful artist Lily Mae Martin has begun a sketching project, similar to (and inspired by) mine. Looking at other people who have attempted or achieved a similar body of work, the ‘sharing’ as a way of facing up to following through with something seems integral to the process.*308

January 8, 2012

305 “St Jambience - Processed Guitars, Noise, Radio and Other Stuff”.
306 Ibid.
308 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 8th January 2012. See appendices page 151.
Melbourne musician and composer Justin Ashworth collaborated with visual artist Sophia Hanover on a daily animation and sound experiment in February 2012. Justin continued the project, titled *Ritual Loops*[^309], by himself throughout March.

Presentation and Onwards

At this point *Momentum* has taken on a number of forms, on and offline. There is the project blog with each individual and monthly track plus blog posts from each day of recording and mixing. There is the SoundCloud page where all these tracks are hosted, and where the *Collective* group now exists also. On the Bandcamp site three digital albums can be downloaded, and physical CDs purchased. There is a 4 disc box set of the 366 project as well as single discs for the *Turkey* and *Live* projects.

The opportunity to present the 366 project in the George Paton Gallery in Melbourne in March, 2013 has been mentioned already. Guided partly by the size of the space (a 13x6 metre rectangle), and a desire to exhibit the whole of the project but without listeners needing to be there for 4 hours to get a feel for the scope of the work, I decided to play the 12 movements simultaneously. 12 speakers were installed in their own separate booth, at around 2 metre intervals, with curtains of a double layer of bubble wrap between each booth. In each booth stood a single speaker on a stand, a stool to sit on and prints of all the photos from that month arranged on the wall.\footnote{Images. See appendices page 143-4.} In my initial proposal to the gallery I wrote:

\begin{quote}
I want to create a private and intimate personal experience - a warm atmosphere - an inviting and comfortable experiential space. I have created an online environment for the work to exist within; now I would like to create a site-specific, tangible environment. Low lighting would create a path for audience members to follow, inviting them from one movement to the next, without being intrusive.

Bubble wrap has been a consistent feature in my sound works for some years now, so I think it is fitting that I propose to utilise large sheets of bubble wrap, hung like curtains from ceiling beams in the gallery, to divide the space into 12 sections. This will allow for the delineation of 12 separate listening spaces, whilst also allowing for some light and sound to bleed through. *Momentum*
has been created with this kind of transparency in mind. I blog about the digital processing that I apply to the sounds, about people and artists who inspire me, and about those who contribute material to the project.

Displaying the 366 photos from the project was a last minute addition, something I wasn’t entirely sure about at the time but an element that became an important part of the exhibition, and a real talking point. Online the images served a particular purpose, to accompany the tracks each day. In the gallery the images were displayed together in monthly batches and they served as a visual guide to my year, to the contributors, and to the recordings. Feedback from gallery attendees was that having something to focus on visually whilst listening to Momentum was intriguing and interesting.

Some of the images are very specific and leave no doubt as to the sound that was recorded on that day but many of the images are abstract or of things I didn’t record. Although not taken with the exhibition in mind, the mixture of images kept the audience guessing as to how to reconcile (or it they even could) the photos with the sounds they were hearing. The photos are now an integral part of the project, any conference presentations I give on the project, and planned future works, also.

The 12 tracks were played on separate loops in the gallery, and because each track was a different length, a process of phasing occurred throughout each day. Spending 6 hours in the gallery each day throughout the exhibition allowed me to hear different parts of the recording juxtaposed with one another. The kookaburras from the beginning of February, for example, would be very clear at one point in the day. However the next time that track looped again something noisier or more demanding might be happening on another track. Different sounds revealed themselves and were then covered up again over the course of each day.
Later in 2013 *Momentum* was installed in a gallery in Norway called 3.14. The gallery has a parabolic speaker in the entrance and the curators attempt to match sound works with the visual works being presented in the gallery. They contacted me at the beginning of 2013 about exhibiting *Momentum*, and my work played there from June 13 to August 11.\(^{311}\)

In 2014 my paper on *Momentum* titled *Harmony, Audience Engagement and Participatory Arts Practice* was accepted for presentation at the peer reviewed Australasian Computer Music Conference\(^{312}\) in Melbourne. I spoke in particular about the audience involvement in the creation of *Momentum*, and the reflexive processes of feedback and collaboration that opening my project up to an audience allowed.

In December 2014 *Momentum* will be exhibited at The Auricle Sonic Arts Gallery in Christchurch, New Zealand. I successfully applied to present the work in The Auricle’s octophonic gallery and will install *Momentum* there from December 4-18.\(^{313}\)

The different forms that *Momentum* has taken so far will inspire the kind of work I make and the ways in which I present those works in the future. I want to continue to engage with my audience in the process of creating new work, not just when I have a finished product. I would also like to do this in a more physical way, as well as online, perhaps through site-specific community-based works or residencies. The installation format has also given me a new perspective on how my work may be presented, in addition to live performance and CD recordings.

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312 Nat Grant, “*Harmony, Audience Engagement and Participatory Arts Practice,*” Australian Computer Music Conference, https://www.academia.edu/7635178/Momentum__Harmony__Audience_Engagement_and_Participatory_Arts_Practice.
Conclusion

The snowball effect of the *Momentum* projects indicates that experiment put into practice leads to further experimentation with results, and further expansion of artistic process. The yearlong project led to the *Turkey* project, the *Turkey* project led to the *live* project and so on. These were unintended consequences of the initial experiment: the music that came out of the projects had unexpected results due to the unknown material and the project itself had unexpected results that led to further practice and further experimentation. *Momentum* operated in reflexive ways, with results that were able to be fed back into the existing work and body of knowledge, and also lead the way forward to future works and discoveries.

The idea behind *Momentum* was one of self-reflection and exploration of cumulative compositional processes. By working on the initial project each day for 366 days, and documenting my thoughts and processes along the way, I was able to obtain a clear sense of what kind of working methods were best for me and my art. I also noticed patterns in my compositional processes and by forcing myself to find something new to record and new ways to treat sounds each day rapidly expanded my palette as a sound artist and composer.

All the different phases of *Momentum* allowed me to fully investigate the different facets of my musical life, each providing more and more insight into my process and depth to my research. The different forms of the projects allowed me to explore and develop cumulative compositional processes across all parts of my practice, and to apply the *Momentum* model to my regular creative environment as well as overseas and in live and recorded situations.

*Momentum* has extended beyond and outside of itself. The initial, yearlong project inspired me to create the three subsequent projects, and the processes of disciplined practice, of multiple authorship, collaboration, and cumulative composition have continued, flowing on to new projects and ideas. *Momentum* has resulted in several compositions, publications, recordings, performances, and a
research project that culminates in the musical work as well as my blog, journals, and this exegesis. It has proved a vehicle for experimenting with form, content, technique, improvisation, and audience interaction.

As stated in the **Introduction** I began to create *Momentum* with the goal of building a research framework around the work as the work itself was being created, of developing both alongside each other. I asked:

*What is the effect on the development of the artist/composer of creating transparently, and collaboratively?*

*What are the implications of practicing art making in a disciplined and also cumulative fashion?*

*Is it possible to make a work of art within fixed parameters whilst improvising on a large scale, with constantly evolving and mostly unknown material?*

Creating *Momentum* over such a long period of time, whilst also working on it every day throughout each project, became the defining and central element of the work, within which all the other issues that emerged along the way are situated. The juxtaposition of timescales, that is, having to create a polished piece to publish each day, whilst also keeping the long form of each composition in mind, meant that I attained, through practice, the ability to be able to maintain multiple perspectives; I was able to focus on the task at hand, to keep in mind the overall work to date, and to choose new musical material accordingly.

Within this overarching phenomena are the other important issues that emerged throughout the research period – the cumulative, experiential, and experimental methods I employed to create *Momentum*, the discipline I practiced throughout the projects, and the inclusion of my audience in all stages of the work.
Creating *Momentum* has revealed to me what I think is important about process in the creation and presentation of my art. By working on *Momentum* every day I came to new conclusions about how my art works and what’s important to me within that work. Repeated execution over time revealed that the most important thing for me is the experience of making the work; my art is not conceptual, it is practiced; completion of the project was never really the goal of the work – the making of the work was the goal.

By the time I arrived at Day 366 of the initial project it became apparent that getting to the last day wasn’t the point of conducting the project. The CD outcomes weren’t the goal either, but a byproduct of the process. Experiencing making the work and learning from the process was the most important and meaningful part to me, as an artist, and gave me the most impetus to continue to create and reflect.

On December 5, 2012 I compiled a list of what the framework of *Momentum* had allowed me to do up to that point:

*What the framework of Momentum has allowed me to do:*

*obtain experience at making and editing field recordings*

*gain confidence at manipulating a wide variety of musical materials*

*build a field recording library to use for other projects eg theatre/sound design*

*collaborate with my friends, colleagues, and to approach people I want to work with for a small musical contribution (not too much pressure, great in)*

*talk about my music on the radio*

*listen to the world in a different way*

*develop a new way of working and composing*

*find ways to best make my art and approach new and difficult tasks*

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314 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 5th December 2012. See appendices page 194.
Momentum became part of my daily routine, a habitual and lived practice; I lived Momentum for the initial 12 months, plus the time taken to create the two subsequent projects. Working on Momentum cumulatively and working every day allowed me to really focus on and engage with my work and my creative process. This, combined with the long duration of the initial project, allowed me time to experiment with compositional methods, to reflect on the work, and to feed my observations back into the work as I was creating it. This reflexive process occurred continuously throughout each of the projects and provided a valuable feedback loop, expanding and refining my compositional practice.

Developing a disciplined and habitual approach to my practice aided the successful completion of the above goals, in particular being able to commit to creating something every day for 366 consecutive days. Momentum necessarily became auto biographical, as the processes of sourcing sounds, making, and editing recordings became a part of my everyday life.

Being disciplined in some ways allowed me to be free in other ways and not worry about the framework. I set a start and end date for each project, and maintained, where appropriate, my one rule of not repeating sound sources. This made me comfortable that I knew what I had to do and stretched me to find new ways to do it. As Stephen Nachmanovitch writes, “Structure ignites spontaneity.”315 I strived to maintain a balance whereby just enough structure allowed me to be continually and freely creative, allowing the work to be what it was and however long or short; knowing the end dates meant I didn’t have to decide when the projects were ‘finished’.

Momentum explored the effect it had on me, as a creative individual, to experience the dichotomy between a very disciplined approach and a constantly changing set of inputs, of coming to the process of creating, daily, without actually knowing what new material I’d be adding to the composition that day. I experienced a number of reactions to this: fear of being sent sounds I couldn’t work with, uncertainty of whether I could find hundreds of original sounds to record, surprise

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315 Nachmanovitch, Free Play. Improvisation in Life and Art, 83.
when day after day I would successfully find something different and new ways to incorporate these sounds into the composition. The fears associated with outside contributions were repeatedly quashed, as I found that I had created a work that was flexible enough to be able to accommodate anything that I wanted or needed to add.

This exegesis has given particular attention to the experience and findings of reflexivity in the creation and documentation of *Momentum*. I allowed myself as flexible a framework as possible within a disciplined approach; I gave myself the freedom to play, experiment, and improvise, which opened up my practice and expanded my work. Opening *Momentum* up to audience contributions and feedback did likewise, expanding my sound palette, stretching my skills, and allowing me to make new connections with other artists.

*Momentum* enabled me to create the kind of environment that would become a site for investigating and experimenting with improvisation, composition, and the creation of artistic work. This resulted in an experimental composition and process that allowed me to explore, learn, and reflect whilst I was creating the work. I made the work, reflected on it, and documented the process and these lessons to inform further making and reflecting. *Momentum* was a lesson; I investigated and explored different ways of working, simultaneously reflecting on these and feeding lessons and observations immediately back into my art.

The habits of creativity and productivity had a multitude of benefits from the very beginning of *Momentum*. On Day 30 (January 30, 2012) I noted in my journal: “First month nearly over! And I’m getting new ideas everyday. Things I find, even if they don’t influence me directly, give me other ideas or remind me of ideas I’ve had and forgotten.”

The processes of reflecting on and engaging with my work every day as I was making it opened up new ways of approaching the work, new skills to manipulate sounds and new potential sounds to record. These processes continued throughout each of the projects as I felt my sound world and respective creative palettes growing continuously.

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316 Journal entry, Nat Grant, 30th January 2012. See appendices page 159.
My thoughts, my skills, and my work moved forward with new knowledge and inspiration. Richard Sennett describes this process as “stimulating when organised as looking ahead. “The substance of the routine may change,” he writes, “metamorphose, improve, but the emotional payoff is one’s experience of doing it again.”\(^{317}\)

I found that the few limitations I placed on myself whilst creating *Momentum* turned out to be liberating, in several ways. Firstly, by not doubling up on sound sources I was forced to look (and listen) further afield for ideas and source material for *Momentum*; I also learnt to listen differently and more carefully to my regular surroundings for sounds I might have otherwise missed or be so familiar with that I didn’t consciously hear them anymore.

Secondly, by having to produce and publish a piece each day, I couldn’t be precious about making the work ‘perfect’; I wanted the music I was putting out into the world each day to be interesting and of a professional standard, but the daily time restraints meant that I wasn’t always 100% happy with the work at the time of publication. Conversely this meant I was forced to let go of some of my insecurities about the work being less than perfectly polished, and in hindsight I always found that what I had published was good anyway, when I listened back several days, weeks, or months later.

Thirdly, the decisions I made to facilitate working easier like limiting field recording time to 1 min or 30 seconds made me become more scrupulous, and made me work harder to find something I definitely wanted to record and thought I could use. It made my work better. It made me more considerate and discerning in choosing material to record. It also meant I didn’t and mostly wasn’t able to spend so long on the project each day as to burn myself out. This helped to create a situation whereby I could complete the initial 366 days, and also had energy and drive to initiate further projects.

\(^{317}\) Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 175.
I took risks in creating *Momentum* the way that I did. I had no initial idea of what kind of form the pieces would take. Because of my belief that approaching creative work with overarching ideas can be limiting, and despite the risk of not knowing how the work and my research would end up, I chose to not impose a form or methodology on *Momentum* before I began the project, and found I wasn’t limited by a preconceived concept of what the end product was going to be.

I wanted to be open to seeing what happened through the process of creating *Momentum*. I felt that it would be possible to be blinkered by how I imagined the work would turn out, and wanted to be free to take the work and the research wherever it led, and to be open to all possibilities. By not deciding what it would be in advance I was able to do and to try anything I wanted to or felt like along the way.

Creating *Momentum* in an open and transparent way allowed me to share resources with other artists, and encouraged others to get involved; it opened up my own practice to new tools, to new ways of creating, and I was able to harness the collective knowledge and creativity of my audience to feed back into the work and further develop my own practice. Bringing together my audience and other artists opened streams of dialogue leading to new collaborations and an engaged and participatory culture around my projects.

Creating *Momentum* was an experiment, in terms of collaboration, transparency of process, and exploring new and different modes of authorship. I didn’t know who would contribute, if anyone, what kinds of musical material I would be given to work with, what kind of feedback and following, if any, would develop as a result of my putting myself and the project out into the world and being open to contributions, feedback, and suggestion. By creating, reflecting, and repeating I found I was able to engage and spend time with the work, allowing improvisation to flourish. As I created the work I was able to reflect on whether it was good, bad, able to build on next day, and choose to either move away from or further explore particular sounds or processes.
The *Momentum* compositions stretch back in time. One the first day of each of the projects I created the beginning of those compositions. On each subsequent day I created the end, which then morphed into different parts along the way. Only on three occasions did what I added to the end of the previous sections actually constitute the end of the piece. *Momentum* evolved in layers: each day I added musical material on top that then served as beginning, middle, end, and in the case of a lot of these positions shifted as the work continued to grow. The material at the start and end of each monthly movement served different purposes in that context than in each work as a whole.

Applying the *Momentum* method across the different forms of my practice meant I could test the effects of working in a very specific way across a number of working methods, in different forms and locations. Completing *Momentum* also allowed me to combine the disparate ways in which I was working, allowing me to be simultaneously curator, composer, performer and improviser, combining real time music making with a process of standing back, editing, and composing with this material.

On November 17, 2012 I wrote in my journal "My project is open-ended, which is motivational in terms of seeing my development as a composer as an ongoing one, rather than one with a fixed end point. Building skill through practice."318 There needed to be an end point for the sake of the research I was conducting but it became apparent that the end point itself wasn’t the goal of the project.

Involving my audience in the process of creating *Momentum* was a big drive to continue to create and share my work. Showing where I was up to every day, getting feedback and encouragement to keep going, perhaps even inspiring others to do the same, and receiving so many contributions that turned my audience into collaborators and took the project in new and exciting directions – these were all vital elements in the success and, I believe, completion of the year long *Momentum* project. Working in this way gave my audience deeper insight into my art and my

process, and provided me with inspiration to continue to work in this way in the future.

I observed the effects of communicating with my audience at every stage of the creation of *Momentum*, and inviting them to also contribute to the work. Through the blog, Twitter, Facebook, and SoundCloud I could observe that the number of followers and listeners and those downloading the *Momentum* tracks increased as time went on. These anonymous statistics as well as the direct comments and feedback I received gave me motivation to continue to create the work and to work the way I wanted.

The feedback I received and the cumulative nature of the project motivated me to complete the 366 project and initiate the subsequent projects, stretching myself and growing my skill set throughout. This and the previously identified practices of discipline, transparency, and collaboration were tailored for, and suited to, this project and this research. In terms of the mode and methods of working to create *Momentum*, I found the best ways for me to do this, to learn from my work, my choices and mistakes, and push myself creatively and reflectively. There is much to be learnt from these processes for my future work and for others working collaboratively and creatively, but it is a very specific way of working, one that is valuable to share but I do not prescribe it as the best or only choice in all creative situations, just best suited to this particular one.

I now view *Momentum* not just as an art and research project but also as a concept - a way of working and living. I am taking countless lessons learnt from *Momentum* with me, excited about future opportunities for creating collectively and sharing process. The experience of building my work slowly through a repetitive process led to self-discovery not only in regards to aesthetic concerns but also thematic and academic concerns. Experiential learning, learning through reflection on doing, creates fresh insight and turns experience “upon itself to deepen and intensify its own qualities.”

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awareness through cumulative and reflexive processes, and interaction with my audience and with the developing musical material.

Personally, *Momentum* affected me in many ways. Developing skills that allowed me to be flexible and open in the creation of my art resulted in the simultaneous development of skills enabling me to be flexible and open in my life, my work, and interactions with others. The discipline and habitual practice required of *Momentum* made me see that I could approach any new task, skill, or ambition with the confidence that in time and with continued practice I would improve or grasp things easier.

*Momentum* has implications for future improvisational, collaborative, and compositional projects. I have shown that opening work up to audience comment and contribution, in all stages, results in a rich creative dialogue, and greater connections between that audience, the artist, and the work. Something I definitely agree with Bayles & Orland on is this, that “making lots of work” and seeking regular “feedback” is “the most direct route to learning about your own vision.”

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"Creative Commons - Attribution-Noncommercial-Sharealike 4.0 International - Cc by-Nc-Sa 4.0." http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/.

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"Hybrid-Kookas by Nat Grant Music."  


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Appendices

Images
SoundCloud statistics for *Momentum*, number of plays and downloads, November 2014. Screenshot from https://soundcloud.com/natgrant/stats

Screenshot from [https://soundcloud.com/natgrant/stats](https://soundcloud.com/natgrant/stats)
Blogger statistics for *Momentum*, total number of page views, November 2014.
Screenshot from [http://blogger.com](http://blogger.com)

Screenshot from [http://blogger.com](http://blogger.com)
CD recordings

*Momentum: 366*

Disc One – January, February, March
Disc Two – April, May, June
Disc Three – July, August, September
Disc Four – October, November, December

Original recordings by Nat Grant, with contributions from Erica Rasmussen, Lindsey Walker, David Kimball, Georgina Brett, Rohan Geddes, Noah Demland, Leanda Smith, Alastair Kerr, Richie Cyngler, Jutta Pryor, Maria Finkelmeier, Fritz Hauser, CoCo Loupe, Per Forsberg, Tilly Juls Ross, Peter Knight, Andrew Brooks, Quinn Knight, Tobias Brodel, Craig Bortmas, Laura Ryan, Chris Rainier, Craig Fryers, the Boon kids, Carolyn Rasmussen, Steve Fitzgerald, Justin Ashworth, Greg Hooper, Lily Mae Martin (and Anja), Ashley Higgs, Dandenong West Primary grade 3/4 kids, Luke Howard, David Cooper Orton, Claire Pannell, Iad Wadley, Gareth Thomson, Dan Crowe, Lisa Houser, Michael Peters, Bob McGowan, Gus McKay, Anna Van Veldhuisen, Penelope Bartlau, Phil Bywater, Helena Richardson, Steve Uccello, Miranda Hill and 3 Shades Black ensemble, Matt Bailey, Matt Lewin, Ashley Walker, Myles Mumford, Dan Richardson, Matt Wakeling, Andre Breen, Rhys Corr, Leah Scholes, Heather and Sam Moyes, Matt Wilmott, Rui Almeida, Alister Price, Maya-Victoria Kjellstrand and Evan Carr.

Mixed by Nat Grant.

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Momentum: Turkey

Composition from Turkey, July 2013. All recordings by Nat Grant, contributions from David Kimball. Mixed by Nat Grant.

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https://natgrantmusic.bandcamp.com/album/momentum-turkey

Momentum: Live

Four days of field recording and four nights of live sound sculpture for the Melbourne Fringe Festival, September 2013 at Conduit Arts Space, Melbourne.

All original recordings, mixed and edited by Nat Grant.

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https://natgrantmusic.bandcamp.com/album/momentum-live
Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:
Grant, Natalie

Title:
Momentum: experiential development in music composition

Date:
2014

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/54911

File Description:
Momentum: experiential development in music composition