Materials *Matter*: The Politics of Posthumanist Performativity in Contemporary Studio Practice

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ABSTRACT

Materials *Matter*: The Politics of Posthumanist Performativity in Contemporary Studio Practice

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Written through the eyes of a *doer*, "Materials *Matter*: The Politics of Posthumanist Performativity in Contemporary Studio Practice" narrates a philosophical complication of materials in a studio practice through what feminist quantum physicist Karen Barad names a posthumanist performative framework - a theoretical model through which all that is nonhuman matter [phenomenon] becomes active, and agential via methods of intra-activity and embodiment. In other words, through an open-ended apparatus, Barad suggests that materials perform. Provoked by the idea that materials in a studio practice, in the words of Barad, *do*, I deconstruct the ways in which material agents in contemporary art, such as lines, taste, place, and smell, become lead actors who complicate the historical and philosophical entanglements between the body and a thing.

Leading up to a thoughtful epilogue about the material choices that I make in my studio practice, I turn to three examples of contemporary women artists who are also engaged with ontological explorations of matter. Jess Dobkin, through the collection, and distribution of breast milk, challenges the traditional practice of performance art by problematizing the relationships between human and nonhuman agency in *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*. Katrin Sigurdardottir's spatial installation *High Plane V* exemplifies the ways in which the space of place embodies locational performativity,

while Kim Faler's site-specific intervention *Untitled (99 44/100% pure)* stages the performativity of smell. In response to the question – *how do materials in a studio practice do* – all of the women in this study, including the author, challenge the limitations of human agency in contemporary art by reassessing the ways through which their materials become performers in the studio, the art gallery, the museum, and the everyday.

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Concordia University's Ph.D. in Humanities is a unique program in which artists, philosophers, and scientists come together to practice entangled models of thinking. As an artist-scholar invested in interdisciplinary methods of production, a program like this one offers a space in which I can practice, as well as blur the material boundaries in my research and the studio. However, without the support of my mentors: Dr. Chris Salter, Dr. Alice Jim, Dr. Kim Sawchuk and François Morelli, my ideas would never have come to life. Throughout the last five years, these four individuals have dared me to look, think and write *through* my art practice, and consider what is at stake in models of practice-led research. With reference to the questions: *how do I make art?*, and *why?*, my committee encouraged me to challenge modern interpretations of material processes and put forth a contribution that I believe is still needed in contemporary art scholarship: *that materials in a studio practice matter*.

Thank you, Chris! You never doubted me, and always made me feel like my work was, and still is, important. In addition to being a supervisor, you have become a colleague, and friend. I am grateful for every opportunity that you have given me and look forward to the next phase of our work together. Alice, you once asked me if I trusted you. I hope you know that I have always trusted in you, your insight, your opinions, and your professionalism. But more importantly, it's the comfort of knowing that you also trust in me – thank you. Kim, you quickly saw through my insecurities of being an artist in an academic program such as the Humanities. Thank you for challenging me and making me believe that my practice is equally valuable to current models of interdisciplinary research. Last, but certainly not least, François - thank you!

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Drawing is an entangled act of making and marking connections between myself, other bodies, other things, and other sensorial doings. Through performative processes, drawing becomes physical, participatory, and perversely dematerial in its conceptualization of the experiential. But more interesting, is the realization that drawing translates into a method of embodiment. However, to conceive drawing as such is to understand that drawing materials – such as paper, graphite, space, place, and even sound – also do. Materially, drawing is more than the act of producing and organizing lines. Lines do more than describe the traces of a gesture or a thing. They embody and enact an action, a time, a site, as well as the experience of making. In what he names a *comparative anthropology of the line*, social anthropologist Tim Ingold argues that the power of the line lies not in the nature of the mark, nor in the hand of the marker, but rather in the linear remnants that entangle people, place and things; "... to study both people and things is to study the lines they are made of."[i]

Writing from the perspective of a drawer, mine is a very different claim: line making, or rather drawing, is a ***performative*** engagement. Beyond the practice of line making, drawing is also an experiential, formal, and metaphorical act that records the intertwining between many materials, such as the body, time, and a site. In other words, drawing is doing onto something else, and being done onto.

Performative - currently a popular word in the fields of new materialist feminism, performance studies, and science studies, is not synonymous with traditional definitions of performance. Nor is it an adjective used to describe an act or a gesture on stage or in

the everyday. In my work, as well as in the philosophical discourses from which I am drawing to understand the ways in which materials in a studio practice do, the word performative is a method of verbing a thing, albeit human or nonhuman. More specifically, performative depicts a conceptual method of doing that translates into an exchange and activation of agency in the world. With reference to Karen Barad's philosophy-physics interpretation of human (vis-à-vis nonhuman) agency and her argument that "... meaning is not ideational but rather specific material (re)configurings of the world,"[ii] line-making, marking and doing become performative through the ways in which they materially (re)configure my world.

As an artist working in the fields of art history and performance studies, the experience of materials in my studio practice differs from modern traditions that associate things such as paint, canvas, wood and paper within the conventions of objecthood. My claim here is that materials are more than tools used to produce an image or a gesture. An artist's materials do something both inside and outside of the studio - they act, they perform, they release smells, make sounds as well as embody the effects of time. In other words, as I will argue, they enact agency.

In the studio, my materials, which often include charcoal, chalk, dirt, dust, paint, snow, and sound, are active, verbal and agential entities that do onto my body as well as the particulars of my surroundings. For example, in the series of performative drawings entitled *3580/3590* (2011) (Figure 1), not only do the markings on each sheet of paper showcase a variety of colored stains and muddy smears produced by the natural landscape; each drawing becomes the result of the landscape's actions. The grass, the damp black dirt, the yellow and purple flowers, and the overgrown weeds mark and shape

the paper as well as transform its flat surface into an object. Echoing what Karen Barad names *posthumanist performatives*, entanglements of human and nonhuman matter,[iii] this series of performative drawings encapsulates the ways in which materials, whether traditional or nontraditional, do in contemporary art. But while Barad calls her subject in question: *matter*, I am naming mine *materials*. Moreover, unlike Barad, who writes through science to understand how "matter matters,"[iv] my aim here is to write through a studio practice to complicate the *performative* nature of materials in contemporary visual arts.

Regardless of the underlying differences between these seemingly opposing two discourses, philosophy of science and the visual arts, it is a series of current thought in quantum physics, sociology, and anthropology that give ammunition to my claim that the materials of a studio art practice perform. In other words, it is the recent contributions from scholars examining the material production of knowledge in science and technology like Barad, Donna Haraway, Andrew Pickering, and Bruno Latour that provides what I will argue are useful conceptual and philosophical frameworks to support the claim that an artist's materials *do*.

The Day That Painting Died

In December 2006, a material and methodological shift occurred in my practice causing me to reconsider the material choices that I was making. During a studio visit with Joan Snyder, a New York-based abstract painter, the word *illustrative* was used in conversation to describe the painting *Looking* (2006) (Figure 2). Typical of my painting

practice from this period, I was trying to blur the boundaries between the representation of space and the experience of place.

Using pieces of fabric from my mother's linen closet, acrylic paint, graphite and found objects, I constructed fictional landscapes, mindscapes and topographies that referenced, in abstract fashions, the experiences of my relationships with my environment. On a two-dimensional surface, I wanted to transcend the physical frame that divided my experience of site from the ways in which the viewer could access this experience. In other words, I wanted to make my paintings experiential through the compositions and organizations of materials.

While speaking with Snyder that day in my studio, it became clear that my paintings were merely perpetuating the representational qualities of site that I was trying to escape. My spaces were flat. The locations cold and unlived. And my experiences were removed. In response to this realization it occurred to me that if I truly wanted to convey an experience in my practice that I needed to live it, feel it, and share it, in person, and with other persons.

At the same time, in the early stages of my transition from two-dimensional to three-dimensional work, I became very aware and troubled with the presence and function of my body. Unlike Carolee Schneeman or Marina Abromovic whose bodies are appropriated as political sites of intervention in art history, I was not interested in the complicated relationships between the body, performance, reenactment or event per se. Instead, the interest in using my body first started with a desire to understand the particulars of a locational experience vis-à-vis my sense of belonging. Inspired by a long list of questions, such as: *what does performance mean?; who performs?; what*

performs?; what are the material boundaries of performance?; and lastly, what happens to a performance after its execution?; it occurred to me that my body became the process through which meaning was produced, and not the *subject* of my work.

Aware of the gender politics surrounding the body in art history, particularly in the realm of performance art and feminist art history, I became very sensitive to the tensions that politicized the private and the public, alongside representation and the experiential. In comparison to artists such as Yoko Ono, Eleanor Antin, and Ana Mendieta whose bodies were strategically appropriated to pierce the male-dominated world of painting in New York City in the 1960s, I was not interested in using my body as a site of resistance.[v] Instead, what interested me were the ways in which things such as architecture, site and climate performed me, and subsequently my experience of *Being* [in New York]. In other words, my interest in performance lay in its transformative power to complicate different notions of site, body and material in a studio [practice] and to unearth the ways these different forces themselves *perform*.

Making a Claim: Materials *Do* in a Studio Practice

Fast forward to 2011. I encounter the writings of Karen Barad in a doctoral seminar. Intimidated by the title *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* as well as my limited understandings of mathematics and science, I was concerned that venturing into science studies, specifically quantum physics, at the doctoral level was a mistake. While I as well as many fellow artists and art historians continue to struggle with Barad's scientific references, what provokes me about her writing are the ways in which traditional boundaries inherent

within scientific practice, specifically the relationships between philosophy/science, human/nonhuman and observer/participant, are blurred and remade.

According to a long ongoing debate in science studies, a scientist is only ever an observer in the laboratory, and never a participant, whereas in the world of visual arts, and performance studies, artists, and performers are only ever participants whose work becomes the result of their intra-actions, frameworks that Barad understands as material entanglements, and engagements with other [participants].[vi] With reference to Niels Bohr's proto-performartive account that frames the act of theorizing as an individual and embodied activity, Barad in her writing, echoes the problems inherent with being an observer versus a participant; "[i]n the absence of due consideration to this crucial point, Bohr warns that scientists can only speculate about mere abstractions, and in doing so, they fail to provide an objective account of the phenomena they are studying."[vii]

Barad's interest in complicating the distinctions between these many identities not only informs my argument that making art is ultimately dialogical, but her appropriation of Bohr's philosophy-physics approach to understanding [nonhuman] matter informs my questions of what *matters* and who *matters*, and provides a powerful theoretical framework through which to consider the central research question in this inquiry: *how are materials such as lines, taste, the environment and smell vis-à-vis the body co-produced, and subsequently co-produce each other to perform in a studio arts practice?*

In the context of Barad's philosophy-physics, "Bohr argues that scientific practices must be understood as intra-actions among component parts of nature and that our ability to understand the world hinges on our taking account of the fact that our

knowledge-making practices are material enactments that contribute to, and are part of, the phenomena we describe."[viii]

In the context of visual arts, the idea that materials do and function/operate/perform as agents first became of interest to me when I stopped painting, or at least stopped identifying as a painter. For years I was working to understand how I could use paint to communicate my experience with site. By blurring the boundaries between representation and abstraction, I created fictional landscapes using found images, fabric and objects to represent how I thought I understood and experienced my environment. But after moving to New York City, my relationship with my environment changed, and a new set of political and social conditions, including a new legal status labeled "alien," helped me to re-realize that the matter of concern in my practice was not my environment per se, but rather the ways through which the materials in my work were performing me. In other words, embodiment and experience of the surroundings as the central material concern. What still haunts me about this revelation is that it continues to inform and change how I understand making, writing and doing research.

Thinking through concepts of embodiment, becoming, and the idea that an experience is a material thing inspired my first performative act entitled *Winged* (2006) (Figure 3) – a gesture that entangled the material act of doing paint through the experience of being done onto by site. I refer to *Winged* as a performative act because it extends beyond an action painting. Yet it is different from a "traditional" performance in the sense that performance art historically provided the body a platform on which to enact and reenact in an event. In the spirit of an anti-event, I emptied a gallon of white latex

paint on the studio floor, took off all of my clothes, except my white underwear, and lay down on my back in the white puddle to make snow angels. Trumping the occurrence of enactment was the experience that my materials were doing me, rather than me doing them. I had not considered that the paint would be cold, have an odor, be slippery, outline my naked body and emphasize my nudity to the two invited observers in the room.

For the first time, it occurred to me that paint, in my practice, was in essence performing me. It became an agent in my studio who in turn was doing onto me, and it made me feel, move and respond to the conditions of my studio in ways that I had never before anticipated. *In short, I was no longer a pre-existing, fixed body responsible for making marks on paper, canvas or my floor, but rather the embodiment of time, place, space and white paint.*

The idea that the materials of an art practice perform slowly became the major theoretical foundation of my studio practice. And in this text, it is also the *raison d'être* for the question of how are materials, such as space, place, and smell vis-à-vis the body co-produced, and subsequently co-produce each other to perform in a studio arts practice? Prior to performing *Winged*, my understanding of performance art was limited to the traditional performance-as-event example in which artists stage an action on a given day, during a scheduled time, in front of an expected audience. Trained in art history, I considered artists such as Carolee Schneemann, Ana Mendieta and Janine Antoni as leading examples of performance artists who, for political reasons, inserted their bodies into their work to reclaim their place within the canonical traditions of 'high'

art. But *Winged* was different. It was a private performance in which I never felt like the performer, or actor.

From conception to the moment of execution, *Winged* was a material investigation of the ways in which materials, phenomena or conditions, such as climate change, humidity, temperature, site, snow and white paint, perform the body - my body. Nine years later, as *Winged* remains a key performative act in my repertoir of performatives, I am still working to understand the roles these materials, sites and conditions play – *their* forms of expression that lie beyond me. To further substantiate my claim, I consider, in three precursory chapters to an epilogue dedicated to my studio work from 2006-2015, three key works of art by three contemporary women artists who collectively exemplify how the materials of an art practice begin to *matter* in contemporary art [history].

Although very different, all three artists, Jess Dobkin, Katrin Sigurdardottir, and Kim Faler, blur the lines between performance, sculpture, painting, and installation in their work. Not quite interdisciplinary, and not quite transdisciplinary, their works, *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar* (2006) (Figure 4), *High Plane V* (2005) (Figure 5), and *Untitled (99 44/100% pure)* (2012) (Figure 6) challenge the discursive in current discourses of art history, performance studies and material feminism through Barad's notion of posthumanist performativity - "[a] posthumanist account calls into question the givenness of the differential categories of "human" and "nonhuman," examining the practices through which these differential boundaries are stabilized and destabilized."[ix]

The Road to Positioning Posthumanist Performativity in Contemporary Art

The word *doing* is a key term that, throughout this thesis, will continue to speak to the ways in which materials in contemporary art exemplify what Andrew Pickering terms *material agency* – a method that complicates the presupposed relationships between science and representation proposing that nonhuman things, such as machines and substances, also embody performativity.[x] Originally rooted in linguistics and semiotics, the word doing in relationship to performance was used by John L. Austin in his critique of the predominant at the time reign of natural language theory, to suggest that words, upon their utterance, *do* something; that words embody power, and therefore when spoken, become their truth. In a series of lectures at Harvard in 1955 entitled *How to Do Things With Words*, Austin proposed to name these words "performatives" - words that, in essence, perform their meaning through their doing, "[t]he term performative will be used in a variety of cognate ways and constructions, much as the term 'imperative' is. The name is derived, of course, from 'perform', the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action."[xi]

Austin's concept of performativity has substantially informed the ways in which the body has been identified, understood and materialized, on stage, in a gallery and in the everyday. In the context of their respected fields, a range of different theorists in theater, performance and cultural studies have continually positioned the body at the centre of a performative act; what science and poststructural philosophers distinguish as a humanist discourse. Humanism, according to Barad, is an "essentialist" philosophy that "places the human back at the center of the universe."[xii] Moreover, humanism reduces the body to a set of cultural, ethical, and political binaries that she argues isolates the

body within discursivity. Thus, by disavowing humanism within science studies, a range of scholars, including Haraway, and Pickering in addition to Barad offer a necessary opposition to the ways in which the body has been considered in other fields.

But what does performance studies, gender studies and art history contribute to discourses of the body and more specifically, to concepts of material agency? In the realm of theatre studies, scholar Richard Schechner argues that to perform is to be, and that meaning is born from an ensemble of experiences that when brought together create consciousness; "…the drama is what the writer writes; the script is the interior map of a particular production; the theatre is the specific set of gestures performed by the performers in any given performance; the performance is the whole event, including audience and performers (technicians, too, anyone who is there)."[xiii]

According to this particular model that hierarchizes the human body in the event of a performance, Schechner's appropriation of a dialogical platform for the exchange of experiences limits who, and what can embody agency. By ignoring other kinds of bodies in a performance, he thus perpetuates a binary that separates the body from its material world. Moreover, Schechner's theory lends itself to the idea that what is not inherent to the body is contextualized as scientific, and therefore not considered to be performative, nor relevant to a performance event; "[a]lthough artistic and scientific creativity have long been thought to be similar, there is this decisive difference: scientists focus their work on external phenomena; even a neurobiologist works on somebody else's brain. Performing artists, work on themselves, trying to induce deep psychophysical transformations either of a temporary or of a permanent kind."[xiv]

Parallel to the argument that performance occurs in the materialization of the body, the feminist cultural theorist Judith Butler, whose contributions to gender studies, and queer theory continue to inform the ways in which the gay, lesbian and transgender body is deconstructed, materialized and re-materialized in contemporary society, arguably draws from Austin's model of performativity to understand gender as the result of repeated, and ritualized acts of material doings. In other words, a body's gender is the result of a citational, and material embodiment.

In *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* Butler argues against the distinction that sex and gender are blurred realities insisting instead that they derive from series of social and material constructions; "[i]f gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this 'sex' except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that 'sex' becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access."[xv] Critical of the culture/nature binary that constructivism perpetuates in materialist and postmodern feminism, she proposes, instead, to understand gender as the result of what she terms *performativity*.

In the context of Butler's research and writing, peformativity is ultimately an act of reiteration and citationality through which gender becomes the result of the body's performance. In her early essay "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," Butler boldly claims that performativity transcends from methods of doing gender, doing an identity, and doing what gender is [materially] assumed to be. Concerned with the concept of *doing* versus the act of *being*, Butler argues against the idea that gender is a pre-existing identity that is inherently pre-

scripted. Instead, gender is an open-ended, evolutionary and flexible identity; that "[g]ender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed."[xvi]

Echoed in the title *Bodies That Matter* is the notion that the body, through its materialization, and thus performativity, begins to matter, or rather mean something; "[t]o speak within these classical contexts of *bodies that matter* is not an idle pun, for to be material means to materialize, where the principle of that materialization is precisely what 'matters' about that body, its very intelligibility. In this sense, to know the significance of something is to know how and why it matters, where 'to matter' means at once 'to materialize' and 'to mean'."[xvii]

In keeping with Butler's interpretation of performativity vis-à-vis the repetition and ritualization of gender, the German theatre and performance studies historian Erika Fischer-Lichte's model of performativity positions the latter in a humanist discourse in which performance exists as a body-centric practice of performative acts that, in turn re-instantiates modern theories of linguistic discursivity. With reference to Marina Abramovic's long career as a celebrated performance artist, Fischer-Lichte explains that the relationship between performance and the body (in theatre and visual arts) represents a form of aesthetic narration in which the body becomes a symbol of embodied consciousness through performative acts.

In *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, Fischer-Lichte draws on Schechner's theories of audience participation to deconstruct the changing role of the viewer-turned-participant during Abramovic's earlier performance *Lips of Thomas* (1975) (Figure 7).[xviii] Originally performed at the Krinzinger Gallery in Innsbruck, the

two-hour event consisted of the artist engaging in a variety of abusive acts, such as cutting herself with glass, flagellating her back and laying on blocks of ice. In the context of live theater, Abramovic's performance stages a traditionally laid out one-woman performance with a live audience looking on. However, everything changes when the artist transforms the preconceived situation from that of a theater-like experience into an ethical debate between viewing, participating and helping.

In the midst of a violent situation, the artist forces the viewers to reconsider their own role as an observer by making them question whether or not they should help the bleeding woman in front of them. Caught between "the norms and rules of art and everyday life, between aesthetic and ethical imperatives,"[xix] the audience's dilemma shifts the ways in which to understand the body in performance. In this example, the body is no longer communicating an act, but rather transforming the figure into its own illusion. According to Fischer-Lichte, the relationship between performance and the body, in *Lips of Thomas*, becomes a symbol of embodied consciousness; "... the human body is not a material like any other to be shaped and controlled at will. It constitutes a living organism, constantly engaged in the process of becoming, of permanent transformation. The human body knows no state of being; it exists only in a state of becoming. It recreates itself with every blink of the eye; every breath and movement embodies a new body. For that reason, the body is ultimately elusive. The bodily being-in-the world, which cannot *be* but becomes, vehemently refutes all notions of the completed work of art."[xx] Likened to a Schechnerian understanding of performance, Fischer-Lichte argues that performance therefore occurs during the

transformative moment between the subject's act and the viewer's internal shift in consciousness.

Within this brief archeology of the body's relationship to performativity, my intention thus far has not been to criticize previous writings or theories about performance, and subsequently the performative, in performance studies or art history. Nor has my goal been to replace the words or the ideas of performance and the performative in feminist discourses of the gendered body. Instead, my references to Richard Schechner, Judith Butler, Erika Fischer-Lichte and the ways in which they understand performance vis-à-vis the human body are rather intended to frame the argument, prevalent in studies of the socio-technical impact of science and technology that nonhuman matter or materials of art practice also constitute forms of agency, just as the human body does.

This particular strain of posthumanist science studies, however, is not the only area in which the borders between inert and active in performative settings are questioned. In the opening sentence to *Performance Histories*, performance critic Bonnie Marranca embraces the concept that performance occurs in the spaces between a thing and the experience of that thing; "[a]fter a century of hybridization in the arts, the concept of 'performance' has come to the forefront of contemporary thought on art and culture. The word 'performance,' whether it describes a live event or personal acting-out; the features of a car, a perfume, a sound system; and whether it refers to history or therapy or the act of mourning, now shapes contemporary thinking about people and things."[xxi]

In comparison to what I am naming the more traditional definitions of *performance* in performance studies and art history, Marranca's writing provides the

possibility for a different kind of interpretation. In keeping with science studies scholars and material feminists, she begins to acknowledge what is an important theoretical and material shift between performance and the performative. First of all, by attributing the word *performance* to things that are not only human, Marranca is, consciously or not, proposing a linguistic shift in the ways we think about and understand the conditions of performance as well as the relationship between the performer and the thing being performed. Furthermore, by singling out the idea that performance occurs during the moment of its experience and not only as the result of a bodily act, she suggests a crucial shift in the ways that performance has historically been understood. By pushing the linguistic and semiotic boundaries of performance, hers is a model that begins to echo what scholars are currently naming performativity via a discourse of material agency.

By challenging the conditions and limitations of performance, Marranca is teasingly hinting at her desire to move beyond the ways in which performance has been mainly focused on the human body, and human agency. Recalling past food-based performances by artists such as Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Eleanor Antin and Janine Antoni, she echoes what Barad, Haraway and Pickering label a performative shift between human and nonhuman agency.

For instance, rather than describing the relationship between licking, eating, and chocolate in *Lick and Lather* (1993) (Figure 8) or the physical transformation of the body when dieting in *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture* (1972) (Figure 9), Marranca considers performance *through* food, *through* cooking, *through* smelling, *through* eating and/or *through* not eating. Marranca suggests that artists are practicing quintessential examples

of nonhuman agency, or rather material agency, in ways by which they engage with materials, as well as how materials engage them.

The performative relationship between the body and food, in theatre studies, performance studies, and visual arts, is one that has historically troubled the representation of the gendered body in performance. Food, for example, is identifiable, ritualistic and biologically necessary for the sustainability of human life. According to Marranca, "[f]ood has everything in the world to tell us about the mentalities of an age, its desiring tropes and geographies of taste, its contribution to the life of spectacle. Today, just as we have come to see natural history understood as part of the history of the world, the subject of food is now embraced as a history of humankind."[xxii] No longer a thing that the body consumes, food becomes an agent, an embodied source of power that is performed by the body, and in turn, performs the body. Reminiscent of Barad's concept of *thingification*, "the turning of relations into *things*,"[xxiii] Marranca's exploration of performance also proposes a methodology of doing through the ways in which she argues that an environment is performative.

Framing Methods of *Doing*

In comparison to my *framing* of material agency in contemporary art, and posthumanist performativity in a studio practice, performance studies, gender studies and art historical discourses have continued to focus on a body-centric interpretation of performance grounding the latter instead within a discursive practice that favors human agency vis-à-vis nonhuman agency. Consequently, in order to go beyond language and speech acts as the basis for an action or a performance, I draw from science and

technology studies (STS) in which feminist-science scholars like Barad and Donna Haraway consider nonhuman agency vis-à-vis performativity through a posthumanist lens in order to understand how meaning emerges through an intra-active entanglement between a thing and other preexisting things.

In the realm of feminist quantum physics, for example, Barad's concept of posthumanist performativity complicates longstanding gendered dichotomies, such as nature/culture, mind/body and subject/object that historically inspired the linguistic turn within modern feminist theory. Working towards what material feminists name one of the primary objectives of postmodern feminism – to interrogate the tension between objective reality versus social construction settlements in which the gendered body begins to *matter* – Barad frames the entanglement of feminism and science studies within what she calls "... the interaction of culture, history, discourse, technology, biology, and the 'environment,' without privileging any one of these elements."[xxiv] By naming her model *posthumanist performativity*, she introduces a theoretical and practical space in which to problematize the body-centric discourse that has traditionally situated the gendered body within the intertwinement of knowledge, subjectivity, and language.

Working as well within the traditions of posthumanism, Donna Haraway explains that "[t]o be one is always to *become with* many."[xxv] Moreover, that *being* (on this earth) stems from the exchange between a living species and its materiality; "[f]igures are not representations or didactic illustrations, but rather material-semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings co-shape one another. For me, figures have always been where the biological and literary or artistic come together with all of the force of lived reality. My body itself is just such a figure, literally."[xxvi] Through the

entanglement of consciousness, becoming, in Haraway's writing, is the foundation for her evaluation of what Judith Butler calls intelligibility.

With reference to specific animal-inspired case studies, Haraway frames [her] identity as a co-constitutive relationship between the body and its companions writing that "[t]he kinds of relatings that these introductions perform entangle a motley crowd of differentiality situated species, including landscapes, animals, plants, microorganisms, people, and technologies."[xxvii] In other words, that humans, animals and thing are intelligible, and therefore embody [human or nonhuman] agency.

Moreover, the celebrated "cyborgian" body, which Haraway understands as Being through bodily and mechanical coexistence, blurs the binaries that have framed the gendered body within historical, sexual and political hierarchies. For example, drawing on *dog writing* in *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, she complicates the divides within human evolution; "[c]yborgs and companion species each bring together the human and nonhuman, the organic and technological, carbon and silicon, freedom and structure, history and myth, the rich and the poor, the state and the subject, diversity and depletion, modernity and postmodernity, and nature and culture in unexpected ways."[xxviii] Inspired by dog-human relationships and the ways in which she herself coexists with her dog, Cayenne Pepper, Haraway's manifesto thus provides a platform on which to challenge essentialist politics and the theory that there is a universal female body, identity and experience.

In other examples of her writing, such as *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Haraway continues to negotiate the relationships between objectivity and the ways in which the gendered body can begin to be re-imagined and re-

recognized within a contemporary climate. Embedded within the argument that meaning is historically and scientifically specific, she calls into question the rhetoric and practice of science vis-à-vis a discourse of embodiment to complicate what has philosophically become the *raison d'être* for her interventions of feminist objectivity and human agency, or rather a method that she terms *situated knowledge*.[xxix]

How then does Haraway's theory of situated knowledge inform the ways in which Barad understands posthumanist performativity as a method to complicate human agency, in the social and natural sciences? In the larger context of Haraway's investigation of the body/machine relationship, objectivity becomes a helpful strategy for thinking about difference; "[f]eminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. In this way we might become answerable for what we learn how to see."[xxx] To further complicate the matter, she explains that to understand the technical, social and psychical implications of objectivity is to understand how to embody it.[xxxi]

In Barad's feminist account of quantum physics, she articulates the precarity of objectivity as the critical foundation of Niels Bohr's intersubjective re-positioning of the human body in nature. She explains that objectivity, in philosophy-physics, informs the ways in which scientists, like Bohr, and even Albert Einstein, questioned the limitations and distinctions between humanist and posthumanist methods of understanding [the ontological] conditions of Being, or what Barad names *mattering*. In other words, objectivity becomes a methodological apparatus in science studies used to complicate the human-centric ideology that only humans embody agency.

For the purpose of this dissertation, this reading of the relationships between objectivity, agency and posthumanist performativity in quantum physics and visual arts informs the introductory fundamentals for the argument that materials used by artists embody agency through the ways in which they perform via entangled acts of embodiment. Furthermore, Bohr and Barad's argument that nonhuman matter *matters* serves to shape how I will consider materials and conditions, such as snow, and site in my own studio practice. In keeping with Andrew Pickering who coined two critical terms through which to understand the decentering of human agency within the realm of the philosophy and sociology of science: *material agency* and *mangle*, the concept of the posthuman vis-à-vis matter helps to further ground the entangled relationships between the natural and human sciences. Drawing from the posthumanist ideologies developed by Haraway, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Pickering argues that posthumanism not only problematizes the nature and identity of *a* body, but that the latter calls into question the very disciplinary structures through which meaning is produced; "the critique reflects an increasingly widespread conviction that the analysis of science calls for a decentering of the human subject. As a discipline, sociology has traditionally focused on human individuals and groups as the locus for understanding and explanation, and what is suggested here is a kind of posthumanist displacement of our interpretive frameworks."[xxxii] In theory and practice, Barad, Haraway, and Pickering's framing of performativity in scientific practice offers a more fruitful space through which to problematize the ways in which scientists and artists advocate for and exemplify human agency in the laboratory and the studio. Through *the mangle*, a term that Pickering appropriates as both a verb and a methodology to complicate and restructure "the

contours of material agency,"[xxxiii] his is a theoretical model that destabilizes the temporal and empirical conditions of mattering, and subsequently knowing. Thus, in order to move beyond a discourse that favors the body – the body of the scientist or the body of the artist – Pickering's argument, complemented by the writings of Karen Barad and Donna Haraway, offer the fields of performance studies and visual arts, the possibility to understand meaning, and its dissemination, beyond the contours of human doings, makings and markings.

What Pickering, Barad and Haraway also make apparent is the idea that the moment of performance does not end when the body's action ends. Nor does the moment of performance depend solely on a body's action. Instead, I am borrowing from science studies to rename what was once labeled performance in art history today *posthumanist performativity*. As the basis for this switch – reappropriation – transformation of the terms, the latter offers a lens through which to understand *how* the materials and conditions of my studio practice, such as snow, grass, lines and my environment, begin to *do* through embodiment.

Writing as a woman who *does*, my subsequent inquiry probes the relationship between how materials, space and the body co-produce each other in studio arts practice. I introduce and consider the work of four women artists, including my own work, and the ways through which current examples of performance, installation and drawing exemplify this entanglement between human and nonhuman forces in contemporary art. To substantiate this inquiry, I write through three specific theoretical lenses across three core chapters in this thesis. Chapter One explores notions of posthumanist performativity in the writings of Karen Barad and Donna Haraway. Chapter Two considers the

phenomenological entanglements between the body and its environment in relation to questions of place and space while Chapter Three explores the ways in which sensorially-augmented materials, such as those articulated by artists working with smell, can be framed through work in sensory anthropology.

Four Chapters, Four Women, and Four Methods of Material Doings

What is the relationship between material agency and a contemporary studio art practice? *What* does material agency look or act like? Moreover, *what* does it mean to practice posthumanist performativity? As a maker, a doer, and an art historian, I am aware of the different labels and functions attached to materials within a studio practice. Paint is not merely a wet material used to fill a surface. Site is not merely a spatial container that supports an object, or a body. As an artist, I continue to experience the various ways in which these materials, for example, perform. But how does this doing play out in the act of observing other practitioners and the entangled manner in which the body and materials produce new forms of artistic experience?

In order to explore the question of what material agency in a contemporary studio practice could be, I focus on four artists over four chapters: "Milk Does the Body," "Hom[ing] Site, or Being Home[d]," "I Smell Soap: Deconstructing the Politics of Olfaction," and "Epilogue: Art as Entanglement - Entanglement as Art." Borrowing from Barad's model of posthumanist performativity, I explore how four very different women artists engage with material doings in their practices.

In Chapter One: "Milk Does the Body," I re-consider and re-experience the ways in which breast milk becomes a material agent in Canadian artist Jess Dobkin's

performance *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*. When I attended the performance's opening reception in July 2006, my response to the work as well as to the milk challenged any preconceived understandings of performance art that I had previously formulated. In theory, the piece resembled very traditional definitions of performance art, but philosophically, the complicated relationship between body and thing during the event shifted the very nature of body-as-performer vis-à-vis thing-as-performer.

In the spirit of a gallery-turned-cocktail lounge, the exhibition, hosted by the Ontario College of Art and Design's Professional Art Gallery, offered guests a space in which to sample and socially engage with five new mothers' breast milk. Immediately upon entering the gallery, guests were greeted by servers, silver platters, and a selection of milk shots. Each identified by a clever bar name, such as *Passion's Legacy*, *Sweet Fall Harvest*, or *Straight Up with a Twist and Truth Serum #9*, it was curious to me why the milk's donors were anonymous. Moreover, the artist in the room remained also unidentified and anonymous.

Unlike the conventions of performance art in which the artist's body performs an act, a gesture or an event, this piece, instead, exemplified new possibilities for performance. But only after reading Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* did it become clear to me how milk, in *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*, became the performer, and therefore an example of performativity. In my own words, milk was doing onto me.

In keeping within a well-understood Western art historical definition of performance art, Dobkin created an event in which gendered bodies performed. Or at least that is what the description of the work advertised at the time. Starting from the

lactation, to the feeding and the distribution process, the artist created a situation that showcased the performer in the piece. But from the moment I entered the gallery, it became clear to me that the performer in the room, or in the event, was displaced: not just a human body, but rather milk. Although the men and women in the gallery, through ingestion, digestion and voyeurism became agents through their shared relationship and co-existence with the milk, no *one* body was actually performing. Thus, in response to the question *is milk performative?,* I consider the ways in which Dobkin's use of breast milk, the environment and the entire setup become examples of material agency, and subsequently posthumanist performativity.

Chapter Two: "Hom[ing] Site, or Being Home[d]," was originally inspired by my reading of W.J.T. Mitchell's introduction to *Landscape and Power* in which he argues that landscape is a verb and not a noun.[xxxiv] In the contexts of human geography and poststructural spatial theory, the argument that site performs the body is not necessarily revolutionary for these discourses have historically rooted the meaning of place and space within their dialogical relationships with the human body. But in the realm of visual arts, it was my experience of the Icelandic-born artist Katrin Sigurdardottir's architectural intervention/installation entitled *High Plane V* that first made me, both physically and materially experience what I will name locational agency via site.

Drawing from human geography and the traditions of spatial theory, in the work of philosophers Edward Casey and Michel Foucault, this chapter will consider the ways in which the materiality and conditions of site become performative in visual arts. Informed by the idea that an environment is performative and subsequently a method through which to understand how a site does onto the body, I explore how the material

conditions of Sigurdardottir's work, her baby blue mountains, raised ground and use of height does the body within the traditions of contemporary art. With reference to American art historian Claire Bishop's understanding that installation art is an experiential method for the practice of what science studies names material agency,[xxxv] coupled with my appropriation of Barad's method of posthumanist performativity, I frame my interpretation of Sigurdardottir's large-scale participatory installation as an example of contemporary art that blurs the objective and subjective lines that localize site within a discourse that art historian Miwon Kwon terms *locational aesthetics*, or what I will name *locational agency*.

Chapter Three, "I Smell Soap: Deconstructing Olfaction in Art," considers a third, and perhaps, more unusual example of material agency in contemporary art – smell. In the summer of 2012, I had the opportunity to experience the smell of white tea and ginger in American artist Kim Faler's site-specific installation *Untitled (99 44/100%)*. Installed in the exhibition *Invisible Cities*, hosted by the MASS MoCA in North Adams, MA, Faler's piece occupied an expanded field of space on the second floor of the museum. According to curator Susan Cross, the soap-turned-stud walls "emphasize[s] the ephemerality of the built environment as well as its many romanticized associations, including comparisons to the body."[xxxvi]

Although an accurate description of the artist's work, Cross' interpretation is also limiting in that it perpetuates what modern art historian Michael Fried once argued is the essence of fine art: *objecthood*.[xxxvii] By rooting the meaning of the work within its materiality and how that materiality is relational to the scale of the human body, the curator, like Fried, is overlooking other questions, such as: *what* is the materiality (smell

and wood) in the installation doing? Moreover, *what* are the relationships between the art object, its location and the body? And lastly, can soap, in art, exemplify posthumanist performativity?

In the field of sensory studies, cultural historian Constance Classen has critically contextualized the ways in which aroma, also known as smell or olfaction, embodies the ability to *do*. In *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, Classen, alongside David Howes and Anthony Synnott, explores the anthropological, cultural and social conditions that inform the behavior and experience of odor. In the opening sentence of the book, she writes that; [s]mell is powerful. Odours affect us on a physical, psychological and social level."[xxxviii]

Curious about the nature of smell beyond a thing that has a scent, she understands the latter as culturally, physically and socially active; "[s]mell, however, is a highly elusive phenomenon. Odours, unlike colours, for instance, cannot be named – at least not in European languages. "It smells like...' we have to say when describing an odour, groping to express our olfactory experience by means of metaphors. Nor can odours be recorded: there is no effective way of either capturing scents or storing them over time. On the realm of olfaction, we must make do with descriptions and recollections."[xxxix] Drawing from Austin's theory that words *do*, and phenomenological discourses that understand the body through perception, Classen argues that olfaction is performative and, subsequently, *does* the body.

Chapter Four, "Epilogue: Art as Entanglement - Entanglement as Art," circles back to the central question - *how do the materials of a studio practice do in contemporary art?* – from a very different perspective than offered in the first three

chapters. In this last view into the ways in which materials do in art, I consider my own studio practice, the materials that I *do* with, as well as how material agency is produced and enacted through drawing, performance and installation.

Provoked by the vocabulary that has historically entangled the terms *performance, performative* and *performativity* within art history, I uncover how space and place, for example, *do* the body and subsequently each other rather than merely support the body like it would an object. Through my experiences of making and doing, I have realized that the performative extends beyond philosophical discourses of the body and language. Moreover, that when coupled with feminist-inspired quantum physics, particularly Karen Barad's discussion of *posthumanist performativity*, matter, or in my case materials, can become examples of material agency in contemporary art.

Echoing Amelia Jones' criticism of the language that has been traditionally used to distinguish *performance* and *the performative* in art history and art criticism,[xl] the larger context of this thesis also arises out of a desire to challenge the words used to describe and understand materiality in visual arts. Thus, by advocating for a shift in scholarship this dissertation, as well as this epilogue, both seek to provoke the passivity/inertness that has been assigned to nonhuman materials in contemporary art history. By re-framing and re-situating posthumanist performativity as a materially-discursive model that renegotiates the relationship between the body and *thingness* in contemporary art, this last chapter will therefore propose a methodological shift within visual and material culture and dare the discourse to consider, through the eyes and hands of a maker and doer, material agency in contemporary art.

Drawing is more than the act of producing and organizing lines. And lines do more than describe the traces of a gesture or a thing. Rather, lines embody an action, a time, a site, as well as the experience of making. Returning to my opening statement, it is through the entanglements of many discourses, particularly art history, material feminism, the philosophy of science, social anthropology, quantum physics, science and technology studies and visual arts that a claim such as mine can even begin to be considered. *Matter* and *material* are two words that culturally, historically, and theoretically mean very different things. Moreover, in each context, they are practiced in very different ways.

The experience of studio practice enacts the concept that the things artists work with *matter*; that graphite, paper, paint, place, sound, and even smell, embody abilities to do that extend beyond modern theories of objecthood. But if I am going to exemplify exactly how materials are agents in contemporary art, I have to strategically shift the ways in which Michael Fried's dated use of the word objecthood limits the possibilities for new practices of materiality in visual arts. Thus, perhaps an unconventional pairing of discourses and research, Karen Barad's scientific development of the concept of *posthumanist performativity* becomes one possible lens through by which to problematize the limitations of objecthood and instead, shift to the doings and actions of material itself.

Chapter One

"Milk *Does* the Body"

A hot summer night in July 2006. Me, an emerging performance artist, and Larissa, a friend, colleague, and art enthusiast, walk into the Ontario College of Art and Design Professional Art Gallery to attend the opening reception for Jess Dobkin's controversial performance *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*, organized by Paul Couillard.[xli] The room is white, stark, cold and crowded. A man wearing a tuxedo carrying a silver platter greets us at the door. He first offers us a menu, and then a shot of milk. He among a group of servers circulating around the room offers colourfully-named samples of breast milk.[xlii] Once he introduces all six varieties, he explains that each of the sample's colours, flavors, smells and tastes are different depending on the body that they came from.

Larissa, eagerly takes a shot - "not bad," she says. I, on the other hand, am unable to indulge in this experience. Already uncomfortable with the idea of breastfeeding, I am gripped by nausea feeling faint, and truthfully a little ashamed. I feel that my refusal to drink is written all over my face. Worse, I feel as though I am the only person in the room who feels this particular kind of discomfort. Did this make me a bad person? A bad woman? Or worse, does it mean that I will make a bad mother one day? Overwhelmed by so many insecurities, I still have yet to be able to forget this experience. Today, eight years later, why am I still preoccupied with this performance? Moreover, how did this experience of performance change the ways in which I myself understand and practice performance?

The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar was unlike any performance, or event, that I had yet to encounter. Until that evening, I saw performance art as a medium in which bodies performed. Whether on stage, in a gallery or in public, performance artists acted, reenacted, read, sang or protested their work for an audience to witness. But this was different. I didn't know who the artist was or who the mothers' were, but nor did I need to know. In fact, these details were insignificant. From the moment that I entered the space, the only performer who physically, psychologically and materially did onto me was the milk. Like actors, each shot glass performed my body, my mind and my behavior through my refusal to consume the white liquid.

Through a curatorial lens, the representation of milk in contemporary art is more commonly considered within what architectural historian and art critic Kenneth Hayes refers to as a "milk-splash discourse" – a field of inquiry that grew out of the California Pop Art scene in the early 1960s to negotiate the ways in which milk becomes a metaphor for the human body; "[t]he milk-splash discourse problematized the identity of the white fluid to the point at which it could no longer, with any certainty, be identified as milk."[xliii] Recalling the maternal body, infancy, nourishment, the domestic body, the sexual body, semen excretion and conception, Hayes explains that contemporary depictions of milk, particularly in photography, speak to larger ideas of commodification and consumption, particularly in works by artists such as Jeff Wall, Ed Ruscha, Gilber and George and General Idea.

Through milk imagery, or rather milk splashes, Hayes' male-dominated case studies collectively complicate the active, or rather agential nature of milk by capitalizing on its photographic stillness. Through performance, Dobkin in comparison perpetuates

the substance's movement and material agency by showcasing its liveness in the art gallery. By trivializing the distinctions between body-as-performer and material-as-performer, Dobkin instigates an unconventional method of engaging with performance art by blurring the distinctions between body and subject. In comparison to the body-centric genre of performance that I had become accustomed to, *The Lactation Station* showcases a shift in the ways in which subject and body interact in a performance situation.

In parallel to Barad's model of posthumanist performativity in which nonhuman matter begins to matter through intra-activity, Dobkin is complicating the human/nonhuman dichotomy that is inherent to feminist posthumanist discourses. Moreover, through pasteurization and distribution, the artist materially and theoretically displaces all agency, what Karen Barad parallels with a form of inherent doing,[xliv] from the body and, through performance, inserts it into the breast milk. Therefore, unlike traditional forms of art criticism that deploy iconography as a starting point for the visual analysis of food in art, this example moves beyond the boundaries of formal analysis by considering instead the posthuman aesthetics of a substance – the embodied qualities that transform a nonhuman subject into an agent.

In traditional art historical discourses, food art is often interpreted through a Panofsky-inspired iconographic lens. According to art historian Travis Nygard, food-related imagery in Renaissance and modern painting can only be considered within the politics of iconography because food, historically, reveals a variety of symbolic and semiotic functions in visual culture.[xlv]

Limited in theory and practice, iconography, in Western art history, does not address a work of art's context. Nor does it consider the occurrence of an experience, albeit a human or a material experience. Rather, according to the German art historian Erwin Panofsky, art can only truthfully be deconstructed through iconography; "[i]t is possible to experience every object, natural or man-made, aesthetically. We do this, to express it as simply as possible, when we just look at it (or listen to it) without relating it, intellectually or emotionally, to anything outside of itself."[xlvi] In other words, to understand an image, and its relationship to the viewer, is to understand art.

Riddled with limitations, this particular methodology does very little for the interpretation of food in art. In comparison to Panofsky, and his contemporary Nygard who both argue that iconography is the only method of analysis suitable for describing the social, contextual and political situations of food imagery in art,[xlvii] a deconstruction based on aesthetics in fact ghettoizes food into an economic and Marxist sign rather than understanding of the ways in which it becomes a source of power.

In early Renaissance painting, for example, food imagery was often considered a sign of wealth - the artist's wealth, the patron's wealth, and the sitter's wealth in a portrait. In Jan van Eyck's painting *The Arnolfini Portrait* (also known as *The Arnolfini Wedding*, and/or *The Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his Wife*) (1434) (Figure 10), the clementines grouped on the table behind the male figure indicate a level of wealth because fresh fruit during this time period was a luxury. When considered within the traditions of iconography, the oranges, however, become limited to class signifiers, over material objects and thus, get lost in the perils of Marxist representation.

When drawing from Karen Barad's model of posthumanist performativity, an analysis of food imagery [in art] moves beyond an iconographical discourse of representation entering instead into a realm of socio-political commentary by way of a Marxist interpretation of food and culture. Framed within a space in which materials begin to *matter* through intra-activity breast milk is not limited to a human bi-product that nourishes the body.

Likened to the active agents pursued by science studies, breast milk in Dobkin's performance becomes a participant, or rather what historian Rebecca Herzig refers to as an actor entangled within what John Law names *relational materiality*, "[f]or such actors, agency is not a predetermined condition or capacity, but instead the mutable effect of *relational materiality*."[xlviii] In addition to being done by the body, breast milk, in this performance, does onto the body, it informs the choreography of the event as well as the ways in which each body interacts. Through a posthumanist performative lens, milk's material agency becomes apparent – its tastes, smells, colours, and cheeky identities in the performance influences the viewer-turned-participant's body to feel, react and respond differently to other bodies in the gallery, including their own body.

Performativity Within Performance Studies

The material shifts between performance and the performative in *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar* are not only exemplified through the subject of the event - the milk - but also through the ways in which the material interacts with and through the body. The participants in this event fluctuate between the artist, the women who donated breast milk, the servers, the spectators, as well as the invisible bodies of the babies.

Collectively, each body in the space of the gallery, through ingestion, digestion and voyeurism become done onto by the milk, as well as continually do onto each other through their interactions with the material.

Regardless of each participant's ingestion of breast milk, the material's agency continues to *matter* through each person's consideration to drink, or not. For example, although I did not consume breast milk during my visit, its embodied agency still affected and effected the ways in which I moved, felt, and interacted with other bodies in the gallery.

To aesthetically complement the performativity of breast milk in the performance, the artist re-designed the art gallery into a cocktail bar. Decorated with a large white shag rug, white leather lounge chairs, a white bar lined with white bar stools, the gallery transformed into a club-like venue where spectators were met by servers offering milk 'shots' on silver platters. However, this so-called change was not only aesthetic. The artist no longer was represented as the sole creative producer in the piece, but rather became one of many performers. As active agents during the event the spectators transformed into subjects as well as participants by drinking, socializing and mingling with the crowd. Through what performance studies scholars identify as the occurrence of *transformance*, Dobkin's identity becomes blurred and arguably *transformed* during the event of the performance. Leading to questions, such as who, or what, becomes the creative agent? Or, who embodies the role of performer? the occurrence of transformance results in a complete recontextualization of the event.

According to Richard Schechner, the occurrence of transformance is at the heart of performance. Akin to Fischer-Lichte whose argument that performance is the result of an

experiential exchange, Schechner, too, favors the concept that performance, or what he terms drama, is rooted in dialogical acts of being. For instance, he explains that performance is a procedural medium that can inspire and manifest change; that "[a]s in all rites of passage something [had] happened during the performance. The performance both symbolized and actualized the change in status."[xlix] Similar to a braid in which independent elements are overlapped and entangled to create a whole, performance is "… a mixture, a braid, of entertainment and ritual."[l] Embedded within a modernist approach to theater is Schechner's model for framing the experiential. To perform is to be, and that meaning is born from an ensemble of experiences that when brought together create consciousness.

In a comparison between the body and things in theater, Schechner inserts a clear binary between who, or what, arguably matters on stage, or in a rehearsal room. Yet by proposing that there is a distinction between the ways in which scientists and artists understand and *do* performance – scientists through observation and artists through experience – Schechner neglects to consider the ways in which observation and experience become entangled methods of producing a subject's meaning, as well as its ability to do. Evident of Bohr's argument that the scientist is only ever an observer, and never a participant, Schechner's analysis of the performing artist exemplifies the ways in which the body in performance continually transforms into a psychophysical entanglement. In other words a performing artist, according to Schechner, becomes the result of its embodied transformance.

The debate between what and what not counts as performative is a problematic that Karen Barad complicates by blurring the aesthetic and agential functions of performative

matter. Reminiscent of the traditions of performance studies in which the body has historically been assigned sole agency, Barad negotiates the relationship between material matter and human matter while also assessing the physical and physiological experience of materiality vis-à-vis the body.

In Schechner's analogy that performativity is rooted in the experiential exchange between the body and the stage, he explains that "… the performance the spectators see – is the visible result of a trialog among: 1) the conventions or givens of a genre, 2) the stretching, distorting, or invention of new conventions, and 3) brain-centered psychophysical transformations of the self."[li] In other words, performance, in the context of theatre, represents the result of the body's relationships with its environment. By framing the event of a performance as a model for communicative exchange, Schechner argues that to perform means to enact a change and transformation among its participants.

For example, the spectator, according to his analysis, is an active participant whose identity is continually redefined in theater. Whether they become participants in the space of the event, or they undergo a private and experiential transformation, they inevitably leave the theatre a changed person. Influenced by the anthropologist Victor Turner's work on social drama, Schechner interprets the spectator according to two models: the aesthetic drama and the social drama. However, he also believes that drama is the result of a transformation, albeit one that is rooted in human consciousness while the other is physical.

Performativity Versus Posthumanist Performativity

In contrast to Schechner's anthropocentric positioning of performance as rooted in a human psychological self, Karen Barad, in her feminist-inspired research in quantum physics, argues that everything in the world, albeit human or nonhuman, *matters* - culture *matters*, language *matters*, and things *matter*. Troubled by the ways in which structuralism has historically and philosophically determined who, or what *matters* according to systems of binary oppositions, such as nature/culture, man/woman, and human/nonhuman, Barad's theories of performativity are intended to challenge the belief that linguistic and semiotic representations of meaning vis-à-vis Being fail to explain how things begin to matter.

More specifically, "[a] performative understanding of discursive practices challenges the representationalist belief in the power of words to represent preexisting things. Unlike representationalism, which positions us above or outside of the world we allegedly merely reflect on, a performative account insists on understanding thinking, observing, and theorizing as practices of engagement with, and as part of, the world in which we have our being."[lii] Performativity thus challenges linguistic systems of material description and representation by proposing that a thing's Being is instead informed by its actions, and doings.

In her attempt to answer the overarching question *how does matter come to matter?* – Barad disentangles the ways in which to understand being, doing, acting, and interacting vis-à-vis material agency. For example, to understand that matter does is to understand that matter is active – a term Barad associates with agentive.[liii] And if matter is agentive, then it literally and philosophically translates into a form of material agency,

which through intra-activity, becomes a framework through which to destabilize and re-conceptualize matter as ultimately agential rather than representational. In other words, material agency becomes a method through which to understand how matter begins to *matter*. According to Barad, "[t]he notion of intra-action represents a profound conceptual shift. It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the components of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful."[liv]

In her effort to complicate the inherent limitations of representationalism, a discourse that she claims limits the meaning of matter to language, Barad proposes to consider the latter through a posthumanist performative lens – a scientific framework in which matter *becomes* matter through intra-activity. In essence, she argues that material matter is not self-referential, but rather inter-active, communicative and agential through its intra-relational and *intra-active* exchange with the body; "[m]atter is therefore not to be understood as a property of things but, like discursive practices, must be understood in more dynamic and productive terms – in terms of intra-activity."[lv]

In comparison to Austin's theory of performativity that focuses acts of doing to words, Barad's entanglement of science studies and feminism challenges the power that has historically been attributed to language. Through a materially-discursive method of iterative enactment, or rather posthumanist performativity, matter thus becomes the result of its practices, doings, and actions; "[t]he world is a dynamic process of intra-activity and materialization in the enactment of determinate causal structures with determinate boundaries, properties, meanings, and patterns of marks on bodies."[lvi]

Milk, Material Agency and Thing-power

In the context of Jess Dobkin's performance *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar* – breast milk marked bodies. It coated digestive systems, it navigated the body in space, and it even repulsed the body – my body. Through Barad's model of posthumanist performativity, milk, in this example, becomes a prime example of material agency vis-à-vis posthumanist performativity. With reference to science studies and postfeminist inquiry, Dobkin's so-called lead actor embodies the ability to *do* in the performance transforming it into a material agent that is active, participatory and ultimately performative.

Yet, by contextualizing material matter as an actant that co-exists and co-performs with and by the body, Barad echoes the political theorist Jane Bennett who proposes an alternative for reading matter as transformative; "…an actant never really acts alone. Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces."[lvii] Subsequently, that the transformative power of performance occurs through a reciprocal interaction between two or more 'things'. In attempting to understand the manner in which things themselves can act as material agents, Bennett describes what she calls "thing-power," which proposes to complicate the binaries that distinguish between thing and human; that it is "… a good starting point for thinking beyond the life-matter binary, the dominant organizational principle of adult experience."[lviii] In theory, Bennett also notes that thing-power represents a disadvantage for it "tends to overstate the 'thingness' or fixed stability of materiality."[lix] Instead her interest is rather to "theorize a materiality that is as much force as entity, as much energy as matter, as much intensity as extension."[lx]

In her argument that nonhuman matter, akin to human matter, is active, Bennett draws from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the assemblage, a theoretical framework that considers the whole and active "confederation" of matter, to propose that things embody agency. In *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari famously explain that "[a]n assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously (independently of any recapitulation that may be made of it in a scientific and theoretical corpus)."[lxi]

In other words, Deleuze and Guattari's model focuses on the concept of multiplicity, the multiplicity of meaning, the multiplicity of behaviors, and the multiplicity of material entanglements. Furthermore, they note that an assemblage "establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject."[lxii] Adding to Deleuze and Guattari's model, Bennett writes that "[a]ssemblages are [also] ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts. Assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persist presence of energies that confound them from within."[lxiii] In theory, the assemblage, in addition to considering the entire grouping of interacting material sources, also speaks to the dialogical intertwinement that occurs between human and nonhuman matter, or rather breast milk and human participation in *The Lactation Station*.

In chapter three of her book *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, "Edible Matter," Bennett writes through her model of the assemblage to understand the entangled relationship between the body and food. Food, in her argument "appear[s] as actant inside and alongside intention-forming, morality-(dis)obeying, language-using,

reflexivity-wielding, and culture-making human beings, and as an inducer-producer of salient, public effects."[lxiv] With reference to Friedrich Nietzsche and Henry Thoreau, she reflects on the performative act of eating, arguing that upon ingestion food transforms, by association, into an agent; "[e]ating appears as a series of mutual transformations in which the border between inside and outside becomes blurry: my meal both is and is not mine; you both are and are not what you eat."[lxv]

By drinking the pasteurized breast milk during Dobkin's performance event, the dividing lines that separate the artist, the mothers and the spectators also become blurred, transforming the body into an assemblage, and the milk, by association, into performative matter. To quote the philosopher of science Leon Kass, "we do not become the something that we eat; rather the edible gets assimilated to what we are…the edible object is thoroughly transformed by and re-formed into the eater."[lxvi]

In her investigation of nonhuman matter, Bennett exemplifies this interactive and performative nature of "thingness" through the relationship between food as an actant and the act of eating as an assemblage. By linking the transformational act of eating with the agential function of food, she offers a new model that blurs the lines between human and nonhuman matter, in order to highlight the dialogical intertwinement between the body and food.

In Barad's posthumanist reading of material matter, she suggests that nonhuman "things" are not neutral, but inherently inter-active and intra-active. The concept that matter is not singular, nor self-referential, problematizes the neutrality that has traditionally been assigned to materiality – including the materiality of a contemporary studio practice. Through her model of agential realism, a model that understands

material agency through its intra-relational exchanges, Barad argues that matter, albeit human or nonhuman, is performative, co-constitutive and materially-discursive; "[m]atter and meaning are not separate elements. They are inextricably fused together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder."[lxvii]

Here, Barad maps an ontological narrative that considers the agential autonomy of matter. In keeping with Jane Bennett's argument that matter is characterized as a "performative" agent that is born from intra-active apparatuses, Barad's task of redefining nonhuman matter aims to question its ethical, metaphysical and ontological intertwinement. In others words, nonhuman matter is inherently discursive and contingent on an entanglement of meaning.

Moreover, Barad understands the performative nature of nonhuman matter in relation to a critical analysis of certain frameworks of poststructuralism that attribute acts of agency to the merely human. For example, Judith Butler specifically does not attribute agency to the body, but instead limits the latter to a discourse of materiality arguing that the body becomes the result of its external material agents.

In the spirit of a material-discursive practice for interpreting the production of meaning, Barad grounds her argument in a scientific deconstruction that reconsiders matter in relation to its intra-active, scientific and social relationships; "I am not interested in drawing analogies between particles and people, the micro and the macro, the scientific and the social, nature and culture; rather, I am interested in understanding the epistemological and ontological issues that quantum physics forces us to confront, such as the conditions for the possibility of objectivity, the nature of measurement, the nature of nature and meaning making, and the relationship between discursive practices

and the material world."[lxviii] In other words, her investigation surrounding the meaning and function of matter asks that [we] move beyond an aesthetic and representational analysis of its referent, and rather toward an understanding that matter, through intra-activity, becomes a material force that marks the body.

In an ethical debate pertaining to the questions *who or what matters, and when?* Barad refers to feminist sociologist Monica Casper's political interest in dismantling the binaries that distinguish human and nonhuman agency in technoscientific practices. Selfishly admitting that her concerns are rooted in a need to understand "to whom and what in the world [she] is accountable,"[lxix] Casper draws on the distinctions between female body-as-patient and fetus-as-patient to argue that nonhuman agency should not, in fact, be considered or evaluated in opposition to human agency.

In her own words, "... that actor network theorists, in their principled attribution of agency to human agency is premised on a dichotomous ontological positioning in which [nonhuman] is opposed to human."[lxx] In the context of an agential realist account, Barad insists that nonhuman matter be considered in relation to its *apparatus* – what she claims is the practice through which the human/nonhuman status of a thing is determined.[lxxi] Yet in the example of Caspar's case study of the fetus, the lines that divide the human/nonhuman identity are inextricably blurred, suggesting that perhaps both embody material agency as well as the label of apparatus.

The apparatus, as per Barad, is arguably the root of the performative nature of matter. Loosely defined as a nonhuman (and human) device, practice and action, the apparatus effectively conditions the nature of the practice and is therefore the essence of what generates performativity in relation to material-discursive matter. According to

Barad, "[a]pparatuses are open-ended practices involving specific intra-actions of humans and nonhumans, where the differential constitutions of human and nonhuman designate particular phenomena that are themselves implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity."[lxxii]

In order to fully understand the definition and function of the apparatus, it is also important to know that the apparatus is a contingent, limitless, continuous and ultimately procedural practice of *mattering*. If the apparatus is, as iterated above, an active and procedural assemblage that produces meaning through what Bakhtin would call a dialogical exchange, then what is the apparatus in *The Lactation Station*? Is the apparatus the mother's body? The participant's body? Or is the apparatus a method of performance?

The significance of the apparatus, both in Barad's writing, as well as in my interpretation of material agency vis-à-vis contemporary performance art, is important because it helps to frame how and where matter encounter intra-activity. According to Barad, apparatuses are conceptual spaces for the practice of material-discursivity. These are likened to what Schechner calls the occurrence of transformance; "[a]pparatuses are material-discursive practices – causal intra-actions through which matter is iteratively and differentially articulated, reconfiguring the material-discursive field of possibilities and impossibilities in the ongoing dynamics of intra-activity that is agency."[lxxiii] In other words, an apparatus is not a tangible object per se, but rather an apparatus translates into a method through which a thing is conceptually transformed into *mattered* matter.

In the context of *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*, the notion of the apparatus parallels the ways in which performance, in this example, becomes a space for

material transformance through embodiment. Similar to a materially-discursive space of conceptual transformation, the disciplinary boundaries of performance translate into a metaphorical and political platform on which matter [in this case breast milk] *becomes* through embodied intra-actions. In other words, performance becomes the apparatus while the milk, what Barad would name phenomena, through intra-activity, transforms into a material agent in the event.

Parallel to a scientific explanation that claims that "... any particular apparatus, and the enfolding of locally stabilized phenomena (which may be traded across laboratories, cultures, or geopolitical spaces only to find themselves differently materializing) into subsequent iterations of particular practices constitutes important shifts in the particular apparatus in question and therefore in the nature of the intra-actions that result in the production of new phenomena, and so on. Boundaries do not sit still,"[lxxiv] breast milk, through the apparatus, begins to exemplify new forms of phenomena. In the example of Casper's writing, the apparatus is embedded within a politically and ethically loaded debate that complicates the associations between the [nonhuman] thing and the [living] apparatus in a scientific context. Dependent on the concept of the apparatus, nonhuman agency becomes, in Butlerian terms *intelligible*, only through an intra-active and subsequently, inter-active connection.

But if the mother's body is the apparatus, as suggested by Barad, how do we identify the fetus? Similar to the complications surrounding breast milk's human/nonhuman nature in *The Lactation Station*, the fetus thus becomes the result of an intra-active entanglement – or rather material agency. Material agency, in essence, cannot be defined through its relationship with the absent presence of human agency.

Instead, Casper argues that nonhuman agency is the result of a subjective negotiation between matter and its referent; "the fetus is not a preexisting object of investigation with inherent properties. Rather the fetus is a phenomenon that is constituted and reconstituted out of historically and culturally specific iterative intra-actions of material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production."[lxxv]

In Dobkin's *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*, milk is a food source produced by the maternal body, and biologically speaking, an animal bi-product that in the performance was pasteurized, packaged and distributed as a commodity. Framed within a similar binary opposition to that of Casper's debate between the human and nonhuman identity of the fetus, breast milk, in the performance, thus becomes an agent through its intra-active relationship with the performance-turned-apparatus.

Moreover, if milk becomes matter through a performative exchange, then the argument can be made that it is inherently phenomena because, according to Barad, "…it is through specific intra-actions that phenomena come to matter – in both senses of the word."[lxxvi] Here, the word phenomena can be explained as the result of patterns of interactions. More specifically, phenomena represents a form of performance in which matter engages in an entanglement; "[p]henomena are not the mere result of human laboratory contrivances or human concepts. Phenomena are specific material performances of the world."[lxxvii]

By blurring the boundaries between performance and the apparatus, it becomes conceptually easier to understand how breast milk and phenomena become entangled. Moreover, it becomes scientifically plausible to parallel milk and phenomena in that both,

through intra-activity, become examples of material agency within the space of the laboratory-turned-gallery, or rather gallery-turned-laboratory.

Thing-power, and Gender Studies

The concept that an identity is constructed from repeated acts, performative gestures and semiotic signifiers, according to Judith Butler, complicates the ways in which performance studies scholars understand nonhuman matter in art. Butler's argument suggests that an identity is not innately inherent to gender, more specifically woman, but that an identity is the result of a socio cultural performative exchange.[lxxviii] Likened to an aesthetic citation that is constructed through a series of ritualized and repeated acts, Butler explains that; "… the body is only known through its gendered appearance. It would seem imperative to consider the way in which this gendering of the body occurs. My suggestion is that the body becomes its gender through a series of acts, which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time. From a feminist point of view, one might try to reconceive the gendered body as the legacy of sedimented acts rather than a predetermined or foreclosed structure, essence or fact, whether natural, cultural, or linguistic."[lxxix] Focused on acts of *doing* versus the act of *being*, particularly in the context of identity formation, Butler challenges the concept that gender is a pre-existing identity that is pre-scripted and pre-determined arguing, instead, that gender is an open-ended, evolutionary and flexible identity that remains in constant flux.

In addition to furthering her claim that the body becomes gendered through revised acts of doing in *Bodies That Matter*, Butler also suggests that the act of doing is paralleled with the idea that gender is the result of a material and constructed citation;

"[t]he process of that sedimentation or what we might call materialization will be a kind of citationality, the acquisition of being through the citing of power, a citing that establishes an originary complicity with power in the formation of the 'I'."[lxxx]

In this context, gender is framed as a material production that is continuously renegotiated in time. However, this concept of construction also lends itself to the theory that *doing* gender is inherently performative. According to Butler, construction is "neither a single act nor a causal process initiated by a subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. Construction not only takes place in time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms; sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of this reiteration."[lxxxi] In other words, gender becomes a kind of phenomena – performative matter - that remains in constant flux.

In *The Lactation Station*, the concept of construction speaks to the ways in which the artist renegotiates the maternal body/identity of mother construction. By "breastfeeding" other bodies in the gallery, Dobkin re-constitutes her own identity as a mother as well as the other women's maternal identities. For example, in *Unbearable Weight*, feminist philosopher Susan Bordo argues that a woman becomes a woman when she learns to feed others.

Through feeding practices, Bordo argues, women's bodies perpetuate their femininity, their womanhood, and their maternal agency; "the rules for [the] construction of femininity (and I speak here in a language both symbolic and literal) require that women learn to feed others, not the self, and to construe any desires for self-nurturance and self-feeding as greedy and excessive. Thus, women must develop a totally other-oriented emotional economy. In this economy the control of female appetite for food is

merely the most concrete expression of the general rule governing the construction of femininity: that female hunger – for public power, for independence, for sexual gratification – be contained, and the public space that women be allowed to take up be circumscribed, limited."[lxxxii]

The connection between feeding and femininity is a curious correlation in the context of Dobkin's performance, however, because she is, in fact, feeding the audience the same 'food' that other women are feeding their babies: breast milk. However, in keeping with the theme of construction – through the distribution of breast milk – the artist is also constructing her own identity as a mother.

In her writing, Butler asks "[i]s there a way to link the question of the materiality of the body to the performativity of gender?"[lxxxiii] More specifically, is embodiment performative? The short answer is yes. The body, according to Butler, is an autonomous being whose identity is intelligible. But more important is the concept that the body *does* the body, resulting in an inevitable form of temporary and ever-changing embodiment; "… the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant materializing of possibilities. One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body and, indeed, one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well."[lxxxiv]

In other words, materials become material manifestations of their procedural relationships with other *things*. For example, in *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*, breast milk extends beyond a signifier for the maternal body. Rather, it manifests into a material agent [phenomena] whose performative nature remains in constant flux, thus continually reinventing itself vis-à-vis the human body. The fact that Dobkin uses

something we ingest in our own materializing bodies leads [us] to the idea that the materialization of food itself is also an unstable one, similar to and actually, sometimes aligned with gender as a performative act.

Parallel to the concept that milk, in Dobkin's performance, *does* the body is the notion that food *does* one's gender in the field of gastronomical literature. One of the earliest distinctions between gender and food writing is rooted in the claim that men were authors of gastronomy while women were authors of cookbooks. During a time when women wrote cookbooks and men were scholars of gastronomy, Alice B. Toklas, Gertrude Stein's lover and long-time partner, challenged the gender politics inherent within what is today labeled food studies. Curious about the influence of food on gender, sexuality and society, hers was, in theory and practice, an argument that food is in essence performative.[lxxxv]

In *Aesthetic Pleasure in Twentieth-Century Women's Food Writing: The Innovative Appetites of M.F.K. Fisher, Alice B. Toklas, and Elizabeth David*, Alice L. McLean maps a social and political history of the evolution of gastronomical literature through a feminist lens. With reference to Elizabeth David's understanding and appropriation of food [writing], McLean notes that through food, women could begin to understand themselves as social and sexual bodies; "... food encouraged a sensory engagement with her environment and a physical receptivity toward pleasure that engendered her creative aesthetic."[lxxxvi]

Furthermore, according to McLean, "... David educated her readers to approach food as more than just an end in itself, to understand eating and cooking as means of self-construction as well as self-expression."[lxxxvii] Although through a different medium

Dobkin too is channeling Toklas' same revolutionary ambition to explore the function of food in relation to sexuality, and gender roles in performance art.

Like her predecessor, Dobkin is a self-identified lesbian working to dismantle stereotypes. Through the act of sharing breast milk in *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*, however, hers is also a debate between homosexuality and motherhood. Or rather, is the artist's identity being constructed, and perpetuated, through her ability, or truthfully inability, to produce breast milk? Moreover, does this mean that a lesbian can biologically also, be a mother?

In the performance, the act of undoing the body is physically and metaphorically exemplified by Dobkin, who literally undoes the maternal body by collecting its milk and sharing it. In theory, by serving donated breast milk, the artist transforms her role as the performer into that of a facilitator and participant. However, these acts also problematize the concept of performativity by blurring the material lines between human and nonhuman matter. As an active and participatory agent in this piece, milk becomes the performer in the gallery through its new role as a transformative agent. In keeping with Butler's argument that gender, through the act of doing, becomes performative, then the milk, by comparison, through its ability to blur the roles between performer and participant also becomes performative matter.

The argument that nonhuman matter *matters*, according to Barad, supports the ongoing theory that milk, in this chapter, is not discursive, nor pre-existent, but rather performative through intra-activity. Critical of Butler's claim that matter is only materialized to produce an *identity*, Barad argues that matter is not only a material thing, but that it is an active, and transformative phenomena that continually reproduces the

boundaries and conditions of Being.[lxxxviii] "Butler's theory ultimately re-inscribes matter as a passive product of discursive practices rather than as an active agent participating in the very process of materialization."[lxxxix] In other words, nonhuman matter, in the realm of gender studies, is a neutral material that conditions the aesthetics of gender, of an identity, and of sexuality. Yet, matter, according to Barad is also a transformative entity that is never neutral, nor limited to representation.

More problematic than Butler's argument that only the human body is representative of matter are the ways in which she understands gender through its material surface; "[p]erhaps the most crucial limitation of Butler's theory of materiality is that it is limited to an account of the materialization of human bodies (or, more accurately, to the construction of the surface of the human body, which most certainly is not all there is to human bodies).[xc] In the context of posthumanist performativity and the argument that materials are performative, Butler's writing limits the debate that nonhuman materials are in theory and practice agential.

The relationship between matter and breast milk, in *The Lactation Station*, is equally complicated when considered through a Butlerian lens because Butler's model neglects to account for the transformative processes that make milk edible. Breast milk is originally a source of food for a baby produced by a mother's body. According to Western traditions, it is not intended to be pasteurized for consumption like the milk produced by animals. By comparison, cow, goat and sheep's milk undergoes a process of pasteurization in which it is heated in order to kill any potential bacteria.

Yet, breast milk, which is not intended for the adult body, is also not meant for pasteurization. In addition to providing digestive enzymes, protein, and vitamins to

newborn babies, the act of breastfeeding also benefits the mother's body by reducing the risks of post-partum bleeding and post-partum depression. But traditionally, breast milk is not a food source intended for the consumption of the adult body in that its ingredients are biologically specific for its intended consumer – a baby.

In the context of the argument that materials are performative in contemporary art, breast milk becomes a curious example of material agency in that it is both a live human bi-product that is inherently agential as well as a material that, in Dobkin's performance, becomes a performative subject through distribution and ingestion. Distinguished by taste, color, and even name, the so-called lead actor in the gallery is never the same, or neutral.

Instead, breast milk's ever-changing nature suggests that it is alive and active through biological, cultural and social transformance. Influenced by factors such as a mother's age, their diet, the age and gender of the baby, as well as the materialization of the spectator-turned-participant, each "milk-tail" had a unique taste. Thus, if the milk's "identity" remains active after pasteurization, then arguably so does its status as a performative material [in art].

Through *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*, the problematic surrounding the performativity of nonhuman materials becomes embedded within a larger debate surrounding the questions: who or what matters in contemporary performance art? Moreover, the debate pertaining to performative agency lends itself to a more complicated inquiry into the ways in which posthumanist performativity accounts for the inherent material agency of the "stuff of a studio practice."

Although human through its (biological) relationship to the body, breast milk, in the context of this event, becomes more than a substance produced by a mother's body. Milk, in this example, transforms into an agent, an actant, a producer and a participant.[xci] In other words, milk, through its intra-active relationship with performance and its consumer, suggests that a material which is both active and socio-cultural can be seen as performative phenomena [matter].

Chapter Two

"Hom[ing] Site, or Being Home[d]"

"What is home? The place I was born? Where I grew up? Where my parents live? Where I live and work as an adult? Where I locate my community, my people? Who are my people? Is home a geographical space, a historical space, an emotional, sensory space?"[xcii]

For the last fifteen years, *home* has remained a constant theme in my artwork. Curious whether home is a feeling, an architectural structure, or a sociocultural construct that connects the body – my body - to a place, I continue to ask myself: where is home? Where is my home? And how does home *do* onto my body? As a result, the quest to locate and experience home has been a powerful metaphor in my painting, drawing and performance practice.

For example, in *Making Winter* (2007) (Figure 11), I made and scattered thousands of hand cut paper snowflakes in and around Manhattan and Brooklyn to blur the geographical boundaries between my native home - Ottawa, and my home at the time - New York City.

Influenced by the different climate conditions between the two cities during the winter months of 2006 and 2007, I wanted to intertwine my Canadian experience of winter with the mild American temperatures that filled the December air of midtown Manhattan. Curious about the ways in which to fabricate a hybrid winter wonderland, my attempt resulted in an unexpected embodiment of time, and the space of place – the ephemeral materials of my studio practice during that period.

Prior to performing *Making Winter*, I had only ever experienced a kind of locational and spatial embodiment on one other occasion: during my participatory

viewing of Katrin Sigurdardottir's installation *High Plane V*. Installed in a corner gallery on the second and third floors of MoMA PS1, Contemporary Art Centre in Long Island City, the piece consisted of two ladders leading to two square holes in the ceiling. Above the ceiling, the Icelandic-born New York-based artist created a quasi-fictional topography comprising powder blue miniature mountains, or glaciers, or perhaps the cosmos. Installed below fluorescent lighting on a white-blanketed floor, the features of this 'world' were immersive. Literally standing in what I understand as the space of place, my body quickly became a subject performed onto. In other words, I was no longer a viewer, nor a participant, or even a performer. Instead I became part of the assemblage-turned-museological intervention.

In contemporary curatorial discourse, Toronto-based curator Barbara Fischer appropriates the notion of "museum intervention" to understand how artists and museums collaborate to "transform the museum from a *container* of cultural artifacts to a *medium* of contemporary work."[xciii] In keeping with the argument that the space of place in Sigurdardottir's installation is performative, Fischer's argument lends itself to my claim that the space occupied by the art object too becomes performative in the gallery through the ways in which it disrupts the architecture of the room as well as influences how the body feels, behaves and ultimately becomes embodied.

In their curatorial practice, curators Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher understand both the museum and the art gallery through what they name museological affect – "how museums feel and subtly influence visitors. The auratic features of museums – their particular moods, presences, ambiances."[xciv] In the spirit of museological spatial theory, both Drobnick and Fischer argue that the gallery, or museum is active, dialogical and

inherently performative through the ways in which art objects do onto the body, the architecture of site, and even the institutional mandate of place. In keeping with contemporary curatorial practices, Sigurdardottir translates place and subsequently space into verbs by shifting the ways in which the body, or at least my body, experiences the particulars of a site.[xcv] Rather than existing as a subject in the work, the conditions of site becomes an example of material agency, albeit different from Dobkin's breast milk described in the previous chapter, through the ways in which it does on the body, and subsequently how the body does onto it. Space is active. Place is active. And both physically, psychologically, and sensorially perform the body.

But more curious to the idea that the space of place embodies agency are the parallels between spatial theory, human geography and Barad's posthumanist performativity through intra-activity, which I expanded upon in Chapter 1. If food, through intra-activity, becomes performative matter in contemporary art as in Dobkin's work already described, can *conditions*, namely, place and space in installation art, also act as material agents through embodiment and subsequently performativity? In other words, through a human geographical lens and models of modern spatial theory, Katrin Sigurdardottir's installation *High Plane V* also might be seen as performative, in similar ways that Jess Dobkin's breast milk is performative.

During my participation in Sigurdardottir's installation, I was not the only body, or participant in the space above the ceiling. Joined by an anonymous woman-turned-player, the act of viewing quickly turned into a game of 'peek-a-boo'. Curiously fun, the act of locating the other woman's whereabouts in the installation/landscape, although entertaining, soon became a need. Comforted by her presence in the space, and the

knowledge that I was not alone 'up there' helped me to feel 'safe' in her company, as well as in the unfamiliar conditions of place.

In keeping with American art historian Claire Bishop's theory that "...activated spectatorship [is] a political aesthetic practice,"[xcvi] my participation was very much a political act of localizing the body and interacting with other bodies in the space of place. Although strangers, we established a precarious bond that unexpectedly connected us in the installation. In essence, we became partners in our shared experience of accessing the work and making sense of its particulars.

In comparison to my preconceived understandings regarding site-specific installation art, such as James Turrell's perceptual distortion of light entitled *Meeting* (1986) (Figure 12) on view at MoMA PS1 in Long Island City, or Janet Cardiff's haunted walk *A Large Slow River* (2000) (Figure 13) that guides listeners along the shoreline of Lake Ontario in Oakville, ON – two quintessential examples in which the particulars of site choreograph the work of art - my experience of *High Plane V* was unique in that its performativity was not day-specific, time-specific, or sound-specific as are Turrell and Cardiff's works. Nor was it an installation according to Bishop's definition that installation [art] is "... the type of art into which the viewer physically enters, and which is often described as 'theatrical,' 'immersive,' or 'experimental'.[xcvii] Rather, through spatial embodiment, Sigurdardottir's piece becomes an ideal example of performative art.

In theory and practice, I thought that I understood the distinctions between viewing, participating, and making vis-à-vis engaging with contemporary art. However, during my experience of Sigurdardottir's work, these three categories quickly blurred transforming the situation into a dialogical, and ultimately performative act. I use the

term performative in this instance because place and space orchestrated and defined by material assemblages became agents who were collectively performing my body, my behavior and my engagement with the work.

For example, although I was participating in the work by climbing atop one of the two ladders in the gallery, and peering through a square hole in the ceiling, I was also being performed by another body – the body of a young woman climbing the second ladder. Entangled within the various performative exchanges occurring within the installation, our dialogue exemplified yet another way in which the space of the work became performative.

An early influence and philosophical *raison d'être* for pursuing graduate studies, cultural theorist W.J.T. Mitchell's argument that landscape is a verb continues to inform the ways in which I understand and subsequently practice place in my research, my writing and my artwork.[xcviii] But to say that a site is a verb is not sufficient. The challenge is to recognize the experience and shifts that occur within the transition between noun to verb. In making art, I continue to experiment with concepts of place through performance and the performative in order to uncover how site, the environment, and landscape, become methods for understanding my relationship with home and subsequently the politics of location.

In art history, performance art has historically been associated with the concept that the body is a transformative agent in time and space. For instance, in the 1960s and 1970s women artists such as Carolee Schneemann and Yoko Ono used their bodies to challenge and reclaim their place within the traditions of 'high' art. Whereas in current discourses pertaining to the entangled relationships between performance and the body,

scholars of the humanities, and the social sciences are engaging with radical linguistic, material and philosophical shifts in scholarship noting that the body is no longer the sole performer in a performance, but rather that performance occurs during embodiment and transformance - the transformance of human matter, and/or nonhuman matter as well as the embodiment of materials.

In the exhibition catalogue *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art*, art historian Caroline A. Jones brings together art historians, philosophers and scientists to understand the varied relationships between technology and the human experience, and the ways in which artists materially engage with the embodiment of what she names the "technologized world."[xcix] Jones draws from Donna Haraway's models of situated knowledge and the cyborg to understand what constitutes an agent writing that, "[t]hings are material, specific, non-self-identical, and semiotically active. In the realm of the living, critter is another name for thing. Never purely themselves, such things are compound; they are made up of combinations of other things coordinated to magnify power, to make something happen, to engage the world, to risk fleshly acts of interpretation."[c] Simply put, anything that *does or is concretely situated* becomes an agent, whether it is a human body, or an artist's materials.

Shaping the Conditions of Spatial Theory

How then does this negotiation of place vis-à-vis spatial theory inform the question of material agency in contemporary studio art practice? Historically and philosophically, the concept of space has been framed in relation to place as well as complicated by the physicality and position of place, and non-place, or what Aristotle

calls the void of place. In *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, American philosopher Edward Casey maps a detailed genealogy of place and space according to two main schools of thought: that place is an a priori of Being and that space, as an embodied entity, is inherently experiential. Interested in the power of place within Western philosophy, he explains that place is, "reduced to locations between which movements of physical bodies occur."[ci] In other words, place functions as a (political) site in which matter is situated, localized and arguably hierarchized.

Dissatisfied by the conceptual limitations and erasure of place from the discourse of spatial theory, Casey proposes to reinsert the latter into modern philosophy.[cii] According to ancient Greek thought, particularly in the writings of Aristotle, place is understood as a container for a thing, or body. The study of physical and sensorial phenomena that place surrounds, he argues encompasses and contains all that occupies its space, and that the power of place is ultimately its ability to situate a thing.

In *Physics*, for example, Aristotle notes that "[t]hings are together in place when their immediate or primary place is one. A material thing fits snugly in its proper place, a place that clings to that thing, since thing and place act together in determining a given situation. I say act together in view of the power of place to actively surround and to situate what is in it – that is, a physical thing or body, which is not there as a mere passive occupant: as actually or potentially changing or moving, and as changing or moving precisely in/to its proper place, it, too, has power."[ciii]

In comparison, Casey's argument suggests that *things* (human or nonhuman) are in essence agents. However, the concept that place is relational is still overlooked at this level of interpretation and thus helps to contextualize what Casey calls the four main

limitations of the Aristotelian model: that place, regardless of its sociability, remains a two dimensional space that is not able to fully embody three dimensionality; that the tension between localism and globalism remain unresolved in their suggestion that place represents an absolute; that there remains an inherent hierarchy proposing that all that is contained by place remains 'moot;' and lastly, that Aristotle himself never fully explains the function of the word 'contain'.[civ] Embedded within a conceptual power struggle, place according to Aristotle, therefore represents an agent.

Unlike Aristotle who focuses on naming the function of place through its contextual relationships, Casey is more concerned with the questions: *how* does place come to be? Moreover, *how* does place function as an interactive site of exchange? By using a Heideggerian lens to understand the relational nature of place, Casey considers what it means to *Be* in place. To help introduce the experiential into the philosophical equation that is spatial theory, he refers to Heidegger's understanding that place is created inside the spaces between place itself and the body; "Heidegger's way back to place is a middle way, a *via media* between body and mind, both of which are set aside in order to concentrate on what happens between them."[cv]

Less focused on the physical body per se, Heidegger understands place through the essence of the body and the space that the body occupies. Furthermore, that "... place becomes for him the very scene of Being's disclosure and of the openness of the Open in which truth is unconcealed. In the end, place figures as the setting for the postmetaphysical event of Appropriation."[cvi] In other words, place encapsulates a specific time and space in which a metaphysical sense of Being is determined.

If it is true that place is defined according to the abstract relationship between its referent and the body, then the space of place created in Sigurdardottir's installation becomes a literal entanglement of the hidden landscape above the ceiling complicated by my insertion within it. However, does this mean that place is purely experiential – that is, only experienced through a human subject? According to a Heideggerian model of analysis, place becomes the result of the body's relationship with and to space, thus forming the basis for understanding how it begins to embody agency in an *art* situation. Subsequently, through the body, place transforms into an active agent that informs how it is ultimately understood and experienced in either a white cube, or the urban environment.

The problem, however, with this philosophical equation is that Heidegger's model perpetuates the idea that the body is the only active agent in the production of space. Can instead an understanding of place, through space, be produced without the participation of a body? And if not, then it is necessary to understand what role the body occupies in the example of Sigurdardottir's landscape *High Plane V*.

According to Casey, the distinction between place and space is abstract in ancient Greek thought because both terms are philosophically assimilated.[cvii] In essence, they represent very different functions pertaining to the qualification and quantification of the body's relationship with place. To reiterate, what is place? How does it differ from space? What is its function? And lastly, how can it embody agency?

To answer these questions, Casey identifies Michel Foucault as a poststructural pioneer in the field of modern spatial theory because he established economical and philosophical distinctions between the terms place and space, arguing that each are

independent sites for different forms of embodiment.[cviii] In his 1967 lecture entitled "Of Other Spaces," Foucault deconstructs the conditions of space by complicating the hierarchies that have characterized Western readings of its structure. For example, in his analysis, he describes space as being dialogical, relational and most importantly, the result of a network of juxtapositions.[cix]

In addition, because he considers space as inherently procedural, Foucault proposes to dismantle the political and institutional boundaries that have traditionally limited the production of space as well as the embodiment of space, suggesting that what is needed, in fact, is a new understanding of space as relational. According to Foucault, space is an interactive network from which site is constructed, lived, and experience. Noting that [we] do not live in a void, he distinctly explains that space, in a contemporary context, is built upon a series of utopic relations experienced and shared between bodies, institutions and politics.

Drawing from philosopher of science Gaston Bachelard's argument that (we) do not live in an empty space, Foucault understands the presence of space in relation to its absence noting that "... we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another."[cx]

Sigurdardottir's fictional site in *High Plane V* is a quintessential example of the ways in which the space of place grows out of a set of relational experiences. Although unfamiliar with its specificity, my understanding of the blue mountainous landscape in the installation was not only based on personal and geographical reference - my

experience of the site was also sensorial. The colour of blue inserted a cool chill in the air, but the heat that emanated from the lights offered an unusual contrast confusing the ways in which I accessed the site.

Standing atop a ladder, I was suspended in space inside an unfamiliar place. Caught between a perfect entanglement of geography, scale, temperature, and a fear of heights, the ice-covered topography challenged what Foucault terms a utopia. The relationship between the presence and absence of space, or what he names utopias and heterotopias, is characterized, and differentiated, by its relational nature. More specifically, if a space is not relational, it is in theory not real; "[u]topias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society."[cxi] Thus, through a human-geographical lens, Sigurdardottir dismantles the spatial organization of place all the while challenging the economic hierarchies that have historically valued the ways in which it contains a thing and constructs meaning.

Borrowing from Foucault's theory that place and non-place are determined by a spatial experience, French anthropologist Marc Augé understands space as both the act of occupying a place as well as a signifier for the human body; "[a]nd while we use the word 'space' to describe the frequentation of places which specifically defines the journey, we should still remember that there are spaces in which the individual feels himself to be a spectator without paying much attention to the spectacle."[cxii]

Rooted in an anthropological deconstruction of the body (in space), Augé further argues that the places that occupy space are inherently coded with semiotic and linguistic representations that work to transform place into a non-place, or more specifically an

abstract concept of place; "[c]ertain places exist only through the words that evoke them, and in this sense they are non-places, or rather, imaginary places: banal utopias, clichés."[cxiii]

The tension between the representation of place and the experience of place, between an abstract space and a material formed place in a philosophical context, transforms the body into a precarious extension of the real and the make-believe. More specifically the body becomes a reflection of its surroundings, as well as its ephemeral relationships with place, space, time and temperature.

In comparison to Augé's claim that "[i]dentity and relations lie at the heart of all the spatial arrangements classically studied by anthropology,"[cxiv] the body, in Sigurdardottir's spatial installation of place, becomes more than a social being – the body in her work becomes a participant within a complicated web of relations. For example, my body was not only a viewer, I physically, socially, phenomenologically and behaviorally engaged with the space of site thus becoming one actor entangled within a network of actors.

Foucault's model for understanding space as a relational experience between the real and the imaginary helps make sense of the ways in which I relate to Sigurdardottir's fictional landscape, and subsequently, how the landscape does onto me. I do not know the referent for her scape. Nor do I know what the shapes reference. Are they mountains? Are they islands? Are they icebergs? Are they glaciers? Do they refer to her native Icelandic landscape? Are they symbolic or material formations, which through their scale, shape, weight, position, substance and energy, become representations of a place? Moreover, do the *present* bodies and materials of concrete, polystyrene, wood,

steel co-present with me? Do the different materials enact different notions of place?

Regardless of my ability to locate their whereabouts in the world, or what they are – what becomes important is that I understand that they are *doing* something in the installation. Standing on a ladder atop an empty room, I begin to understand how the absurdity of the situation informs how I move in the work as well as how I feel. *Absurdity* - because only when immersed in the landscape, do the material components of the assemblage become performative matter thus highlighting the *absurd* tension between nonhuman things and posthumanist performativity.

Reminiscent of the limitations in Michel de Certeau's model of the everyday, Marc Augé too assigns spatial agency onto the aesthetics of place rather than considering *how* the body's experience of place actively informs and shapes space and vice versa. Drawing from their assumption that there is such a thing as a shared experience, what most intrigues me are the problematics within their proposed essential body and the presumption that there is an 'everyman.'

In the words of de Certeau; "[t]he 'anyone' or 'everyone' is a common place, a philosophical *topos*. The role of this general character (everyman and nobody) is to formulate a universal connection between illusory and frivolous scriptural productions and death, the law of the other. He plays out on the stage the very definition of literature as a world and of the world as literature. Rather than being merely represented in it, the ordinary man acts out the text itself, in and by the text, and in addition he makes plausible the universal character of the particular place in which the mad discourse of a knowing wisdom is pronounced."[cxv] Using terms such as *everyman*, *common*, *universal*, *humanity*

and *society* Augé and de Certeau alike trivialize the value of one's experience of place by assuming the possibility of *a* body and *a* shared experience of place.[cxvi]

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau further complicates the role of the body (in spatial theory) arguing that his/her movement within place in fact works to abstract identity as well as the framing of an experience; "[t]o walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place – an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign of what ought to be, ultimately, the place but is only a name, the City."[cxvii] In keeping with Augé, de Certeau understands the space of place through its relationship with the body. The limitation with this model, however, is not embedded within the kind of exchange that occurs between place, space and the body, but rather the neglect to acknowledge the body's identity.

Critical of the Foucauldian model's ambiguity, French sociologist Henri Lefebvre proposes a theoretical framework through which to resolve the historical and philosophical problematics inherent to spatial theory in his text *The Production of Space* (*La production de l'espace*).[cxviii] Inspired by two main questions: "[i]f space embodies social relationships, how and why does it do so? And what relationships are they?,"[cxix] he organizes space into three distinct categories of interpretation: the physical, the mental and the social.

In theory, Lefebvre believes that he can expand the discourse into a more inclusive system of analogy that considers the representation of space, the experience of space, spatial relationships, and lastly, the power of space. Through a Marxist lens, he works to reframe space as a social, economic and representational site for production noting that; "[i]t is reasonable to assume that spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces contribute in different ways to the production of space according to their qualities and attributes, according to the society or mode of production in question, and according to the historical period."[cxx]

The heart of Lefebvre's argument suggests that space, as a model for interpretation, is rooted in form, structure and function; "[l]ike any reality, social space is related methodologically and theoretically to three general concepts: form, structure, function. In other words, any social space may be subjected to formal, structural or functional analysis. Each of these approaches provides a code and a method for deciphering what at first may seem impenetrable."[cxxi]

To paraphrase, space is a coded system of analysis that *shapes* the aesthetic and conceptual production of place. For example, in *High Plane V*, place becomes performative through spatial intra-activity. Through the phenomenological and perceptual embodiment of temperature, height and topology, place begins to do onto the body – my body. Therefore the idea that the space of place is in and of itself agential frames the argument that landscape in contemporary installation art can exemplify performativity.

Although Lefebvre's is a social-spatial model that acknowledges the power of what Nicolas Bourriaud understands as *relational aesthetics*,[cxxii] he has however

complicated the role of the body by essentializing its social subjectivity. To reiterate the two questions from which his study stems from: *[i]f space embodies social relationships, how and why does it do so? And what relationships are they?* Lefebvre suggests that the body plays an active role in the construction of the social, however, he neglects to identify the body.

By not asking *what is a body?* Or *whose body?* he troubles the notion of the social by assuming that all bodies are the same; "[v]is-à-vis lived experience, space is neither a mere 'frame', after the fashion of the frame of a painting, nor a form or container of a virtually neutral kind, designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it. Space is social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure."[cxxiii]

Since the 1970s, a shift in the study of human geography has proposed to expand spatial theory into a relational and social investigation of the body. In comparison to Aristotelian and Heideggerian models that consider place to be the sole agent in the study of space, human geography, which draws from methods of poststructural analysis, frames space in relation to the body as a dialogical force. In other words, the subject of space is no longer characterized as a visual representation of the containment of a site; rather space is qualified and quantified as an agent, an embodied phenomenon that does onto place, and all that is entangled within it.

Sexing Site: The Gendered Body in Spatial Theory

Since 2004, I have moved thirteen times, between 4 major urban centers - Ottawa, Toronto, New York and Montreal; and two countries - Canada and the United States of

America. In the spirit of a methodology, the peripatetic nature of my practice, over the last ten years, has become how I understand the entangled relationships between identity, placiality, spatiality and geography. When making things, it is *through* the idea that place and space *do* that continues to inform the ways in which I practice research, writing and making. And while thinkers such as Edward Casey, Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre offer insightful readings into the functions and problematics of site in Western philosophy, how do the entangled relationships between place and space vis-à-vis posthumanist performativity influence the ways in which identities are formed.

According to models of spatial theory, the gendered body has become a contentious site for debate in that space has been historically, philosophically and theoretically framed by and *through* its inhabitant[s], its spectators, and according to de Certeau, the identity of the *everyman*. Although the task in this dissertation is not to deconstruct the politics of the body as a site of intervention per se, in order to understand posthumanist performativity, it is still necessary to contextualize the body in relation to it. In keeping with Judith Butler's argument that an identity is not inherent to gender, but rather that it is the result of a socio-cultural *performative* exchange,[cxxiv] one cannot overlook the importance of gender within contemporary art when trying to understand the performativity of site and space and the ways in which they exemplify material agency in relation to the body.

In comparison to poststructural spatial theory contributors, such as Foucault and de Certeau, architect and urban historian Dolores Hayden argues that the urban space is shaped by and *through* the experience, history and preservation of the gendered body,

and that the "exploration of how the social history of urban space may lead to public history and public art, and may enlarge the practice of urban preservation and the writing of urban history by introducing new perspectives"[cxxv] is in fact what human geography is all about.

Concerned with the aesthetics of place and the idea that history continues to inform the urban landscape, Hayden suggests that the representation of the body vis-à-vis the experience of the body become material sources that frame the politics of place (within space); "[p]laces make memories cohere in complex ways. People's experiences of the urban landscape intertwine the sense of place and the politics of space. If people's attachments to places are material, social and imaginative, then these are necessary dimensions of new projects to extend public history in the urban landscape, as well as new histories of American cultural landscapes and the buildings within them."[cxxvi] In other words, it is impossible to separate (the space of) place from the body.

In *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, Hayden makes an important distinction between place and space arguing that both terms represent precarious, yet very specific standings within the structures of gender and identity politics. For example, place serves to situate and localize the body, specifically the female body,[cxxvii] within a social hierarchy that has historically valorized the body's worth in urban studies and art history; "[i]n the nineteenth century and earlier, place also carried a sense of the right of a person to own a piece of land, or to be a part of a social world, and in this older sense place contains more political history. Phrases like 'knowing one's place' or 'a woman's place' still imply both spatial and political meaning."[cxxviii]

In keeping with an Aristotelian inspired understanding that place signifies the practice of localizing historical, philosophical and political meaning, Hayden explains that place also represents the practice of identity politics writing that "[t]he politics of identity – however they may be defined around gender or race or neighborhood – are an inescapable and important aspect of dealing with the urban built environment, from the perspectives of public history, urban preservation, and urban design."[cxxix]

Subsequently, according to Hayden, the omission of class, race and gender from the development and preservation of urban landscape is deeply rooted in the entangled politics that frame place. Through a postcolonial lens, her text theoretically works to complicate the class, gender, and racial lines that have historically omitted the 'Other' from the discourse of urban studies as well as advocates for an all-inclusive model of citizenship, or rather what she names cultural citizenship.[cxxx]

In her quest to problematize the historical and political voices that have shaped place, Hayden asks "[w]hy are so few moments in women's history remembered as part of preservation? Why are so few women represented in commemorative public art? And why are the few women honored almost never women of color? Issues about working-class and poor neighborhoods remain – what, if anything, can public-history or preservation projects add to their identity and economic development?"[cxxxi]

For example, in "Contested Terrain," she explains that it is necessary to ask these questions if we as a culture want to preserve the memory and identity of our landscape. Believing that place and history are intertwined realities that shape identity, whether it be a historical, political, urban or sexual identity, she insists that an all-inclusive history of place is imperative.

Parallel to Hayden's complication of the political and sexual hierarchies that continue to shape the urban landscape, British geographer Doreen Massey is also working to consider the gender binaries embedded within human geography as the result of the philosophical tensions characterized in debates between place and space. Writing through a Foucauldian and Butlerian perspective, she inserts the problematic of identity politics into her inquiry arguing that both are inherently influenced by gender relations and the subjectivity of the body.[cxxxii]

Rooted in "the nature of and the relation between the concepts of space and place, and some aspects of their relation in turn to gender,"[cxxxiii] Massey understands the relationship between gender and place as a social entanglement defined according to two distinct concepts: that space is the result of its social relationships; and that place, alternatively, signifies a bounded and enclosed physical site.[cxxxiv]

Although part of the ongoing challenge within human geography is to identify the differences between place and space, Massey starts to understand place as equally 'porous' and flexible as space. In a deconstruction of their relationship, she suggests that place, like space, informs, and is informed by, the many social relations that interact with it; "[t]hinking of places in this way implies that they are not so much bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations. It implies that their identities are constructed through the specificity of their interaction with other places rather than by counterposition to them."[cxxxv]

Yet, by blurring the distinctions between both terms, she is dismantling the political hierarchies that have historically defined them. Rooted within a feminist strategy to dismantle the gender binaries inherent within Western spatial theory, her

complication of the aesthetics and functions of place and space thus propose to reevaluate how gender is materialized and constructed in the discourse of geography.

In the context of this chapter's interest in material agency vis-à-vis the embodiment of spatial theory in *High Plane V*, Hayden and Massey's feminist critiques provide an important political framework through which to reconsider the ways in which gender *becomes*, and subsequently *does* the body in the space of place. In comparison to Foucault and Lefebvre's theories that promote the essentialization of the body by discounting gender specificity, my spatial experience of Sigurdardottir's work counters the latter proving that the space of place is, in fact, fluid, and thus becomes performative through one's embodiment of it. For example, my experience of the artist's scape was not only a sensorial one, rather my body became part of the assemblage – I embodied the height, light, and sound of the space transforming it into an agent in the installation.

Massey's feminist inspired institutional critique of place and space, and arguably human geography further challenges the codes and stereotypes that have historically understood space as masculine and the lack of space as feminine. Critical of the ways in which the representation of gender is essentialized in spatial theory and the arbitrary (Flexible) sexism that frames geography, Massey proposes to dismantle the social and sexual binaries that have politically coded how place and space are experienced writing that "... spatiality cannot be analyzed through the medium of a male body and heterosexual male experience, but without recognizing these as important and highly specific characteristics, and then generalized to people at large (Flexible sexism). It means that some of the concepts central to recent debate need reconsideration in the light of gender specificity and oppressive gender constructions and relations."[cxxxvi] In other

words, to understand that site is performative is to understand that the social relations that have historically informed the space of place must be de-gendered and ultimately de-constructed.

Becoming in Theory and Practice

According to Judith Butler, it is the concept that gender is the result of a performative, reiterative and citational exchange that informs the ways in which the body *becomes*. Moreover, she argues that an identity is a social and spatial construction that is not singular, nor fixed, but rather relational. In her writing, she argues against the distinction that sex and gender are blurred realities suggesting instead that sex references a fictional and philosophically prelinguistic space in which gender *becomes*, rather than co-exists.[cxxxvii]

Critical of the nature versus nurture binary that constructivism perpetuates, Butler proposes to understand gender as the summation of *performativity*; "[f]or if gender is constructed, it is not necessarily constructed by an "I" or a "we" who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of 'before.' Indeed, it is unclear that there can be an "I" or a "we" who has not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being."[cxxxviii]

What is critical in Butler's argument is the idea that an identity is dialogical. When considered in the context of spatial theory, hers is a strategic model that helps to inform how the body becomes *through* its locationality rather than in juxtaposition to site. Unlike Foucault and Lefebvre who essentialize the body in their interpretations of spatial

theory, Butler's model of the performative partially helps to understand how the body *becomes*, rather than *is*.

The word *becoming* is an important verb and qualifier. It is a word that references an exchange, a movement and a transformation - a word that is never singular, but always dialogical. With respect to my experience of *High Plane V*, the concept of *becoming* hints at the idea that an experience has occurred; that something has happened through, in reference to Barad, an intra-active exchange. In *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*, Elizabeth Grosz decodes the relationship between the body and its 'outside' world in order to understand becoming *through* an ontological reading of how and what the body experiences.

Informed by the writing of Deleuze and Guattari, she explains that all works of art are ultimately experiential, perceptual and sensorial assemblages that take into account each force's embodied performativity. Moreover, all forms of materials within the assemblage *become* through entangled inter-actions and intra-actions.[cxxxix] Concerned with the ways in which the body *becomes*, Grosz's interpretation of art calls for a deconstruction of material agency through a philosophical and phenomenological lens. Paraphrasing Deleuze, she notes that art is ultimately procedural through the ways in which it philosophically and sensorially provokes a thing, a problematic, and/or a body.

Deleuze and Guattari circle around the concept of becoming before ultimately naming it, in my analysis, a *phenomenon*. Entangled within a complex narrative that compares becoming to phantastical and imaginary methods of coexistence, they ground the term within a discourse of the real, a discourse of creation and most significantly a

discourse of *verbing*; "[b]ecoming is a verb with consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, 'appearing,' 'being,' 'equaling,' or 'producing."[cxl]

The intertwinement of the word *becoming* with the concept of *verbing* produces a powerful space in which to shift the ways we think about embodiment. Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari, makers, thinkers and writers alike can, therefore, start to think about *becoming* as a method of embodiment through intra-activity, and subsequently the space of place as a material agent.

In the context of the overarching question *how are materials, such as space, place, and smell vis-à-vis the body co-produced, and subsequently co-produce each other to perform in a studio arts practice*, what is most important in this chapter is the negotiation between installation art, assemblage, and material agency via the various methods of human and nonhuman entanglement within Katrin Sigurdardottir's work.

Influenced by an Aristotelian model of spatial theory, Edward Casey, Michel Foucault and Henri Lefebvre offer three distinctly essentialist interpretations of the space of place while Dolores Hayden and Doreen Massey's deconstruction of the (gendered) body vis-à-vis the politics of location problematize the binaries that arguably continue to frame, shape and perform site. Therefore, in the concext that the space of place exemplifies posthumanist performativity in contemporary art, the argument can be made that the conditions of site - a nonhuman material - *becomes* through their entangled intra-actions with other human and nonhuman forces.

Chapter Three

"I Smell Soap: Deconstructing the Politics of Olfaction"

I'm not sure what excited me more: the overpowering sweet smell that filled the air of the second floor in the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA); or watching two men giggle as they tried to locate the odor in the gallery-turned-construction site.

It was during the summer of 2012, while visiting the first ever survey of Canadian art in America entitled *Oh Canada* at the MASS MoCA that I accidently stumbled upon an exhibition that invited me into an imaginary and sensorially powerful world born out of nostalgia. Titled *Invisible Cities* and curated by Susan Cross, upon entering the first gallery, I was *sweetly* escorted into what looked like a workspace, or a home interior under construction. The lights were dimmed. Echoes of traffic could be heard through the uncovered windows. And behind what looked like a brand new wall frame, the walls were stripped to the studs exposing the original brick of the 150 year-old building.

But this was not a typical workspace, nor was it a typical gallery space. Even before entering the gallery, visitors were immersed into an aroma. In comparison to the institutional smell of climate-controlled air, the gallery smelled sweet, fresh, homely and, dare I say, stereotypically feminine. But I, and other viewers were hard pressed to locate the aroma. Was someone wearing perfume? Were there flowers in the room? Was it food? Or was the smell emanating from the construction site-turned-art installation?

Initially drawn into the exhibition space by Miha Strukelj's fragile interpretation of the digital world, *The Melting Pot* (2012) (Figure 14), my curiosity peaked when confronted by a collection of graphite lines, transparent strings and white rectangular platforms that transformed the entrance space into a futuristic and architecturally

complicated urban sprawl. Combined with the museum's high ceilings and wooden rafters, the carefully organized assemblage embodied a certain monumentality that converted each component into whimsical extensions of what I imagine are their native cityscapes.

For instance, Sopheap Pich's modular skyline *Compound* (2011) (Figure 15) occupied a physicality and cultural specificity that blurred the distant geographical borders between its location in Massachusetts and the aesthetics of its referred Cambodian community. In other examples, artists appropriated methods of collage to materially transcend the spaces between the real and the make-belief resulting in locational and temporal mind games.

However, arguably the most perceptually and visually complex example of a site-specific and sensorial experience in this "invisible city" was Kim Faler's performative installation of smell art, *Untitled (99 44/100%)* – a custom wall frame made of white tea and ginger scented homemade soap that transformed the space of the gallery into a construction, or renovation site.

As a trained painter and drawer-turned performance artist, I am somewhat familiar with the term *sensorial art*. However, this particular kind of entanglement (between art and smell) was new to me during this visit. In my everyday life, I experience a variety of different smells: the smell of shampoo, coffee, food, my clothes, my car, my home, and my bed. But the experience of *smell art* was something that I had not yet encountered in a museum. Once immersed in the space and the smell, what echoed, very loudly, in my head was the ongoing question of materials and their actions and the performative role these play in my own artistic work. Moreover, I could not help

but wonder if this installation could be considered a performance. Or better yet, an example of performative art through the ways in which it (smell) was doing – doing onto the body, doing onto the space, and doing onto the architecture of the Mass MoCA.

The Sensorial in Visual Arts and Performance Studies

In *The Senses in Performance*, dance historian Sally Banes suggests that the sensorial, regardless of its growing popularity in theatre and visual culture, has received little critical attention in performance studies; "[i]n the 1990s, olfactory effects in performance became particularly pronounced. And yet, the use of aroma onstage has received surprisingly little critical or scholarly attention: there is no published history of olfactory performances, nor have most theatre semioticians included smells in their analyses of theatrical signs. Thus there exists a largely unexplored rhetoric of what I will call the 'olfactory effect' in theatrical events – that is, the deliberate use of 'aroma design' to create meaning in performance."[cxli]

Similarly, in Western art historical literature, I have read very little pertaining to smell art, or rather what Norwegian-born artist Sissel Tolaas refers to as "smell-communication."[cxlii] Like Faler, Tolaas incorporates smell as a methodology for social and spatial intervention. By blurring the lines between art and science, in the laboratory, the museum, and the public sphere, both artists are pushing the physical and ephemeral limits of materially-discursive practices through the material agency of the invisible – specifically, the molecular constructions that produce what we label smell.

Thus, how does smell become through different forms of perceptual, physical and sensorial embodiment? Moreover, how is smell a material that *does*? A stimulatory

experience of materiality, whether by smell or touch, has become an integral part of the performative process in performance, albeit theatrical performance, or performance art. Entangled between the sensual, the aromatic and the malleable, a physical and sensorial engagement with materials is indicative of the ways in which meaning is both produced, and disseminated in contemporary art. For example, influenced purely by a desire to *experience*,[cxliii] American artist Janine Antoni selectively chooses the materiality of her work based on the nature of the experience that she is engaged with, or rather wants to become engaged with.

In the series of busts entitled *Lick and Lather* (Figure 8), Antoni exemplifies the interwoven roles between the artist-as-maker and the artist-as-subject. Using chocolate and soap, she created fourteen busts made from a cast of her own body. In private performances, she bathed with each soap bust, and licked each chocolate bust hoping to alter, and sometimes erase, the details that characterize their (her) identity. Although riddled with references to the traditions of self-portraiture, and the immortalization of the self in art, it is the performativity of such intimate acts paralleled with the transformance of materials that informs her relationship with the sensorial as well as the viewers' experience of the object.

In comparison to Antoni's sensorial and perceptual engagements with sculpture in which tasting, touching and seeing are an inherent part of her creative process, Faler understands sensory art as a method of art/artist/viewer-participation; "[m]ulti-sensory art, as I understand, plays with more than just the visual component of art. It delves within the details, and if successful, nearly goes unnoticed. It's for the active viewer that takes the time to slow down looking."[cxliv]

In other words, the sensorial becomes contemplative; it is supposed to produce an experience and transform the act of viewing into an engagement with matter. In her installation, Faler uses smell, and what she considers an unstable material - soap - as a meditative device to slow down the act of looking and force the viewer to think, remember, and play.[cxlv]

In visual and material culture, smell is understood and sometimes practiced as a form of Barad's posthumanist performativity through the ways in which it makes *sense* of the human experience vis-à-vis the physiological relationship between the body, time and place. For example, smell is not only associated with food, but also creates context, situates a scene, and identifies a body. Moreover, according to Banes, smell is not only used to represent an event, or describe an experience in visual arts and performance studies – smell complements an act or performance.

Like an actor or participant, smell becomes an active contributor who engages with other forces and thus embodies agency in the situation; "... it is significant to note that, more rarely but perhaps more pointedly, directors, choreographers, and performance artists sometimes engage the use of odors for exactly the opposite function to illustration: to complement or contract with what is happening in the rest of the performance."[cxlvi] Similar to the ways in which Faler uses smell to recall the phenomenological relationships between architecture, history and the body, olfaction - on stage or on screen - mimics the ways in which a choreographer directs the body in the production of a dance, performance or a narrative.

The parallels between performance, performativity, sense experience, and Kim Faler's use of smell in *Untitled (99 44/100% pure)* is evident in the ways in which the

artist uses a homemade scent to entangle the history of the MASS MoCA, the economic situation of North Adams, the traditions of modern sculpture and her interests in site-specificity in the installation, as well as in relation to the theme of the exhibition.

According to the curator Susan Cross, *Invisible Cities* stages the ephemerality of the relationship between a person and a city. Through visitors' perceptual and sensorial experiences of architecture, landscapes and urbanscapes, the artists complicate how one understands the space of place as well as how one exists within the space of place. By comparison to modern theories of the object in art history and visual culture that ultimately dematerialize a thing from the body and its context, this exhibition is in fact re-materializing matter into material agents.

Through the ways in which soap, smell, light, sound and scale perform the body, so do the invisible cities in the exhibition perform their residents; "[l]ooking at the city both within and without, the artists present dynamic shifts in scale, making viewers aware of their physical relationships to the works and to the city. Many translate the fleeting experience of place – and one's recollections of it – through ephemeral materials such as light, soap, and sound, emphasizing the role that all the senses play in knowing or remembering place."[cxlvii]

In other words, through visitors' perceptual and sensorial experiences of architecture, landscapes and urbanscapes, the artists in the exhibition complicate how one understands the space of place as well as how one exists within the space of place. Thus, in comparison to modern theories of the object in art history and visual culture that ultimately dematerialize a thing from the body and its context, she re-materializes soap

into a material agent, and ultimately, performs the body, as do the invisible cities in the exhibition perform their residents.

Similar to the ways in which Faler appropriates olfaction as a material substance to perform architecture, the body, history and space, scholar Holly Dugan understands perfume as a contextually specific substance that is procedural and performative through its ability to do; doing onto the body, doing onto place and doing onto time. Writing through a Proustian lens, Dugan emphasizes the romantic and emotional relationships between smell, smelling and the body adding that through the smell of perfume, place and space also become intelligible. In her own words, "[o]lfaction blurred distinctions between boundaries and environments."[cxlviii] In the context of early modern theater and Greek philosophy, she argues that smell, in theory and practice, translates into a kind of performative agent.

Smell and the Sense Experience

In her chapter "Phenomenological Inquiry," art education researcher Lynn Butler-Kisber draws from philosopher Edmund Husserl and his writings on the importance of the lived experience (within transcendental phenomenology) to understand "how knowledge comes into being in consciousness."[cxlix] In other words, that the meaning of a thing is produced within the everyday experience of, and relationship with, a thing.

Similar to the argument that the space of place is performative via a deconstruction of spatial theory in Chapter Two, this particular branch of phenomenology complicates the notion that the body is the sole entity that performs and produces knowledge. Instead, the proposition that meaning is produced within the lived experience

of a thing dismantles the modern limitations that discount material agency as well as posthumanist performativity in a contemporary studio art practice.

Grounded in a discourse of the performative, Butler-Kisber's reference to Husserl is useful in the context of Faler's work because it challenges the distinctions between knowing a smell, and experiencing how a smell *becomes*. In other words, it is not the naming of a thing, experience, or aroma that *matters*, but instead understanding how, through an entanglement of *doing* and *becoming*, its meaning emerges.

The concept that objects, events and arguably, the body are not independent, but rather indicative of an entangled embodiment is nonetheless an incredibly provocative statement. How can smell, although invisible to the naked eye, fill a room and interact with others - material or not? Its potency, ephemeral physicality and ability to influence how the body interacts with space translates its material nature into an active substance that coats the body and things alike as well as performs what occupies its space in the room.

In phenomenological discourses pertaining to perception and studies of the senses, there is a historically loaded genealogy that favors certain senses, such as hearing, sight and touch. By comparison to the latter senses, smell and taste have traditionally received less attention. Dating back more than 2000 years, Plato, in his most influential contribution to philosophy and political theory, *The Republic - Book VII*, argues that Being is born out of knowledge, and that said knowledge subsequently is informed by what one can see. Metaphorically embedded within the analogy of coming out of the dark, and going into the light, he explains that knowledge is only produced from what is visually accessible to the body. By problematizing the distinctions between what is

represented inside the cave - the simulacrum - and what is visually experienced outside of the cave, Plato creates a sensorial hierarchy assuming that sight, over any other sense, provides the basis for the production of knowledge.[cl]

Braided within the "Allegory of the Cave" is a philosophical negotiation between what is real, and what is an illusion. According to Plato, the chained prisoners' concepts of reality are based upon their visual experience and their visual understanding of a thing's representation. Unable to *see* the actual object itself, its reflection (on the cave wall) thus becomes a mediated form of knowledge – or what is assumed to be the truth.

The power that Plato has assigned to the visual in Western philosophy continues to raise many questions within current discourses of the senses, representation and (human) experience. In the realm of phenomenology, it is the notion that knowledge is the result of the body's sensorial relationship with the material world that predominates. Interested in the occurrence of an experience, phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty understands that meaning is contingent on the exchange of relationships: both physical relationships and perceptual relationships; "[a]nalytical reflection starts from our experience of the world and goes back to the subject as to a condition of possibility distinct from that experience, revealing the all-embracing synthesis as that without which there would be no world."[cli]

The relationship between Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and sensory art (in art criticism) is inherently more complicated, however, because the perceptual experiences of sound, taste and smell, for instance, will never produce or reproduce the same intellectual or bodily experience. In other words, the relationship between the body and

the senses is a purely subjective phenomenon, and therefore can never be shared, duplicated or repeated.

The senses, in the context of art, exist as dialogical agents who are continually changing the body's experience of place and space. For example, my experience of Faler's aromatic intervention was very different from other viewers who, as noted earlier, found it funny. In comparison to their laughter, my initial response to the work was poetic, emotional, and even a little romantic.

According to cultural historian Constance Classen, smell has an invisible ability to make the body feel and remember; "[t]he perception of smell consists not only of the sensation of the odours themselves, but of the experiences and emotions associated with them."[clii] Smell, although ephemeral, has the ability to embody and transport the body in time and place. It can make the body feel; it can make the body hungry, it can choreograph the body; and it can change a body's identity. In essence, it can *do* the body in the same way that the body *does* onto it. Reminiscent of a mixture between fresh cut flowers and French perfume, the sweet and spicy smell that emanated from the installation brought me back to my childhood recalling a time, a place and my love for the lily of the valley - the flower that bloomed along the side of our family home every month of May.

According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, there are two important distinctions to take note of when working to understand how [nonhuman] materials *become*: that all matter produces an experience, and that the experience of Being and the experience of phenomenon are inherently very different in the ways in which they *do* onto other forms of matter. Embedded within his model is the concept that meaning is produced through a

body's relationship with an object; "[w]hen I see an object, I always feel that there is a portion of being beyond what I see at this moment, not only as regards visible being, but also as regards what is tangible or audible. And not only sensible being, but a depth of the object that no progressive sensory deduction will ever exhaust."[cliii] In other words, is material agency, in the discourse of phenomenology, dependent on the *mattering* of a thing?

In theory, sense experience is a conceptually powerful methodology for understanding the layered relationships between embodiment, experience and subject. According to Merleau-Ponty, the latter proposes a framework for understanding the ways in which the meaning of a thing is produced through a dialogical and relational entanglement of matter and mattering. "The problem is to understand these strange relationships which are woven between the parts of the landscape, or between it and me as incarnate subject, and through which an object perceived can concentrate in itself a whole sense or become the *imago* of a whole segment of life."[cliv] In essence, it offers a space for understanding meaning through perception. Or rather proposes that perception produces meaning – the meaning of a thing.

In relation to sensorial art such as Faler's intervention *Untitled (99 44/100%)*, a theory of sense experience thus helps to make "sense" of the entangled relationship between a thing, and one's perception of *that* thing. For example, my knowledge of a wall frame under construction combined with the smell of white tea and ginger produced an antithetical experience of a contemporary art installation. Moreover, the site-specific sweet scent complicated, as well as contrasted the ways in which I understand wood, construction, and renovation vis-à-vis how I understand the conditions and politics of an

art museum. But more importantly, it is the idea that the sensorial presupposes the real and informs the ways in which Merleau-Ponty claims to understand an experience that helps to challenge the ways in which modern art historical discourses have overlooked material agency in a studio practice.

In Faler's work, it is the idea that the sensorial presupposes the real that informs the entangled relationships between viewing, smelling, and experiencing. For instance, *Untitled (99 44/100%)* is a strong example of the ways in which an experience of viewing changes when one experiences *through* a material versus simply viewing a material. Upon entering the gallery, Faler's piece is nearly unnoticeable because it resembles a typical site under renovation. However, in reality, her installation consists of soap casted wood-like beams made to resemble a wall frame.

In keeping with the traditions of modern sculpture, the "wooden" beams installed directly against the brick wall serve to reorganize the space of the room. In keeping with their original (intended) function, which is to support the weight of drywall, Faler's soap beams also offer support: they support smell, they support an experience, and architecturally, they support the ceiling.

In his highly influential, yet contested, writings on painting and sculpture, American art critic Clement Greenberg argues that the success of modern art is rooted in its ability to embody both its materiality as well as its function; "[t]he essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence."[clv]

Although Faler successfully plays on the self-referentiality of the "wood" beam by simulating its intended function to support other surfaces and *things*, it is in fact her criticism that modern sculpture is a purely optical effect that complicates what art critic Michael Fried names *objecthood*, the material conditions that have historically defined sculpture in the twentieth century, that problematizes the objective versus experiential nature of materials in sculpture, and subsequently interventionist and installation art. "Objecthood of one kind or another is the aim of literalist work, which does not begin or end so much as it merely stops, and in which an indefinite – by implication, infinite – progression takes place as if in time."[clvi]

In comparison to Canadian sculptor Roland Poulin who appropriates sculpture as a method to complicate the spatial lines between the ground that supports his objects and the ground on which the viewer's body stands, Faler understands sculpture as a transformational medium that blurs the boundaries between viewing and engaging with matter. For example, her use of smell, in relation to the body and the conceptual referent, translate the work into a dialogical, and ultimately performative space in which the materials, such as architecture, history, soap, and smell become performers, spatial navigators and participatory artifacts that embody as well as instigate movement.

Unlike Poulin's modern sculptures that dematerialize objecthood by remaining fixed and untouched by space and time, Faler's installation embodies time and place. Her "wood" beams do not remain 'untouched.' With every day that passes, they transform, they change in shape, in colour, and in smell (Figure 16). Moreover, because smell produces invisible and sensorial boundaries and pathways in the space, the smell of soap begins to choreograph the viewer's patterns of walking in and around the gallery

recalling the ways in which space embodies performativity in Katrin Sigurdardottir's work.

The argument that smell *does* is arguably framed by current work in sensory anthropology. Deeply influenced by the concept that the body is culturally and socially constructed, certain poststructurally influenced strains of anthropology understand Being as the result of an ethnographic dialogue. In *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*, anthropologist and Professor David Howes refers to Margaret Lock's claim that anthropology "promotes and theorizes a full-bodied approach to sensory experience and expression"[clvii] to understand the varied relationships between the body, culture and the sensorial.[clviii] A prolific contributor to sensory discourses within anthropology, sociology and cultural studies, Howes understands the body as a series of embodied responses to what he calls *sensory phenomena* - sensorial responses to a person's behavior and social circumstances.[clix]

The idea that the body exists in dialogue with the sensorial conditions of its surroundings parallels my first experience of Faler's installation in *Invisible Cities*. Although invisible to the naked eye, the overwhelming smell of white tea and ginger certainly performed my body as well as other bodies - it navigated the ways in which we moved in the space of the exhibition; how we approached each artwork, as well as how we approached and interacted with each other's bodies in the room. Literally and metaphorically, the aroma in the room forged a pathway to and from the back of the room where faux wood beams decorated the walls.

Yet, although the smell grew more powerful with every step, its specificity remained a mystery. Only when standing directly in front of the piece was I able to

identify that the smell was in fact emanating from the sculpture: a wall frame made of homemade soap. But more important than being able to identify the source of smell was the realization that it was *doing* something; that it was performative because it not only reiterated Pickering's notion of material agency as something producing material captures of human agency but also because the assemblage of conditions was shaping itself as well as [us].

Untitled (99 44/100% pure) was not an event; liveness was not a factor, nor was my role only that of a viewer. I was a participant. I was a subject. But more importantly, I was embodied. In the realm of performance studies, smell is often understood through its dialogical, interactive and embodied relationships with the body. According to Chinese geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, olfaction is a navigational device, both on stage, and in a gallery, through its ability to perform the body. Rooted in what I label a locational methodology, Tuan notes that smell, similar to sight and hearing, affects and effects the body's emotional, and physical relationships and responses to an environment.[clx]

Biologically and physiologically, the body is designed to respond to sounds, tastes, and smells. In fact, "[a]s human beings, our biological composition dictates that our knowledge and exploration of the world take place through the senses."[clxi] In other words, if smell, whether it be in a performance, a restaurant or on the street, is able to produce a response, and subsequently *do*, than it seems very likely that it embodies what Pickering names material agency.

Moreover, as exemplified in Faler's intervention, smell becomes a participatory tool that fosters, in this exhibition locational embodiment – the body inhales, exhales,

feels, and moves according to smell. The body also reproduces a myriad of smells through its biological and perceptual responses to food, emotions, and even fertility. Furthermore, because smell has the ability to change and multiply, its entanglement with the body continually transforms the ways in which the body and it interact and engage with one another, making it an ideal example of performative matter in a contemporary studio practice.

Rivaling the scientific argument that smell, through its molecular entanglement with the body, proves its formal nature, Merleau-Ponty also considers how smell purely *becomes* through it experiential relationship with the body. In his writing, he explains that the relationship between the body and the object exists beyond a physical and aesthetic state of being. More specifically, that a thing's physicality is often considered to be a perceptual result of a person's relationship with said thing, rather than an embodied or inherent quality.[clxii]

Sampling *Smell Art*

"F.B.: *It seems to me that, in the past few years, contemporary art has undergone a multisensory turn, concerning itself with maximizing its expressive powers by investing several sensory modalities simultaneously, rather than sublimating its entire message through sight. Is the era of ocularcentrism over?*

A.B.O.: *After the 'anorexia of the image' caused by the digital era and the Internet, after conceptual art, now we are witnessing a polysensory comeback, in order to give real foundations to what we see through its materiality, its technical explicitness, and also with elements that reach beyond the traditional limits of the medium (for example, trompe-l'oeil.) Now we have the presentation of materials rather than their representation – real materials."*[clxiii]

Curious about the rising popularity of multisensory art and the ways in which it is currently being, or rather not being, canonized in contemporary art criticism, Francesca Bacci invited Italian art critic Achille Bonito Oliva to respond to the many aesthetic and material shifts between art and the senses that are currently influencing contemporary art. Critical of the art historical hierarchy that has favored sight over any other sense, Bacci is first and foremost interested in entertaining new forms of art that incorporate the experience of smell and taste.

In the above excerpt taken from their interview in "Making Sense of Art, Making Art of Sense," Bacci questions the power of the visual in fine arts; *is the era of ocularcentrism over?* Curious about the word *multisensory*, her interest in a discourse of the sensorial stems from her longtime fascination with skin and its ability to convey meaning. With reference to British artist Ella Clocksin's tactile and perceptual interpretations of the body in relation to experience and movement,[clxiv] Bacci frames her interview with Oliva as a material discussion centered around non-verbal methods of communication.[clxv]

Forgiving of the reality that many artists today are, in his own words, designers, project-makers and presenters rather than hands-on fabricators,[clxvi] Oliva is sensitive to the distinctions made between artists who are involved in the material production of their work, and artists who are conceptually involved in the creation of their ideas. In the context of multisensory art, these distinctions become even more important because, according to Oliva, they serve to help characterize what he calls the "art of trespassing," a method of *body art* that blurs the material and experiential lines between the performative and the personal.[clxvii]

For example, in comparison to Marina Abramovic's enactments of mutilation or Vito Acconci's acts of masturbation, Oliva proposes to shift the turn to the sensorial (in art) into a negotiation between the presentation of materials vis-à-vis the representation of materiality.[clxviii] Consequently, in what he claims is the first example of multisensory art, he notes that Marcel Duchamp's sculpture *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?* (Figure 17) falsely evokes the smell and taste of sugar cubes by confusing the representation of white marble squares with the perceived experience of sweetness.

Akin to Oliva, Classen also understands olfaction through place and space, but in her research she names the latter *smellscape*: an unstable and procedural form of matter that is always changing according to its contextual, cultural and social conditions; "[s]uch a 'smellscape' is obviously not a fixed structure, but rather a highly fluid pattern that can shift and change according to atmospheric conditions. Perhaps because of the importance their culture attaches to smell as a means of ordering the world, the Andamanese conceive of space itself not in the way most people do it in the West – as a static area within which things happen, but more as a dynamic environment flow."[clxix] Classen is primarily concerned with smell as "a social phenomenon"[clxx] noting that aroma is a source of power, and a source of cultural and social deconstruction.

In the realm of contemporary art, artists, art historians and curators have started to invest interest in the experience and materiality of the senses in curatorial practices and museum studies. For example, in the exhibition *Smell, Colour: Chemistry, Art and Pedagogy* curated by Cristina Agàpito at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Barcelona, 88 artists were invited to collaborate with perfumer Ernesto Ventós who created smells in relation to each artist's work. In the spirit of smell-specific commissions, the exhibition

becomes a performative visualization of olfaction. In his essay "The World of Smell," the Spanish perfumer suggests that olfaction is likened to a critical methodology through which to understand and perceive the world; "[s]mells are something more than a way of perceiving or understanding the world. They are a way of understanding and relating to the world, of engaging with the world, as are all of the traditional arts...the study of smells requires that we observe and analyse the whole of reality, embracing its complexity and its incalculable abundance."[clxxi]

Reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's argument that meaning is produced through a shared bodily experience is Ventós' claim that smell, through the body, becomes a psychological and physical material agent. Moreover, that smell has formal qualities. Under the subtitle "The Physiology of Smell" in the catalogue essay, Ventós deconstructs the scientific relationship between physiology and smell arguing that olfaction is inherently a material and formal substance; "[s]mell is based on vibrations. What matters is the form, because every molecule has its own combination of bumps, grooves and curves as unique as a fingerprint, and when an odoriferous molecule makes contact with the receptor, the receptor *feels* it and identifies it. We know that the action of all of the other receptors, from the digestive enzymes to the neurotransmitters and the immune system, is based on form, so smell must also be based on form."[clxxii] Regardless of its invisibility to the naked eye, the parts that make up a smell have a form – they do, and are done onto.

In addition to being a locational signifier, Ventós explains that smell instigates emotional, romantic and even pleasurable feelings. Similar to my experience of Faler's 'smellscape' in which I was brought back to my childhood, the samples of smells is this

exhibition evoke what the perfumer calls *emotional memory*; "[e]motional memory is the great territory of olfactory experience. With a single inspiration of what was once a perfectly familiar smell the memories that take us back to that moment are awakened in our consciousness, and we are immersed in the smell..."[clxxiii] Drawing from French philosopher Gaston Bachelard who understands smell as a phenomenological phenomenon that transcends the body in time and place, Ventós paints smell as an invisible thing that can embody emotions and physically move the body.

By using smell to recall the body rather than creating olfactory experiences that transcend the body in time and place, the Norwegian smell artist Sissel Tolaas also complicates the romanticized concept that smell is purely a method of sensorial embodiment. Interested in naturalizing the smell of the body rather than using smell to recall an emotion and metaphorically transport a person, she performs capitalist critiques of contemporary Western culture through her fabricated body-like odours; "Tolaas is one of the few artists in the world working with smell. Her installations explore real scents; that is, body odors and city fumes. Her sweat simulations not only push reflexive disgust to the limit, but they also slyly tweak certain cultural prejudices. "It's to do with cleanliness but also overcleanliness."[clxxiv] Less interested in working with traditional perfume ingredients, such as rose petals and other exotic flowers, her practice is centered on the idea that smell can inform, educate and "re-educate our noses."[clxxv]

A founder of the Re-Search Lab in Berlin, a research laboratory funded by the world's largest fragrance company IFF and located in the artist's studio, Tolaas' approach to smell art is exceptionally calculated and scientific.[clxxvi] In keeping with the ways in which Donna Haraway understands the body as a perpetual process of becoming,

Tolaas engages too in a kind of posthumanist performative practice of olfactory intervention. According to Haraway, "[t]o come to accept the body's unmaking, I need to re-member its becoming. I need to reorganize all the members, animate and inanimate, that make up the knot of a particular life."[clxxvii]

Similarly, Tolaas unmakes the body through a sensorial, olfactory, deconstruction. Currently in the Re-Search lab's smell archive, there are more than 6763 smells that have been preserved from all over the world. The idea that the body can be unmade and re-made through smell recalls the posthumanist concept that the body is a material construction of experiences that continually change its Being.

That olfaction is informative, and even educational, is the central problematic that inspires Tolaas in the studio and laboratory. Likened to a form of language, the artist understands smell as a sensorial method of communication and interaction that speaks to larger concerns pertaining to our society's desensitization of the senses - particularly that smell, like sight and sound, too often gets overlooked, and taken for granted. "The Re_Search Lab is a 'station of dialogues', a place to establish a continuous dialogue between IFF experts and a range of other experts. The goal of the Lab is to change existing notions on noses, smells and the act of smelling and makes a perfect context to further develop the archive of smell and its interconnected language that has been growing for nearly twenty years."[clxxviii]

Echoing the acts of artists Ernesto Ventós, and Tolaas, American naturalist Diane Ackerman contextualizes smell as a grouping of molecular influences that are in constant dialogue with a person's digestive and neurological systems. Biologically, smells are airborne chemicals that enter and exit the body with every breath. Described by

psychophysiologist Tim Jacob as a taxi service, the odorant binding proteins move the chemicals throughout the body to the brain where receptor neurons begin to associate smell with visual references in order to make sense of the senses.[clxxix]

In her own words, Ackerman explains that "[e]ach day, we breathe about 23,040 times and move around 438 cubic feet of air. It takes us about five seconds to breathe--two seconds to inhale and three seconds to exhale--and, that time, molecules of odor flood through our systems. Inhaling and exhaling, we smell odors. Smells coat us, swirl around us, enter our bodies, emanate from us. We live in a constant wash of them. Still, when we try to describe a smell, words fail us like the fabrications they are."[clxxx] A perfect justification for Tolaas' growing smell dictionary entitled *Nasalo*, an associative dictionary that establishes new words for the descriptions and definitions of odours, this parallel between smell and language reinforces the argument that smell is a communicative method for making *sense* of the world.

In keeping with the argument about smell's material agency and how it operates in contemporary studio art practice, it is first and foremost important to understand that smell does something, that smell produces meaning, and that smell interacts with, and potentially, even co-produces the body and environment, physically, sensorially, and scientifically. But even more interesting in the realm of phenomenology, and arguably posthumanist performativity is the concept that *smell instigates a performative act of embodiment through its dialogical relationships*. According to Merleau-Ponty, meaning is not predetermined, but rather the result of a performative exchange between the body, perception, and arguably, the sensorial.

Epilogue

"Art as Entanglement - Entanglement as Art"

"[t]o walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper. The moving about that the city multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place – an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign of what ought to be, ultimately, the place but is only a name, the City."[clxxxi]

How are materials, such as space, place, and smell vis-à-vis the body co-produced, and subsequently co-produce each other to perform in a studio arts practice? In each chapter leading up to this epilogue, I have considered the notion of material agency in contemporary studio practice through three very different mediums and material practices of posthumanist performativity. Chapter one: "Milk Does the Body" complicated the natures of human and nonhuman agency through the ways in which breast milk performs the viewer and consumer's body in Jess Dobkin's *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*. Chapter Two, "Hom[ing] Site, or Being Home[d]," aimed to consider my personal experience of locational agency in Katrin Sigurdardottir's installation *High Plane V* through modern frames of human geography and spatial theory. Lastly, in Chapter Three, "I Smell Soap: Deconstructing the Politics of Olfaction," I understood smell [vis-à-vis the body] in Kim Faler's site-specific intervention *Untitled (99 44/ 100% Pure)* through models of phenomenological and sensorial anthropology. More specifically, that smell embodies cultural, historical, and locational agency thus becoming an actor in the production of an experience, or a performance.

In relation to the body, these three examples of contemporary studio practice, akin to my own studio work, challenge the ways in which [nonhuman] things *do* in a contemporary visual art practice. No longer ephemeral accessories or situational conditions that surround the human body, things such as taste, space and smell, through Barad's model of posthumanist performativity, shift the *thingness* of material matter [in contemporary art] into examples of material agency. Borrowing from the ways in which I understand Dobkin, Sigurdardottir and Faler's art, the following pages are a consideration of my personal investigation of studio art materials-turned-material agents.

Situating Material Agency Within a Studio

Influenced by my many commutes between Ottawa, Toronto, New York, and Montreal, I have grown very sensitive to the dialogical and experiential relationship between the body and its spatial location. Drawing from W.J.T. Mitchell's argument that landscape is not a noun but a verb; "*... that we think of landscape, not as an object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed*,"[clxxxii] the idea that one's environment performs the body has continued to inform the material and conceptual shifts between performance, performativity and the performative in my practice [and research].

In art historical discourses surrounding the feminist body and performance art, performativity has historically been linked to the concept that the body is a transformative agent in a work of art. In the 1970s, women [performance] artists, through feminist acts of insertion, used their bodies to reclaim their place within the traditions of 'high' art. For example, in the *Tree of Life Series* (Figure 18) and *Silueta*

Series (Figure 19) Ana Mendieta appears as a goddess imbedded within the land. In an attempt to become one with [mother] nature, she materially and conceptually camouflaged her body to *become* one with the trees and the earth. In her own words, "I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I reestablish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source."[clxxxiii]

Although these gestures depict beautiful interruptions in the public realm, they are also filled with pathos. Metaphorically, they recall the artist's need to insert her self into the world. However, they also suggest a burial, or subtraction of the female body, from the artist's landscape. In the context of a posthumous interpretation, these political acts also symbolize her precarious erasure [along with many other women artists] from the canon of Western art history.

In queer theory and gender studies, the concept of performativity has been appropriated to describe the transformance of identity through reiteration and what Judith Butler refers to as *citationality*.[clxxxiv] In human geography via spatial theory, performativity speaks to the idea that the space of place embodies agency, and subsequently performs the human body. And in science studies, particularly the writings of Karen Barad, performativity – or rather what she renames posthumanist performativity - provides a framework through which to [re]consider the power of nonhuman *thingness* in the everyday. Specific to my practice, the word performativity translates into an all encompassing model for practicing and experiencing the way that materials, albeit lines, snow, sound, site, or even smell, perform my body, as well as other bodies.

Prior to 2006, I had never made, or even contemplated performance as a potential medium for [mark] making. In fact, my first performance *Winged*, although a 'live' event, still remained very much embedded within the traditions of action painting. In a moment of existential frustration brought upon by my inability to visually communicate an experience, I emptied a gallon of white enamel paint onto my studio floor, stripped my clothes off, and made two snow angels. Originally intended as a metaphorical gesture to mark my territory in Manhattan, the act of "making" with my body quickly changed how I experienced time, place, materiality, my whereabouts of working as well as the role of the viewer.

Influenced by the political, social, and weather conditions that informed my "new" home, I was also very affected by the absence of snow in and around the city. Up until December 2006, my concept of home in the winter was always decorated with snow-covered sidewalks, slippery roads, salt stains, and below normal temperatures. But my new home did not resemble my preconceived notions of *chez-moi* in the slightest.

Akin to a Canadian fall, the weather conditions of New York City during that time were somewhat breezy, mild, and only required me to wear a lightweight jacket. In fact, I was still able to wear open-back shoes rather than boots. To say the least, the environmental conditions of my new home were very different from anything that I had ever experienced during the month of December. Consequently, my idea of "home" was experiencing a monumental shift in geography, scale as well as climate.

In response to these growing changes in my life paired with Joan Snyder's critique of my drawings and paintings from that period which I referred to earlier in this

thesis, I felt it necessary to do something drastic – do something uncharacteristic – do something that would rock my practice at the core. I performed *Winged*. I used my body to physically, emotionally and psychically engage with an experience of my new environment. Regardless of my disinterest in the traditions and formal qualities of body art, my performance was provoked by the need to feel, touch, smell as well as embody the variety of material and subsequently performative conditions of *home*.

During this material and conceptual transition, Janine Antoni's entangled practice comprising sculpture, photography, video, performance and arguably, the performative, became incredibly influential to me. Not only was I curious about her material choices in relation to the performative, I was also enthralled with her descriptions of her work. On several occasions, Antoni has explained to me that she is an object maker. She is not a performance artist, nor is she a sculptor - she is a maker – a maker of things, and a maker of experiences.[clxxxv] Moreover, I have also heard her explain that her work begins with a desire to experience.

Although a trained sculptor, her objects are not born from an idea, but rather emerge as a remnant of an experience. In fact, the words *performance* and *performativity* are not terms that Antoni herself uses when describing her work. In a conversation with the artist in 2007, I asked her what she considered the 'object' of her practice; was it the experience of the act, the remnant of the event, or the documentation of the experience? I struggled to understand performance as a non-event, and what that could be, or materially become.

For example, in *2038* (2000) (Figure 20) the artist is portrayed lying in a vessel-like bathtub while a cow appears to be feeding from her breast. In keeping with her

continued interests in the body, specifically the maternal body, this piece performs a seldom seen interaction between the cow and the human body. The cow, in both a natural context and an economic context, is a nurturing stand-in for the mother; "[f]irst, we nurse from our mother, then we nurse from a cow…in this photograph however, the cow nurses from me."[clxxxvi]

Through the performance of an act, the documentation of an act, and the telling of the act, Antoni transcends the lines that frame an experience. For example, rather than merely describing the experience of bathing with soap, or licking chocolate, her objects become the result of her experiences. However, unlike Antoni, I am not an object maker, nor do I work towards producing a tangible thing per se. In fact, what challenges me most about Antoni's practice are the ways in which her work limits the experiential component of making.

Although born from an experience, whether private or public, her work often exists as an object disconnected from the original moment, gesture or experience. Although representative of the "event," the photographs, videos, and sculptures simply perpetuate the modern traditions of objecthood and in essence, illustrate an experience rather than embody it. Rather than pushing the boundaries of sculpture and performative art, her practice remains entangled in the traditions of modern art.

Seeing Beyond the Body

In *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, theater historian Erika Fischer-Lichte situates the body within a discourse of aesthetics that is inspired by the writings of Richard Schechner, Max Herrmann, Judith Butler and the argument that

the body is a self-referential site of citationality; "[t]he specific materiality of the body emerges out of the repetition of certain gestures and movements; these acts generate the body as individually, sexually, ethically, and culturally marked. Performative acts thus are of crucial importance in constituting bodily as well as social identity."[clxxxvii]

Drawing directly from Butler's understanding that the [gendered] body is the result of a performative exchange, Fischer-Lichte understands the body in performance art as a materially-discursive site in which "one does one's body."[clxxxviii] With reference to philosophical readings of art history, linguistics and semiotics, Fischer-Lichte understands that the body *does* in a similar way that Austin explains how words *do* in language; "[w]e were to consider, you will remember, some cases and senses in which to *say* something is to *do* something; or in which *by* saying or *in* saying something we are doing something."[clxxxix]

Although a loaded term, on a fundamental level, the word *doing* translates in Andrew Pickering's notion into an act of material agency. Consequently, if according to Erika Fischer-Lichte, the body [in performance art] *does*, is it fair to assume that the body, in art, is the primary agent? Drawing from the Polish theater director and theorist Jerzy Grotowski, she explains that, "the human body is not a material like any other to be shaped and controlled at will. It constitutes a living organism, constantly engaged in the process of becoming, of permanent transformation. The human body knows no state of being; it exists only in a state of becoming. It recreates itself with every blink of the eye, every breath and movement embodies a new body. For that reason, the body is ultimately elusive. The bodily being-in-the world, which cannot *be* but becomes, vehemently refutes all notions of the completed work of art."[cxc]

The relationship between the words *body* and *doing* further work to complicate the meaning and representation of the body in cultural studies, queer theory and feminist theory - three discourses in which the body begins to *Be*, or rather mean something through its materialization. Echoed in Butler's title *Bodies That Matter* is the notion that the body, through its performativity, begins to matter, or rather 'mean something.' Dissatisfied by the 'material irreducibility' of sex and gender, Butler proposes to understand the body [what she names matter] as a site of material and political intervention. However, by focusing solely on the relationship between human body vis-à-vis matter, she ignores other bodies and materialities. Instead, her model of performativity perpetuates the idea that gender is rooted in human agency rather than challenges the boundaries that in theory and practice complicate gender as something materially-discursive.

The quest to locate a model of the performative within feminist theory extends beyond a Butlerian interpretation of the [gendered] body. That being said, it is necessary to understand that Butler's is a theory that destabilizes the social, cultural and political hierarchies that have historically situated the [gendered] body. But more importantly, hers is not a model that will inform the ways in which I understand, or don't understand, the body in performance art-turned-posthumanist performatives.

Looking Ahead: Towards Performative Art

In the theoretical sphere of contemporary art history, the term *performativity* has historically often been blurred within a discourse of performance [art] making it a much more abstract concept to both philosophize, and materialize – and even more difficult to

practice. In the recent essay "Performing Time, Performing Space," published in the exhibition catalogue *La Triennale québécoise 2011: Le travail qui nous attend* [*The Work Ahead of Us*], curator Marie Fraser challenges the canonical definitions of performance art by inserting performativity into the linguistic and material narratives of contemporary installation, video and performance art.

Reminded of Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter's argument that performance is no longer a field of practice rooted in the body, but rather that it functions as a site for social and political inquiry,[cxci] Fraser's interpretation of artists' Charles Stankievech, Claudie Gagnon and Olivia Boudreau's work suggests that performative art is not solely rooted in the body, but that it exemplifies the culmination of a materially-discursive, locational and experiential embodiment of [nonhuman] materials.

More complicated, however, is Fraser's argument that contemporary art historical discourses must be broadened if performative art is ever going to be understood, and/or canonized. In parallel, her curatorial efforts to challenge the institutionalization of contemporary art sheds light on the gaps and problems within the traditions of museum studies, as well as paves the way for artists, today, to push beyond the traditional material boundaries of a studio practice.[cxcii]

Whether it be a material or relational experience of a work, it is the idea that art must transcend its physicality in order to *do* that Fraser notes is important to art today. And by using the word performativity to describe the current trends in postmodern aesthetics, she hints at the need to develop a new critical vernacular.[cxciii]

In keeping with Amelia Jones, Dorothea von Hantelmann, and Marie Fraser's claim that a new vernacular is needed in order to situate performative art practices within

the discourse of contemporary art history, my argument is also working toward a material shift - complemented with a *posthumanist* perspective – to understand how the word *material* is mis-framed and mis-contextualized in contemporary studio art practices.

Complemented by Susan Melrose's Deleuzian inspired argument that, "[u]ses of the term 'the body', in terms of contemporary performance writing, bring with them a veritable network of values (measures) and potential unfoldings; its use in that particular context identifies a momentarily and artificially stilled site, within networks of relations, and not a material being as such,"[cxciv] what I make and write are both working to instill the belief that the entangling between the body, the actions of materials and the site is the site of performance and the practice of the performative.

Insights Into A Practice

My many questions surrounding the performativity of materials, such as place, space, snow, temperature, and sound, to name a few, grew out of my experience of being an international student living in New York City. Between 2006-2008, my legal identity was labeled *alien*; when I crossed the border, I was officially granted an F1 status: a non-immigrant alien status. The precarity of this identity inspired what has since become a fascination and philosophical deconstruction of the power of site through other models of performativity.

While performing variations of the intervention/gesture *Winged* in my studio and throughout New York City, I became interested in the privatization of space in the city, and the regulations that controlled who occupied a site, when and how. Inspired by these geographical and political 'fences,' I started to use welcome mats to perform my

resistance of the politics of location in my urban landscape. *Welcome*, (2007-08) (Figure 21) a public intervention, or what I prefer to call a silent protest, comprised strategically placed welcome mats in front of all of the entrances to Gramercy Park.[cxcv] Originally curious about the ways that this object could change how one interacted with space, this act also introduced a kind of play to the space transforming my critique of accessibility into a participatory chase. Inspired by this so-called game of cat and mouse, I too became a player in the quest to enter the park.

Over the course of three months, I befriended anyone who had access to a key; I even joined the Gramercy Park Block Association. Finally, in March 2008, I was escorted onto the park's grounds. But to my surprise, it was underwhelming, and oddly disappointing. It became clear to me that my goal was not simply to acquire access, but to understand the politics of exclusion as well as how I could materially translate the spatial boundaries of place through the experience of belonging, or in this case, not belonging.

Since performing *Welcome* in 2008, I have deconstructed, reconstructed, experienced and cited the material and performative states of belonging, place and space in a variety of landscapes. In New York, my investigation materialized into a performative commute between my apartment and my studio. Not only did I want to quantify how I moved within this particular landscape, but I also wanted to visually understand what it looked like. In the *Dust Drawing Series* (2008-2012) (Figure 22), I have continued to reenact [on paper] the 1584 footsteps separating my home [23 Lexington Avenue] and my studio [141 West 21st Street]. Interested in the aesthetics of that experience, I used my feet to capture the marks of a site-specific commute.

Upon my return to Canada, these concerns remained of great importance in my practice. Although I was back on Canadian soil, I continued to feel estranged from my landscape. Thus, in a quest to locate yet another sense of belonging – a new sense of home – I embarked on a journey to formalize my concept of home, on paper. In the series of drawings entitled *3580/3590* (Figure 1), I began to blur the lines between performance, drawing and documentation in hope to translate the aesthetic, yet abstract, spaces of place.

Exploring the concept that walking can become a method through which to understand both locational belonging and locational identity, I strategically stepped on paper, one sheet at a time, around the periphery of the Riverside Gate condominium complex in Ottawa. My original intention was to document my existence on these grounds by 'stamping' it on paper. However, throughout the performance, it occurred to me that the act of walking, stepping and bending became more of a conceptual and material entanglement of the ways in which this particular landscape was in fact performing me.

According to writer Rebecca Solnit, the act of walking philosophically blurs the boundaries between the body, consciousness and place; that "[w]alking, ideally, is a state in which the mind, the body, and the world are aligned, as though they were three characters finally in conversation together, three notes suddenly making a chord. Walking allows us to be in our bodies and in the world without being made busy by them. It leaves us free to think without being wholly lost in our thoughts."[cxcvi]

In *3580/3590*, the dialogic act of walking [around a condominium complex] transcended the literal experience of moving within a given place by entangling the

bodily experience of site with the locational experience of Being. After four hours of walking, however, I lost interest in the aesthetics of site, and instead became curious about the spatial conditions of place and how they performed my body and the paper under my feet.

Drawing from Elizabeth Grosz's argument that the body is a site of embodied subjectivity, I began to understand how the locational and experiential relationship between my body and site can work to resist traditional art historically influenced models of purely human centric performance art. Through a dialogical exchange between mind, body and world, the act of walking was no longer about the enactment of moving, but rather about an embodiment of the materiality of place.

In "Bodies-Cities," Grosz suggests that place, particularly the city, functions as a stage on which culture and the social body are constructed and performed. In her own words, "…the form, structure, and norms of the city seep into and effect all of the other elements that go into the constitution of corporeality and/as subjectivity."[cxcvii] The entangled state of site and space that Grosz speaks of is one of the many relationships that inherently informs my investigations of doing materials vis-à-vis material doings. Thus, drawing from the belief that place also embodies and enacts a form of agency, *3580/3590* translates into a material investigation of locational, spatial and experiential belonging.

In a more recent reinvention of locational performativity, I placed a blue painted piece of paper at the entrance of my bedroom door. Between October 25, 2011 and October 25, 2012, the paper engaged in a situational and locational performance. Entitled *In and Out [365 Days Into My Bedroom]* (2012) (Figure 23), the hope was to visually complicate material agency through a documentation of the ephemeral. Grounded in a

discourse of site-specific performance, the 'drawing' troubles models of representation through a palimpsest-like erasure and layering of time and place.

In a practice of spatial and platial performativity, the distinction between performance and documentation becomes blurred through what Nick Kaye terms the threat of representation; "[h]ere, where the site cannot be read, represented, or thought without the very mapping which threatens its erasure, the site's *documentation* is used to foreground the paradoxes of representation itself."[cxcviii] In response to my questions surrounding material agency via models of posthumanist performativity, the issues of representation and documentation inform the ways in which I negotiate the materiality of performance. *What is a work of art? Is ART the moment of an act? Is ART the material result of an act? Or do the act and the result of the act exist within two separate spaces that are in and of themselves each performative?*

The need to understand these material and philosophical distinctions, as well as the functions of performance, the performative, the document and representation has become an on-going challenge in my practice. In the *Citing Series* (2012-2013), for example, *Citing I: Armor* (2012) (Figure 24), and *Citing IV* (2013) (Figure 25)], I literally tried to practice methods of performativity through a citational and material process of reiteration. Through the act of unhooking a rug, or rather a domestic signifier for home, I produced a collection of works that cite one another, reenact one another, and ultimately, transform one another.

Drawing from Butler's claim that performativity exemplifies a citational process of reiteration [in the construction of an identity], I appropriated a model of material citationality to understand the ways in which matter, such as a rug, can become

transformative, both individually, and in a group. Whether it be the original rug, the handmade paper molded from the rug, the erased handmade paper, the [photographic] representation of the handmade paper or the traced stencil of the rug, each piece, a quotation of the original source, is redefined through a material process of performativity.

Although the works discussed thus far have clearly mapped a material investigation of the performative nature of place and space, the body has, and continues to be an important site of inquiry in my quest to understand the possibilities of a material methodology. In the *Water[ed] Series* (2012-2013) I am working to blur the performative lines between body and matter. Curious about the ways in which water performs me, and I perform it, I am framing a method of self-referential mark making to understand the aesthetics of being performed vis-à-vis a model of practiced performativity.

In the drawing *Water[ed] Series: [Self-Portrait in Water]* (2013) (Figure 26), I let a paper casting of my body [produced in water] guide the marks that I traced on paper. In keeping with the traditions of self-portraiture, this drawing represents an experiential relationship between my body, place and thingness. Echoed by the ways in which Rebecca Solnit understands walking as a dialogical process between the body, the world and consciousness, *[Self-Portrait in Water]* exemplifies a material and experiential entanglement of Being through an experience of nonhuman matter.

In the context of live performance and body art, the desire to visually understand a state of Being through a citational experience also translated into a participatory entanglement and engagement with a public, a site, my body and the assumptions of what a [gendered] body looks like. In the performance *Make Me Pretty* (2012) (Figure 27), I

invited spectators to make me over with makeup and hair products in an attempt to visualize a performative act of Being. In keeping with the traditions of performances such as *Cut Piece* (1964) (Figure 28) by Yoko Ono, *Make Me Pretty* theoretically epitomizes the Western traditions of performance art-as-event. Although the production of an event is not what is of interest to me, it was necessary in this instance to introduce other bodies into the investigation for the purpose of multiplicity - I wanted to be marked, performed, specifically by other bodies.

Inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of Being-as-event, this performance-as-event staged a dialogical experience of Being vis-à-vis an aesthetic makeover of my face. Embedded within theories of dialogism and feminist criticism surrounding subjectivity and the boundaries of the experiential, this performance proposed to negotiate how *Being* is produced.

In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin explains that an identity, the *I* in question, is ultimately a *product* of a performed act (of aesthetic seeing) and that Being, therefore, is interdependent on the experience of Being-as-event; "[t]he attempt to find oneself in the product of the act/deed of aesthetic seeing is an attempt to cast oneself into non-Being, an attempt to give up both my self-activity from my own unique place located outside any aesthetic being and the full actualization of it in Being-as-event. The performed act/deed of aesthetic seeing rises above any aesthetic being - a product of that act – and is part of a different world: it enters into the actual unity of Being-as-event, bringing the aesthetic world as well into communion with Being in the capacity of a constituent moment."[cxcix]

Rooted in a dialogical methodology, Bakhtin argues that the *I* is an identity that is cognitively contingent on the emotional tone and aesthetics of all that co-exists and communicates with the subject; that Being is dependent upon a participatory, interactive, and ultimately dialogical entanglement.[cc] Subsequently, Being signifies a state of two-sided answerability in which an identity is symbolic of a social subject and a singular existence. Therefore, through a material investigation of the dialogical body, I invited the participants of the event to *remake* me using makeup. While sitting on a stool, I *became* a mannequin, and essentially a site on which to practice an exchange of *Being*.

In an earlier essay "Practicing Performativity: Tracing the Foundations of Performative Art vis-à-vis a Discourse of Material Agency," I deconstructed the performance *Make Me Pretty* through a Butlerian lens in order to map a philosophical understanding of an act of Being through what I consider a practice of performativity.[cci] Provoked by the question *how can one engage with nonhuman matter [in visual arts] if a model of the performative is not yet taken up in feminist theories of performativity and performance art*, I considered a philosophical investigation of the ways in which nonhuman materials, such as makeup, *do* onto the body – my body; "[i]n the realm of visual arts, the term *performativity* has arguably become an umbrella term for all that is considered to be transformative. Traditionally associated with the idea that the body is an active agent through which consciousness and meaning are created and disseminated, performativity is often linked with the performed and communicative aesthetics of the body. In other words, that the body, as an active agent, becomes a portal through which linguistic, representational and semiotic signifiers are performed."[ccii]

In her writings, Butler argues that gender is produced through a repetition of ritualized acts. If this is true, does an aesthetic citation in which *woman, feminine*, and/or *femininity* become embodied through the application of makeup prove a theory of performativity? The problem with this question is that my feelings [of being a woman] were not experienced through an aesthetic transformation of my face. Instead, my feelings of *becoming* a *woman* were rooted in the sensation of the materials *used*: the lipstick on my lips, and eye shadow on my eyelids.

In the context of what I consider a material methodology, does the experience of being performed by makeup then suggest that matter is agential, and therefore, performative? With every layer of makeup that was applied to my face, it became clear that it was not the participant who was performing me, but rather a set of interdependent conditions – the participant, the lipstick, the eye shadow and the blush that transformed too into performative matter during the event.

To further complicate the aesthetics of Being [in performance art], I invited the public to help me trace, in *Tracing Thirty* (2013) (Figure 29) a media-inspired representation of a body, a gender and an age. During the live drawing event, I traced Jenna Rink, played by Jennifer Garner in the film *13 Going on 30*, on the Visual Voice Art Gallery's walls during the 2013 edition of Nuit Blanche.

Originally conceptualized in 2008 when I turned 30 years old, the piece is about my search for a role model. Echoing June Gow's concern for the state of the female role model [in North America] and my apprehensions and insecurities about labeling my own identity, I started drafting what has since become *Tracing Thirty*.

Originally proposed as an event in which I wanted to complicate the aesthetics of a media-generated image of a thirty-year old woman, the 98-minute long performance transformed into a stage on which bodies were reenacting both the character projected on the wall, and me chasing her with a pencil. In keeping with a copy-cat style of mimesis, the performance transformed into a reenactment of me reenacting Jenna Rink.

After six hours of live drawing, the final 'product' was a blend of abstract mark making and youth-inspired wall graffiti. Although almost beautiful as an aesthetic experience of a projected identity, the most interesting element of the performance occurred days after the live event when erasing the traces of time, representation and text off of the walls. At that moment, it became clear that the act of erasure was in fact where the concept of the piece lay.

From conception, the performance sought to work against the traditions of representation in order to understand the performativity of an age, but during its erasure, it was then that the performative interpretation of Rink's body truly started to perform me. Rather than chasing an image on a wall, I became submissive to the stains, words and penises that now decorated my experience of an age and an identity.

To contextualize one's own work is a difficult and precarious task. The intention in writing this text is thus twofold: to help contextualize the actions or agency of materials within making art and to introduce some theoretical frameworks into the art historical debates around performativity, the body, and the site which bring other ways of thinking about performance into being.

In the performative sound installation entitled *Horsing[s]* (2013) (Figure 30) I paired site-specific drawing with the sounds of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police's

horses and stables in Gallery 1313's front courtyard. By blurring the historical distinctions between the building's past, present, and potentially future identities, the piece complicated the ways in which to experience and materialize an address' locational identity. In keeping with the idea that materials are performative, this installation was also concerned with the performativity of architecture. The performativity of time. And the performativity of history.

In the 1930s, 1313 Queen Street West, now the Parkdale Arts and Cultural Centre, housed the Toronto Police Department's Division 6 unit. Home to inmate cells, shooting targets and the stables for the Toronto Mounted Police's horses, the large brick building signified a safe space in what would eventually become a community haunted by crime, drugs and violence.

In the site-specific audio installation *Horsing[s]*, I filled the grounds of the gallery with the shapes and sounds of ghosts past – horses, their voices, and the sounds of their stables. In keeping with the nostalgia of the sounds of history, the animal shapes acted as reminders of the past all the while recalling the presence of a crime scene – a sadly familiar image often associated with the Parkdale neighbourhood today.

Currently, this address houses art galleries and studio spaces sponsored by Artscape. No longer a zone that once protected a community, the site of *Horsing[s]* instead aims to foster community through collectivity and collaboration. Under the mandate of an artist-run center, Gallery 1313 hosts a variety of events, exhibitions and activities that bring together local and international artists, critics, and scholars to work towards a shared belief that making art can re-make, and re-build a sense of community.

Collaboration, whether with things or with histories, continues to influence how I think about material agency and performative art today. In parallel to my ongoing investigation of the argument that *materials do in a studio practice*, I am curious about the ways in which the spaces within collaborations activate relationships, human connections versus nonhuman connections, and architectural embodiments.

In the humanities, the very concept of collaboration signifies what Pranee Liamputtong and Jean Rumbold understand as the foundation of knowledge production. Challenged by the limitations of unidisciplinarity, they look to multidisciplinarity as the only space in which many researchers [and artists] can come together to produce entangled methods of making meaning.

By making clear distinctions between multi, inter, intra and trans, they develop a definition for multidisciplinarity as a disciplinary space in which many kinds of researchers can come together to create, make and practice ways of thinking and doing; "[o]ne admirable motivation encouraging multidisciplinary research is to bring experts from divergent disciplines and perceptions together in order to confront a research question from all angles. The disciplines represented within the health and social sciences, and those related through the 'determinants of health', are many. They represent what many authors view as a hierarchy of professions but also a hierarchy of research methodologies."[cciii]

In the spirit of a multidisciplinary collaboration, the conference panel "*Making Meaning* /Exploring Research Praxis in the Academy" which included a grouping of artists, curators, and scholars Scott Marsden, Erica Grimm, Barbara Meneley, Didier Morelli, and myself, addressed questions and concerns surrounding practice-led research

in the academy - a term that Grimm prefers over the word academia. Initiated by Marsden who has grown tired of the omission of the consideration for artistic research in the art history conference circuit, the panel was invited by the Universities Art Association of Canada to push the boundaries of the ways in which to think about art practice vis-à-vis contemporary models of knowledge production.

My paper, "Practicing Research-creation: *What*? *How*? *Why*?" was as much a historical account of practice-led research as it was a *raison d'être* for the ways in which I practice making, or what I prefer to name *doing* in the studio. As an artist engaged with academic models of thinking, and writing, I draw from my studio practice to ground the argument that making art translates into methods of making meaning and disseminating knowledge, inside and outside of the atelier. In keeping with John Chandler and Lucy Lippard who, in 1968, wrote "[s]ometime in the near future it may be necessary for the writer to be an artist as well as for the artist to be a writer,"[cciv] I believe that now, more than ever, it is necessary to recognize that makers are thinkers, and vice versa. Therefore, specific to my contribution on the panel was a consideration of the question: *can an artist be a maker and a scholar?*

Complemented by other more "traditional" papers that morning, the most important and arguably necessary moment of intervention occurred during Meneley's collaborative performance, which I am entitling *Connecting*. Standing in a circle, all of the panelists along with all of the spectators in the room engaged in an activity of *connecting* with each other via a ball of red string. For instance, if two people shared a connection such as both living in Toronto, they tethered themselves with red string. After

20 minutes of forming a variety of connections, the circle transformed into a frame for a complicated web of relationships, commonalities and shared interests.

Although intrigued by this so-called method of materially transcending the lines of human connection, I am, however, more interested in the spaces activated within each connection. More than lines, to reference Tim Ingold, each piece of string transforms into an embodied engagement between two people. They connect, they trace, and they perform the ways in which two people connect. Furthermore, the red lines within the so-called dialogical web shapes the spaces in which each relationship is activated. Never singular, never untouched, and never unconnected, each line becomes an agent within the circle that is ultimately performative through its materially-discursive entanglement of line, space and human connection.

In the introduction to this thesis, I situate my argument that materials *do* in a studio practice within the notion that lines are performative, both in drawing, installation and performance. *To conceive drawing as such is to understand that drawing materials – such as paper, graphite, space, place, and even sound – do. Materially, drawing is more than the act of producing and organizing lines. Lines do more than describe the traces of a gesture or a thing. They embody an action, a time, a site, as well as the experience of making.*

In parallel to my research and studio practice, I am currently working on the piece *Through Connections* - a performative drawing-turned-installation about material agency that will take the form of a 20 foot-long vinyl wall to floor drawing to be installed in the upcoming two-person exhibition [with Didier Morelli] entitled *A Conversation Piece* scheduled to open at PDA Projects in Ottawa in May 2015. Because the work is

currently in progress, I do not have an image of the work. However, to help provide a visual image of the kinds of lines that I am working from and thinking about, I want to conclude with a detail of Barbara Meneley's collaborative performance *Connecting* (Figure 31).

After the original performance, the red web was laid to rest on the ground causing the lines to become less taught, and thus more organic in nature. In my interpretation, I will in fact lie under the exchange of connections in order to trace their taught linearity – trace their interactions – and trace their performativity. Based on my drawing of the performance, I will transform the paper-based recording into a site-specific white linear installation that will bleed from the white gallery wall onto the brown tiled floor in order to invite new participants into the space of the web to *do* with old connections and perform new lines.

Reminiscent of the ways in which breast milk performs the viewer in *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*; how the space of place begins to entangle the body in *High Plane V*, and the navigational performativity of smell in *Untitled (99 44/ 100% Pure*, I understand the materials that I use in my studio practice, whether snow, the environment, history, or lines, as material agents that perform my body, and potentially other bodies, both human and nonhuman. And although this claim seems an obvious one among makers of all kinds, it is difficult to reconcile such a notion within the discourse of Western art history because the body continues to be privileged as the main source and force for everything performance-based and subsequently performative. But, when reconsidered through a material feminist and scientific lens, the distinctions between human agency and nonhuman agency become blurred and ultimately less obvious. The

challenge going forward will be to push these so-called *blurrings* in the studio and continue to challenge the traditional vocabulary that frames the natures and functions of materials in an artist's studio – starting first and foremost in mine.

Conclusion

"Therefore...materials *matter*"

In my current position as an emerging scholar in a department of art history and theory, I make an important distinction at the beginning of every semester – I am an artist engaged with models of practice-led research. I am an art historian. I am a curator. And I am a writer whose contribution grows out of my training and practice as a visual artist. Unique to my pedagogical approach towards thinking, making, writing, and teaching, is my belief that material practices, such as studio arts and performance, are models that push the conceptual boundaries of making and disseminating meaning, both in academia, and the everyday. In other words – that making *matters*, that doing *matters*, and that materials *matter*.

Although the argument that materials in a studio practice *matter* is initially an abstract concept to consider as well as practice, what has proven even more challenging while drafting this manuscript is understanding the scientific component of Karen Barad's notion of posthumanist performativity. In her feminist-inspired research in quantum physics, Barad, through Niels Bohr's philosophy-physics, has outlined a theoretical model for the argument that nonhuman matter [phenomenon] begins to embody performativity through methods of intra-activity - what she described as moments of entangled transformance.

For example, through material-discursive practices [apparatuses], she explains that nonhuman matter, or rather a thing, undergoes a material and dynamic reconfiguration [through embodiment] transforming from neutral object into an agential force. In the realm of visual arts and performance studies, a similar analogy can be

appropriated for shifting the ways in which nonhuman materials, such as taste, space and smell, are practiced and experienced in contemporary performance art, installation art, and site-specific sensorial interventions. Or at least that has been the intention in this dissertation.

Is Painting Still Dead?

As I described in the introduction, in 2006 I stopped painting, not because I was no longer interested in the medium, or because I was challenged by the materiality of paint, but because I was unable to materially reconcile the entangled relationships between experience, representation and matter. In what I thought were transcendental interpretations of the space of place vis-à-vis my personal negotiation of locational identity, my abstract scapes were instead labeled as illustrative, and descriptive – two "bad" words in my creative vocabulary. Out of partial frustration, and partial determination, I ventured into the world of performative art via performance in order to make *sense* of material embodiment. In other words, I needed to feel how place, space, climate, and time did onto me because I was unable to understand how painting could possibly do.

Ironically, that same year – 2006 – art historian Jim Mooney asked the very same question in his essay entitled "Painting: Poignancy and Ethics" - "[h]ow is painting doing?"[ccv] Provoked by many historical rumors surrounding the death of painting - rumours that Mooney attributes to the wrath of formalism embedded within the crisis of representation that spun out of control during the 1980s, according to Roland Barthes in *Mythologies*, Mooney argues that if painting is ever going to resurrect from its art

historical obituaries, that it must conceptually transform into a material hybrid that parallels models of the apparatus – open-ended practices that reconfigure the world around it. "Some cultural commentators would have us believe that painting, if it is to have a continued cultural role, needs to open itself to various forms of contamination by other, purportedly more vital, practices in order to renew and extend its own vitality, in a somewhat forlorn bid to secure a foothold in the future. The demand is that painting move from some notional and moribund purity to a condition of fashionable hybridity, where painting is dilated and brings other modes of practice under the purview of its discourse."[ccvi] In other words, that painting must move beyond its physical and metaphorical frame if it is ever going to challenge modern methods of visual inquiry.

The practice and theoretical distinctions between performance, performative and performativity continue to be difficult terms and concepts to reconcile, in the studio, and in writing, but when I stopped painting, it slowly became easier to understand the ways in which they potentially differ [still] from one another. In my experience, I used paint to fill a surface, to produce an image, and to textually bring life to two-dimensional representations. At that point in my practice, I did not understand how I could embody a thing or an experience through paint. How to entangle the experience of my environment, the theme of locational identity, and the materiality of paint was a foreign concept to grasp, and an even harder tangible image to imagine. Like Mooney – I was challenged by the notion that paint could *do*.

Upon transitioning into performance art, the necessity to distinguish between performance, the performative and the concept of an event became arguably more important because the traditions of performance art, which are deeply rooted in

discourses of the gendered body, perpetually challenged how, and why I used my body. In the past, women artists such as Carolee Schneemann, Marina Abramovic, and Yoko Ono appropriated their often [naked] bodies to destabilize the Western stereotypes that have omitted women artists from the canon of fine arts, as well as limited the ways in which women artists were considered within history.

Likened to political acts of insertion, women performance artists, to whom I looked to for artistic guidance, were complicating the sexual and material exploitation of the female body in art by inserting themselves into the American art landscape of the Sixties. However, because my reasons for performing, or rather *doing* performance were very different from theirs, I felt it necessary to redefine the parameters of performance in my practice in order to satisfy my material concerns and needs inside the studio.

Performance, a historically and politically loaded term, medium and indeed, worldview in and of itself, was in fact not the ideal method through which to consider the relationship between my practice and locational identity. In fact, after performing pieces such as *Winged*, *Making Winter*, and *Welcome*, it became abundantly clear that my growing issues with performance were not necessarily rooted in a need to act out an event or stage a public gesture, but that performance, or at least how I understood it, instead initiated a space in which to exchange and negotiate agency - both human, and nonhuman agency. Therefore, rather than describing my work as performance, I started to qualify my work as performative.

Drawing from John L. Austin's linguistic and semiotic readings of performativity and his argument that words *do* in the philosophy of language, Judith Butler's theories that gender is a performative act that is born out of repeated acts of citationality; and

Amelia Jones' complication of body art versus performance art versus performative art via the ways in which women artists use their bodies to embody political power in and outside of the museum, I originally became very interested in the word *doing*. Although writing from very different disciplines and theoretical perspectives, all three thinkers, with respect to their own research and writing, proposed to parallel the term performativity with the notion of agency through the concept of *doing – doing* words, *doing* language, *doing* gender, and *doing* feminism.

Going forward in my practice and research, although still provoked by the various ways in which I could parallel methods of doing with my investigation of locational identity, my drawings, performative acts and installations remained caught between superficial material explorations of the space of place and the representation of an experience. And although I was very aware of the challenges in my studio, it became increasingly difficult to reconcile the relationships between doing and experience in my writing.

As described earlier, only after studying Karen Barad's theories surrounding posthumanist performativity, and the argument that matter begins to *matter* through models of intra-activity did it become clear that the task, in my practice and writing, was not an aesthetic one, not a material one, nor a philosophical one, but that the transition from material representation to material agency lay in the transformative methods of embodiment. For example, in order to truly understand the ways in which my new climate was doing onto me, I needed to physically, psychically and materially experience it. Thus, I performed snow angels in white paint on my studio floor.

Upon coming to these preliminary conclusions, I started to experience and interpret other examples of contemporary art quite differently by re-imagining how artists themselves *did* with materials and how the materials subsequently *did* onto other bodies. In the form of case studies, I deconstruct and consider three very different methods of materials agency in contemporary art, as well as challenge the ways in which materials, in contemporary art practice, recall the modern art historical traditions of objecthood.

In my experience of Jess Dobkin's *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*, I examined how milk embodies performativity in performance art. In 2006, I participated in the live event – what looked like a cocktail bar-turned-breast milk lounge – was offered breast milk shots, and then refused them. Physically, emotionally and socially uncomfortable with the concept of drinking another woman's breast milk, I left the event asking one important question: *who was the artist in the performance?* Jess Dobkin? Or the variety of breast milk samples that were distributed on silver platters to every "customer" in the room?

In my focus on a locational matter of concern – the space of place, I investigated Katrin Sigurdardottir's installation *High Plane V* and how it exemplifies an important shift within "platial" agency proving that site does onto the human body similarly to the ways in which the body performs [in a] place. Through a modernist human geographical lens, Edward Casey, Henri Lefebvre, and Michel de Certeau work through the concept that place is not merely a container for space, but that place is relational, dialogical and ultimately, an agent which is also performative through the ways in which it performs the human body. Thus, spatial theory, and human geography, coupled with Claire Bishop's writings on installation art helps to reframe how the entanglement between body, material

and place in Sigurdardottir's piece exemplifies my claim that site embodies material agency in contemporary art practice.

The material and the sensorial highlights Kim Faler's site-specific sensorial intervention entitled *Untitled (99 44/100%)* staged at the Mass MoCA in 2011-2012. After destroying a corner section of dry wall in the museum, the artist mounted what appeared at first to be a wall frame – or rather her attempt to rebuild and renovate the construction site-turned-art gallery. However, in comparison to most workspaces, this particular one had a smell, and it embodied its own identity, its own character, its own qualities, and its own power.

The smell of white tea and ginger not only decorated the scent of the institutional air in the museum, it also choreographed the viewer's body. Like a museum usher, the smell guided individuals in and around the space of the gallery as well as welcomed the viewer into the renovation. Only at that point was the mystery solved – the smell emanated from the soap-casted wall frame.

The performativity of smell, a concept more often explored in fields such as sensorial anthropology, philosophy, and phenomenology has received less attention and consideration in contemporary visual arts. Thus, through the writings of Constance Classen, Plato, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the sensorial relationships between the body and the material world experience a shift in material agency through the ways in which smell, in this example, does onto the body. For example, in my experience of the work, the aroma in the room moved my body, affected my emotional state, as well as my interactions with other bodies. In other words, smell was not neutral – it embodied a performative ability to *do* in the installation.

Finally, in my concluding chapter, “Art as Entanglement - Entanglement as Art” I borrow concepts from all three case studies to help ground and reframe the material negotiations in my own practice. In keeping with Jim Mooney who called for a material and conceptual shift in painting, in its production, its exhibition and its canonization, the three examples I have explored somehow give me the permission to further complicate my relationship with nonhuman matter beyond the traditions of painting.

Although I have struggled since venturing into performance and the realm of the performative with the notion of *performativity*, as well as the ways in which to practice *performativity*, it continues to become a little clearer everyday what it means for a material, such as line, paper and place to exemplify material agency. Moreover, the concept of material agency vis-à-vis art history and art criticism becomes less abstract, and more relevant in that the entanglement between art, science, anthropology, and philosophy, to name a few disciplines, is becoming more and more popular, albeit in academia, the conference circuit, art criticism or the museum.

“Materials *Matter*: The Politics of Posthumanist Performativity in Contemporary Studio Practice” is a timely and necessary inquiry needed going forward if artists are going to continue blurring the linguistic, material, philosophical and scientific boundaries between making things, making meaning, and subsequently making matter *matter*. Because it is no longer enough to claim that materials *do* in the studio, or the museum, what is at stake today is arguably the future of material-discursive practices within art criticism, contemporary art history, material feminism, and science studies. *Mattering* can no longer be limited to the making of art, or other material things, from any one subject or view point. In fact, all makers, albeit makers based in a studio or a laboratory,

must take into consideration the dynamics of intra-action and what such intra-actions make possible; "[w]hat is needed is a posthumanist performative account of the material-discursive practices of mattering (including those that get labeled "scientific" and those that get labeled "social"."[ccvii] Thus, in the words of contemporary art historian Marie Fraser, *the work ahead of us* lies not in the naming of the material, or the method of mattering, but rather in the understanding that all materials *matter*.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

[i] Tim Ingold, *Lines : A Brief History*. (London and New York : Routledge Press, 2007), 5.

[ii] Karen Barad, (2003), "Posthumanist Performativity : Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." In *Material Feminisms*. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman. Ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis : Indiana University Press, 2008), 136.

[iii] In this dissertation, I draw from Karen Barad's definition of posthumanist performativity to help recontextualize the ways in which I name, understand and practice materials in a studio practice. Ibid. 126.

[iv] "Matter is not a support, location, referent, or source of sustainability for discourse. Matter is not immutable or passive. It does not require the mark of an external force like culture or history to complete it. Matter is always already an ongoing historicity." Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway : Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. (London : Duke University Press, 2007), 151.

[v] Carolee Schneemann, "Artist Talk." Talk presented at Concordia University, Montreal, QC, October 16, 2012.

[vi] According to Karen Barad, "... the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the "distinct" agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense." Barad, (2007), 33.

[vii] Ibid. 54.

[viii] Ibid. 247.

[ix] Barad, (2003), 126.

[x] According to Pickering, "[o]ne of the most attractive features of the actor-network approach is that its acknowledgment of material agency can help us to escape from the spell of representation. Traditional accounts of science take it for granted that the end of science is to produce representations of how the world really is; in contrast, admitting a role for material agency points to the fact that, in common with technology, science can also be seen as a realm of instruments, devices, machines, and substances that act, perform, and do things in the material world." Andrew Pickering, "The Mangle of Practice : Agency and Emergence in the Sociology of Science." In *The Science Studies Reader*. Mario Biagoli, Ed. (New York : Routledge, 1999), 563.

[xi] John L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*. (Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 1962), 6.

[xii] Barad, (2007), 26.

[xiii] Ibid. 87.

[xiv] Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory*. (London and New York : Routledge, 1988), 321.

[xv] Judith Butler, (1993) *Bodies That Matter : On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* (London and New York : Routledge, 2011), xv.

[xvi] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution : An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," (1988), 527.

[xvii] Butler, (1993), 7.

[xviii] In the influential text *Performance Theory*, Richard Schechner describes the moment during which reality and performance meet as being transformative : "[m]aking art is the process of transforming raw experience into palatable forms."[xviii] Quite literally, he understands performance in relation to the body that it represents; "[p]erformance is an illusion of an illusion and, as such, might be considered more 'truthful', more 'real' than ordinary experience."[xviii] In other words, he is concerned with the ability to communicate reality through a human gesture. Schechner, xix.

[xix] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance : A New Aesthetics*. Translated by Saskya Iris Jain. (London and New York : Routledge Press, 2008), 12.

[xx] Ibid. 92.

[xxi] Bonnie Marranca, *Performance Histories*. (New York : PAJ Publications, 2008), 3.

[xxii] Ibid. 119.

[xxiii] Barad, (2003), 130.

[xxiv] Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman. Ed. *Material Feminisms*. (Bloomongton and Indianapolis : Indiana University Press, 2008), 7.

[xxv] Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet*. (Minneapolis and London : University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 4.

[xxvi] Idem.

[xxvii] Ibid. 41.

[xxviii] Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto : Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. (Chicago : Prickly Paradigm, 2003), 4.

[xxix] In her own words : "I would like a doctrine of embodied objectivity that accommodates paradoxical and critical feminist science projects: feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledge's*." Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women : The Reinvention of Nature*. (New York : Routledge, 1991),188.

[xxx] Ibid. 190.

[xxxi] Idem.

[xxxii] Pickering, (1999), 561.

[xxxiii] Ibid. 567.

[xxxiv] "The aim of this book is to change "landscape" from a noun to a verb. It asks that we think of landscape, not as an object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed." W.J.T. Mitchell, Ed. *Landscape and Power*. (Chicago and London : Chicago University Press, 1994), 1.

[xxxv] Although Claire Bishop does not directly make reference to material agency in her analysis of installation art, she does suggest that the materials within an installation embody a certain power within the space of the work; "[a]n installation of art is secondary in importance to the individual works it contains, while in a work of installation art, the space, and the ensemble of elements within it, are regarded in their entirety as a singular entity. Installation art creates a situation into which the viewer physically enters, and insists that you regard this as a singular totality." Claire Bishop, *Installation Art : A Critical History*. (New York : Routledge, 2005), 6.

[xxxvi] Susan Cross, *Invisible Cities*, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA, April 12, 2012 – February 4, 2013.

[xxxvii] The term *objecthood* is rooted in Michael Fried's text *Art and Objecthood* in which he frames art history inside a hierarchical model that celebrates the art object, and

therefore the artist as maker. By way of negation, performance art, therefore, does not produce an object (according to his definition of object) and therefore is less valuable. Michael Fried. *Art and Objecthood*. Chicago and London : The University of Chicago Press, 1967, 1-8.

[xxxviii] Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma : The Cultural History of Smell*. (New York and London : Routledge, 1994), 1.

[xxxix] Ibid. 3.

[xl] Amelia Jones, *Body Art : Performing the Subject*. (London and Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

Chapter One: "Milk *Does* the Body"

[xli] According to Curator Charles Reeve from the Ontario College of Art and Design Professional Art Gallery, controversy follows the Toronto-based performance artist Jess Dobkin. In his essay "The Kindness of Human Milk : Jess Dobkin's *Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*," Reeve situates the performance within a long history of controversial acts performed by Dobkin; "[s]tirring the pot of controversy comes easily to Dobkin, who, for more than a decade, has infused her performances with sex and humour. Her early piece *Eat Out* (1996) introduced food into this mix by capping an evening of performance and dining with "a live cunt-eating contest for dessert." Charles Reeve, "The Kindness of Human Milk : Jess Dobkin's *Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*." *Gastronomica*. Winter 2009, 70.

[xlii] Six women, including the Toronto-based artist Jess Dobkin, donated breast milk for pasteurization and sampling. Each sample was listed on a tasting menu under a specific name: *Passion's Legacy*, *Sweet Fall Harvest*, *Life Force Elixir*, *Temple of the Goddess*, *Straight Up with a Twist* and *Truth Serum #9*. *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar* Tasting Menu. Courtesy of the artist. April 10, 2014.

[xliii] Kenneth Hayes, *Milk and Melancholy*. (Toronto and Cambridge : Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art, MIT Press, 2008), 153.

[xliv] Barad, "[a]gency is 'doing' or 'being' in its intra-activity. It is the enactment of iterative changes to particular practices – iterative reconfigurings of topological manifolds of spacetime-matter relations – through the dynamics of intra-activity." Barad, (2007), 178.

[xlv] Travis Nygard, "Food and Art" in Albala, Ken. Ed. *Routledge International Handbook of Food Studies*. (London and New York : Routledge, 2013), 171.

[xlvi] Erwin Panofsky, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline." (1940) In *Art History and Its Methods : A Critical Anthology*. Eric Fernie. Ed. (London : Phaidon Press, 1995), 190.

[xlvii] Nygard, "A food-related iconological analysis might strive to understand whether it is important that the rolls of bread on the table are shown uneaten, that empty plates and bowls are shown carefully placed in front of disciples, that wine glasses are all shown half full, that some fruits and vegetables are shown scattered on the tablecloth, and that two platters appear to contain the main course. The scholar would ultimately argue that the artist used the biblical text as a starting point, but that the painting also represents a new understanding of food geared toward the patron and viewer," 171.

[xlviii] Rebecca Herzig, "On Performance, Productivity and Vocabularies of Motive in Recent Studies of Science." *Feminist Theory*. 2004, 5.
[xlix] Schechner, 127.
[l] Ibid. 162.
[li] Ibid. 321.
[lii] Barad, (2007), 133.
[liii] "Matter is neither fixed and given nor the mere end result of different processes. Matter is produced and productive, generated and generative. Matter is agentive, not a fixed essence or property of things. Mattering is differentiating, and which differences come to matter, matter in the iterative production of different differences." Barad, (2007), 137.
[liv] Barad, (2003), 133.
[lv] Ibid. 150.
[lvi] Barad, (2007), 140.
[lvii] Jane Bennett*, Vibrant Matter : A Political Ecology of Things*. (London : Duke University Press, 2010), 21.
[lviii] Ibid. 20.
[lix] Idem.
[lx] Idem.
[lxi] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Translated by Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 22-23.
[lxii] Idem.
[lxiii] Bennett*,* 23.
[lxiv] Ibid. 21.
[lxv] Ibid. 49.
[lxvi] Leon Kass, *The Hungry Soul : Eating and the Perfecting of Our Nature*. (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1994), 47-48.
[lxvii] Barad, (2007), 3.
[lxviii] Ibid. 24.
[lxix] Ibid. 215.
[lxx] Monica Casper, "Reframing and Grounding Nonhuman Agency : What Makes a Fetus an Agent? *American Behavioral Scientist*. 37 (6) : 839-856, 840.
[lxxi] Barad, (2007), 169.
[lxxii] Ibid. 171-172.
[lxxiii] Ibid. 170.
[lxxiv] Ibid. 134-135.
[lxxv] Ibid. 217.
[lxxvi] Ibid. 140.
[lxxvii] Ibid. 335.
[lxxviii] Misha Kavka, "Introduction," In *Feminist Consequences : Theory for the New Century*. Elisabeth Bronfen and Misha Kavka, Ed. (New York : Columbia University Press, 2001), xiv.
[lxxix] Butler, (1988).
[lxxx] Butler, (1993), 15.

[lxxxi] Ibid. 10.
[lxxxii] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight*, (Berkeley : California University Press, 1993), 171.
[lxxxiii] Butler, (1993), 1.
[lxxxiv] Ibid. 521.
[lxxxv] Alice B. Toklas was an early rebel in the field of gastronomic literature. A self identified lesbian, and queer modern epicure, Toklas consistently blurred the gendered lines between scholarly writing, and domestic food writing by dissolving the boundaries between so-called cookbook writing and gastronomical writing. For example, in addition to inserting recipes into her narrative, she freely moved between the personal and the public to create what today would be called a foodie travelogue. By challenging the power of the male voice in this field, Toklas was not only redefining the ways in which women were involved with gastronomy, but more importantly she was challenging the performative relationship between food, gender and sexuality in the everyday. "... Toklas figures herself as a queer modern epicure – equally at ease in the home kitchen as in the most elite restaurants. Her self-presentation calls into question and reconfigures the nineteenth and early twentieth-century ideologies that defined gastronomy and gastronomic tourism as male pursuits and domestic cookery as feminine endeavor." Alice L. McLean, *Aesthetic Pleasure in Twentieth-Century Women's Food Writing : The Innovative Appetites of M.F.K Fisher, Alice B. Toklas, and Elizabeth David.* (London and New York : Routledge, 2012), 93.
[lxxxvi] Ibid. 1.
[lxxxvii] Ibid. 142.
[lxxxviii] Ibid. 150.
[lxxxix] Barad. (2007), 151.
[xc] Ibid. 209.
[xci] Actants, according to Bruno Latour, represent a "source of action; an actant can be human or not, or, most likely, a combination of both…as 'something that acts or to which activity is granted by others." Bruno Latour, "On Actor-Network Theory : A Few Clarifications." Soziale Welt : 47, no. 4, 1996, 369-381.

Chapter Two: "Hom[ing] Site, or Being Home[d]"
[xcii] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders : Decolonozing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. (Durham and London : Duke University Press, 2003), 126.
[xciii] Curators Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher reference Barbara Fischer's use of the term "museum intervention" in her presentation at the forum for MUSEOPATHY, Kingston, June 24, 2001. Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher, "MUSEOPATHY." In *MUSEOPATHY*. (Kingston : Agnes Etherington Centre, Queen's University in association with DisplayCult, 2001), 15.
[xciv] Ibid. 14.
[xcv] In *Feminism Without Borders : Decolonozing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* Chandra Talpade Mohanty parallels her desire to belong and be 'at home' with the political challenges of being a Other, a woman, a woman of color and a woman from a different race in the West. In the context of my research, this thesis shares a similar understanding that the space of place, the space of home and the space of belonging ultimately perform

the body. Deeply embedded within postcolonial and transnational feminist discourses, Mohanty argues that one's locational identity is deeply rooted within one's cultural, economic, political and social experience of belonging; "[b]ut location, for feminists, necessarily implies self – as well as collection definition, since meaning of the self are inextricably bound up with our understanding of collectives as social agents." Ibid. 122.

[xcvi] Bishop, (2005), 102.

[xcvii] Ibid. 6.

[xcviii] Mitchell, 1.

[xcix] Caroline A. Jones, "Introduction." In *Sensorium : Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art*. Jones, Caroline A., Bill Arning. Eds. (Cambridge : MIT Press: MIT List Visual Arts Center, 2006), 2.

[c] Donna J. Harraway. "Compoundings." In *Sensorium : Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art*. Jones, Caroline A., Bill Arning. Eds. (Cambridge : MIT Press : MIT List Visual Arts Center, 2006), 119.

[ci] Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place : A Philosophical History*. (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1997), x.

[cii] Ibid. x-xi.

[ciii] Aristotle, *Physics*. Translated by R.P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye, 350BC, 21-22.

[civ] Casey, 69-70.

[cv] Ibid. 243-244.

[cvi] Idem.

[cvii] Ibid. x.

[cviii] By shifting the argument that place is representational into a discourse of the experiential, Casey is proposing to complicate, through a Foucauldian model, the concept that place and space are assimilated, arguing instead that each [historically and conceptually] embody different roles; "[i]f it is true that there is a genuine genealogy of space – and, mutatis mutandis, of place – then we cannot maintain that place or space is simply one kind of thing, to be discovered and described once and for all. Not only is space not absolute and place not permanent, but the conception of each is subject to the most extensive historical vicissitudes." Ibid. 297.

[cix] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, 16, (Spring 1986), 22.

[cx] Ibid. 3.

[cxi] Ibid. 24.

[cxii] Marc Augé, *Non-Places : Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. (London and New York : Verso, 1995), 86.

[cxiii] Ibid. 95.

[cxiv] Ibid. 58.

[cxv] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. (Berkley : University of California Press, 1984), 2.

[cxvi] In the essay "Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World," Bruno Latour too draws attention to the political distinctions between human and nonhuman forces in society (the laboratory) arguing that such structures, or rather *platial* binaries, must be dissolved if knowledge is to be produced, practiced, and disseminated. "Once all these displacements and transformations are taken into account, the distinction between the macrosocial level and the level of laboratory science appears fuzzy or even non-existent.

Indeed, laboratories are built to destroy this distinction. Once it is dissolved, a few people can inside their insulated walls work on things that can change the daily life of the multitudes. No matter if they are economists, physicists, geographers, epidemiologists, accountants, microbiologists, they make all the other objects on such a scale – maps, economic models, figures, tables, diagrams- that they can gain strength, reach incontrovertible conclusions, and then extend on a larger scale the conclusions that seem favorable to them. *It* is a political process. *It* is *not* a political process. It is since they gain a source of power. It is not since it is a source of fresh power that escapes the routine and easy definition of a stated political power. Give me a laboratory and I will move society," I said, parodying Archimedes." Bruno Latour, "Give Me a Laboratory and I Will Raise the World." In *Science Observed*. K.D. Knorr-Cetina and M.J. Mulkay. Eds. (Beverley Hills : Sage, 1983), 167.

[cxvii] Ibid. 103.

[cxviii] In 1974, Lefebvre challenged the trends in spatial theory arguing that Foucault "never explains what space it is that he is referring to, nor how it bridges the gap between the theoretical (epistemological) realm and the practical one, between mental and social, between the space of the philosophers and the space of the people who deal with material things." In his analysis, he proposes to reinterpret space through the body's experience of it as a site for production. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. United Kingdom : Blackwell, 1991), 4.

[cxix] Ibid. 27.

[cxx] Ibid. 46.

[cxxi] Ibid. 147.

[cxxii] Nicolas Bourriaud's theories on relational aesthetics are influenced by the concept that the exchange between interactive and interhuman experiences within the realm of cultural production produces art. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction : Culture as Screenplay : How Art Reprograms the World.* Translated by Jeanine Herman. (New York : Lukas & Sternberg, 2005).

[cxxiii] Lefebvre, 93-94.

[cxxiv] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution : An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," 1988.

[cxxv] Ibid. xi.

[cxxvi] Ibid. 43.

[cxxvii] In her evaluation of the historical and political construction of the urban landscape, Hayden is specific in her claims that the acknowledgement of women has been omitted from the dialogical relationship between place and the body. Subsequently, she argues that gender must therefore [re]enter the discourse first as a site of intervention, and second as a site of preservation; "[f]or women, the body, the home, and the street have all been arenas of conflict. Examining them as political territories – bounded spaces with some form of enforcement of the boundaries – helps us to analyze the spatial dimensions of 'women's sphere' at any given time. And just as gender can be mapped as a struggle over social reproduction that occurs at various scales of space, the same is true of race, class, and many other social issues." Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place : Urban Landscapes as Public History*. (Cambridge, Massachussetts : MIT Press, 1995), 22-23.

[cxxviii] Ibid. 16.

[cxxix] Ibid. 7.
[cxxx] Ibid. 8.
[cxxxi] Ibid. 7.
[cxxxii] Massey's reference to the subjectivity of the body is grounded in Elizabeth Grosz's text *Space, Time and Perversion*, and her argument that "there is a historical [and political] correlation between the ways in which space is represented, and the ways in which subjectivity represents itself." Referring to Luce Irigaray's claim that women provide space for men, Grosz understands the female body as a system of hierarchical and gendered binaries. Doreen Massey, *For Space*. (London : Thousand Oaks; California : SAGE, 2005), 56-57.
[cxxxiii] Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*. (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 12.
[cxxxiv] Ibid. 2-7.
[cxxxv] Ibid. 121.
[cxxxvi] Ibid. 182.
[cxxxvii] Ibid. xv.
[cxxxviii] Ibid. xvi.
[cxxxix] Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art : Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*. (New York : Columbia University Press, 2008), 71.
[cxl] Deleuze, Guattari, 237-239.

Chapter Three: "I Smell Soap: Deconstructing the Politics of Olfaction"
[cxli] With reference to Kirsten Shepherd-Barr and Monica Zgutowicz's research on the history and practice of smell in performance, Sally Banes is critical of the gaps in current performance studies literature that ignore the presence of aroma in art. Sally Banes, "Olfactory Performances." In *The Senses in Performance*. Sally, Andre Lepecki. Ed. (London and New York : Routledge, 2007), 29-30.
[cxlii] In The Re_Search Lab, an interdisciplinary practice-based laboratory, artist Sissel Tolaas translates the material and conceptual particulars of smell into a method of communication; "The Re_Search Lab was founded in January 2004 as a laboratory for research on smell, the olfactory and smell-communication. The lab is situated in Berlin and is part of the Tolaas studio, a workspace where interdisciplinary projects are developed, researched and executed. These projects all involve smell, odour and fragrance in various ways, shapes or forms, and can be conceptual, scientific and creative in nature." Sissel Tolaas, "An Alphabet for the Nose," accessed 27 February 2014, http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/?weave=1036.
[cxliii] In a lecture presented at the School of Visual Arts in New York City in September 2007, artist Janine Antoni addressed the importance of having an experience in her practice. Whether it be through physical transformation, bathing, licking or dreaming, the materialization of an occurrence is what informs her role as an object maker.
Janine Antoni, "Untitled Artist Talk," Lecture presented at the School of Visual Arts, 5 September, 2007.
[cxliv] Kim Faler, e-mail response, February 20, 2014.
[cxlv] "I used soap because I was interested in investigating this temporal thing that all of us are familiar with and tying that with architecture- something that surrounds all of us

but almost becomes invisible within our daily experience. The notion of cleansing a space by knocking down walls within a historical building and building anew also played into the piece (as part of the installation- I torn down the existing gallery wall, exposing brick walls and windows in the gallery and then rebuild the stud wall to scale, in soap). The smell encased in the soap also allowed me to play the notion of memory and how we can experience or recall a specific place but seemingly unimportant details." Idem.

[cxlvi] Banes, 31-32.

[cxlvii] Cross.

[cxlviii] Holly Dugan, *The Ephemeral History of Perfume : Scent and Sense in Early Modern England*. (Baltimore : The John Hopkins University Press, 2011), 11.

[cxlix] Catherine Adam, and Max van Manen, "Phenomenology," *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. L. M. Givens. Ed. Volume 2, Thousand Oaks : SAGE, 2008, 615.

[cl] "Any one who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and he who remembers this when he sees any one whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter light, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled by excess of light. Plato, *The Republic*, Book VII, 360 B.C.E.

[cli] Merleau-Ponty, x.

[clii] Classen, 2.

[cliii] Ibid. 251.

[cliv] Merleau-Ponty, 61.

[clv] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Forum Lectures* (Washington, D. C. : Voice of America), 1960.

[clvi] Fried, 183.

[clvii] Margaret Lock, "Cultivating the Body : Anthropology and Epistemologies of Bodily Practice and Knowledge." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1993, 22 : 133-155.

[clviii] David Howes, *Sensual Relations : Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*. (Ann Arbor : The University of Michigan Press, 2006), xiii – xiv.

[clix] Ibid. 6.

[clx] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Passing Strange and Wonderful : Aesthetics, Nature and Culture*. (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1993), 56.

[clxi] Stephen Di Benedetto, "Guiding Somatic Responses Within Performative Structures : Contemporary Live Art and Sensorial Perception." Banes, 124.

[clxii] Merleau-Ponty, 229.

[clxiii] Francesca Bacci, "Making Sense of Art, Making Art of Sense : Francesca Bacci in Conversation with Achille Bonito Oliva." In *Art and the Senses*. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher. Ed. (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2011), 12.

[clxiv] In the context of her piece *Touch Together* (2006), Ella Clocksin explores skin as a sensorial, and active surface that, through human contact, engenders meaning. In her own words; "skin's tactile intelligence provides a highly sensitive interface for non-verbal

communication, especially so for new babies who cannot yet make sense of what they hear or see." Ibid. 9.

[clxv] Idem.

[clxvi] Ibid. 12.

[clxvii] Ibid. 10.

[clxviii] Ibid. 12.

[clxix] Classen, 97.

[clxx] In the abstract for her co-authored publication *Aroma : The Cultural History of Smell*, Dr. Constance Classen contextualizes her research as a social and cultural investigation into the relationships between olfaction and people. Through an anthropological lens, she argues that smell becomes a sensorial methodology through which to deconstruct the conditions of a culture, race and population; "[s]mell is a social phenomenon, invested with particular meanings and values by different cultures. Odours form the building blocks of cosmologies, class hierarchies and political orders; they can enforce social structures or transgress them, unite people or divide them, empower or disempower." Classsen, "Abstract."

[clxxi] Ventós, 19.

[clxxii] Ibid. 22.

[clxxiii] Idem.

[clxxiv] Susie Rushton, "The Sweat Hog." *The New York Times*, August 27. 2006.

[clxxv] Idem.

[clxxvi] "The Re_Search Lab, founded in January 2004, is supported by International Flavors and Fragrances (IFF), a leading creator and manufacturer of flavours and fragrances, which provides the lab with all its necessary ingredients and technical equipment. The Lab is a research situation in which highly qualified professionals from different disciplines meet for the purpose of creating new and innovative approaches to the social role of smell." Sissel Tolaas website: http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/?weave=1036

[clxxvii] Haraway, (2008), 162.

[clxxviii] http://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/?weave=1036

[clxxix] In his essay "The Science of Taste and Smell," Tim Jacob explores the biological and phenomenological distinctions between smell and taste to understand how they produce meaning, and what influences these meanings have on their relationships with the world; "[s]mells, or more scientifically 'odorants,' are airborne chemicals. We take them into the nose as we breathe and they dissolve in the mucus at the roof of the nostrils. In order to be detected by our olfactory system these odorants need to have certain properties. For instance, they must be small enough to be volatile (less than -300 relative molecular mass) so that they can vaporize, get airborn, reach the nose, and then dissolve in the mucus. This tells us that smell, unlike taste, can signal over long distances, enabling it to function as an early warning device." Tim Jacob, "The Science of Taste and Smell." In *Art and the Senses*. Francesca Bacci and David Melcher. Ed. (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2011), 184.

[clxxx] Diane Ackerman, *A Natural History of the Senses.* (New York : Vintage Books, 1991), 6-7.

Chapter Four: "Epilogue: Art as Entanglement - Entanglement as Art"

[clxxxi] de Certeau, 103.

[clxxxii] Mitchell, 1.

[clxxxiii] Guy Brett, "One Energy." In *Ana Mendieta: Earth Body : Sculpture and Perofrmance, 1972-1985*. Olga M. Viso. Ed. (Washington, DC : Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution and Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2004), 181.

[clxxxiv] Performativity, according to Judith Butler, is ultimately an act of reiteration and citationality; "... performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act,' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names." Butler, (1993), xii.

[clxxxv] Antoni, (2007).

[clxxxvi] Idem.

[clxxxvii] Fischer-Lichte, 27.

[clxxxviii] Idem.

[clxxxix] Austin, 12.

[cxc] Fischer-Lichte, 92.

[cxci] In *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research : Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies*, Shannon Rose Riley and Lynette Hunter provide an institutional critique of performance art through two schools of thought: practice as research and performance as research. Working to insert practice as research into the American art curriculum, Riley and Hunter compiled a selection of essay that collectively deconstruct the debate surrounding art as pedagogy and work to reframe performance practices as both research and a site in which meaning is produced; "[w]hile performance practices have always contributed to knowledge, the idea that performance can be more than creative production, that it can constitute intellectual inquiry and contribute new understanding and insight is a concept that challenges many institutional structures and calls into question what gets valued as knowledge." Lynette Hunter and Shannon Rose Riley. Ed. *Mapping Landscapes for Performance as Research : Scholarly Acts and Creative Cartographies*. (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), xv.

[cxcii] "This shift of art toward performative action seems to me to exemplify a new artistic sensibility shared by a number of the artists included in the *Triennial*. Their performativity manifests itself in a range of ways, often in practices and media where it is least expected. Understanding it requires, first, a broadening of the usual notion of performance beyond its strict definition and a special sensitivity to works involving some kind of gesture or action by the artist: perhaps the filming of a performance, the staging of a situation, the increased mobilization of participants or collaborators, or the integration of process into work." Marie Fraser, "Performing Time, Performing Space," *La Triennale québécoise 2011 : Le travail qui nous attend*. (Montréal : Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2011), 87.

[cxciii] "[t]he issues arising from artistic performativity and the encounters it generates between the experience of art and of reality have yet to be fully defined. This – exploring what is still unfathomable and unpredictable – is *the work ahead of us*." Ibid. 94.

[cxciv] Susan Melrose, "Bodies Without Bodies," Broadhurst, Susan and Josephine Machon. Ed. *Performance and Technology : Practices of Virtual Embodiment and Interactivity*. (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 9.

[cxcv] Although I was a resident of the Gramercy Park neighborhood, my address determined how I accessed space. Even though I lived down the street from park, one of only two private parks in New York City, I was not permitted onto the grounds. The intervention *Welcome* was created in response to the politics of this location.
[cxcvi] Rebecca Solnit. *Wanderlust : A History of Walking*. (New York : Penguin Group, 2000), 5.
[cxcvii] Elizabeth Grosz, "Bodies-Cities." In Beatriz Columbia, Ed. *Sexuality and Space*. (New York : Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), 248-249.
[cxcviii] Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art : Performance, Place and Documentation*. New York : Routledge, 2000, 217.
[cxcix] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Eds. Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin : University of Texas Press, 1993, 17.
[cc] Ibid. 13.
[cci] Jaclyn Meloche, "Practicing Performativity : Tracing the Foundations of Performative Art vis-à-vis a Discourse of Material Agency" (paper presented to Dr. Krista Lynes, Concordia University, Montreal, QC, April 2012).
[ccii] Ibid. 2.
[cciii] Pranee Liamputtong, and Jean Rumbold. *Knowing Differently : Arts-Based and Collaborative Research Methods*. (New York : Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2008), 282.
[cciv] John Chandler, and Lucy Lippard, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International*, Vol. 12, no. 2, February 1968 : 31-32.

Conclusion: "Therefore...materials *matter*"

[ccv] Jim Mooney, "Painting : Poignancy and Ethics," in *Thinking Through Art : Reflections on Art as Research*. Katy Macleod and Lin Holdridge, Ed. (London and New York : Routledge Press, 2006), 133.
[ccvi] Ibid. 133-134.
[ccvii] Barad, (2007), 146.

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Figure 1. Jaclyn Meloche, *3580/3590*, 2011

Figure 2. Jaclyn Meloche, *Looking*, 2006

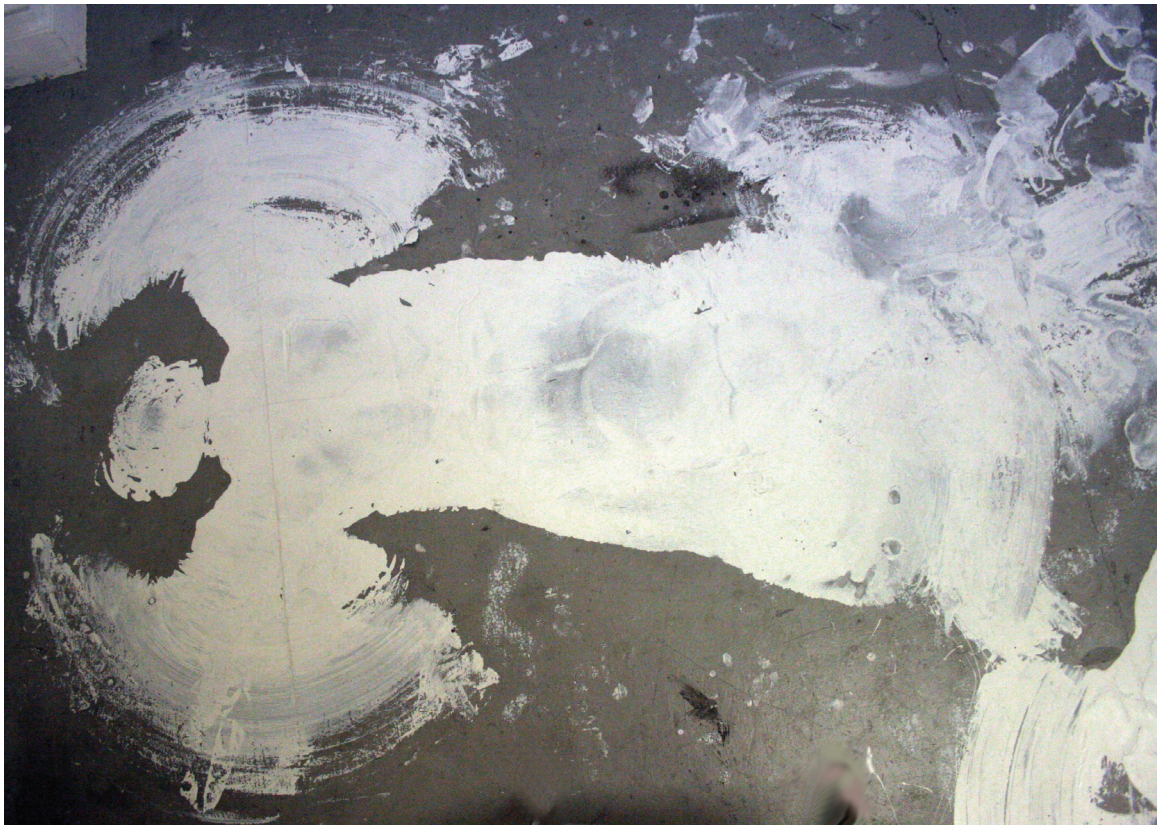

Figure 3. Jaclyn Meloche, *Winged*, 2006

Figure 4. Jess Dobkin, *The Lactation Station Breast Milk Bar*, 2006-2012

Figure 5. Katrin Sigurdardottir, *High Plane V,* 2001-2005

Figure 6. Kim Faler, *Untitled (99 44/ 100% Pure)*, 2012

Figure 7. Marina Abramovic, *Lips of Thomas*, 1975

Figure 8. Janine Antoni, *Lick and Lather*, 1993

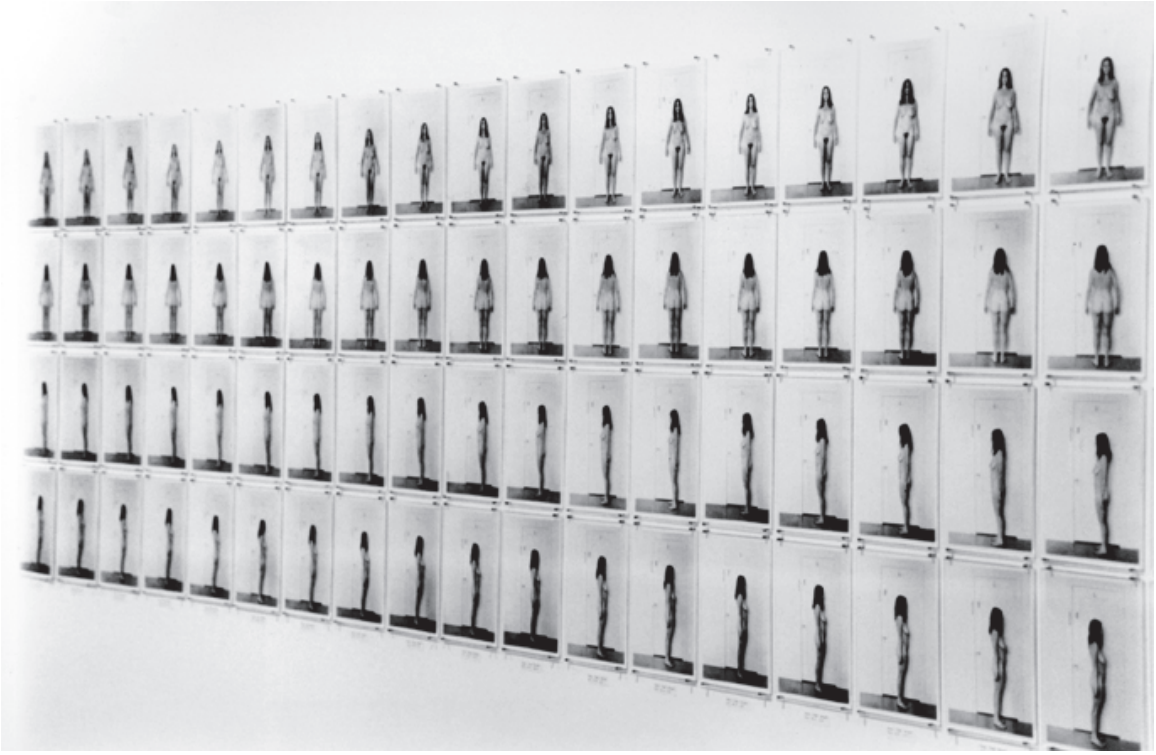

Figure 9. Eleanor Antin, *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture*, 1972

Figure 10. Jan Van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Wedding*, 1434

Figure 11. Jaclyn Meloche, *Making Winter*, 2007

Figure 12. James Turrell, *Meeting*, 1986

Figure 13. Janet Cardiff, *A Slow Long River*, 2000

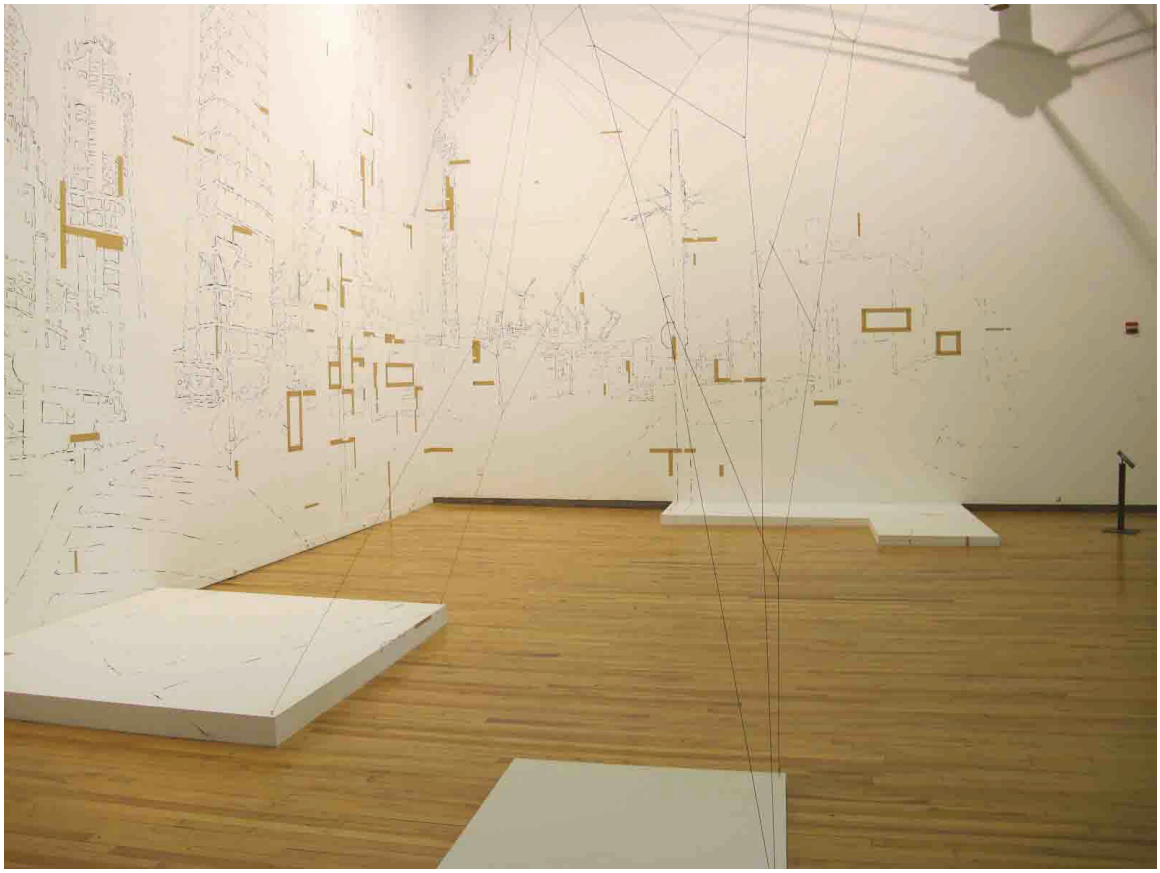

Figure 14. Miha Strukelj, *The Melting Pot*, 2012

Figure 15. Sopheap Pich, *Compound*, 2011

Figure 16. Kim Faler, *(99 44/ 100% Pure)* (detail of the effects of time), 2011-2012

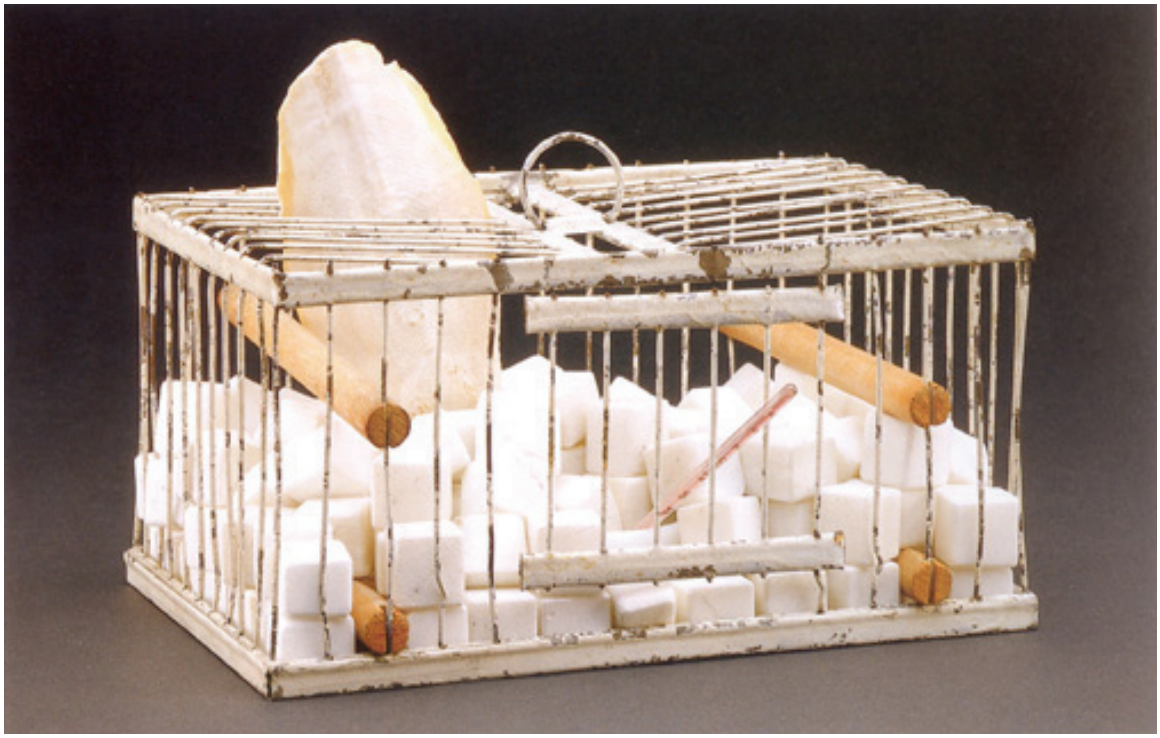

Figure 17. Marcel Duchamp, *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?*, 1921

Figure 18. Ana Mendieta, *Tree of Life Series*, 1976

Figure 19. Ana Mendieta, *Silueta Series*, 1973-1977

Figure 20. Janine Antoni, *2038*, 2000

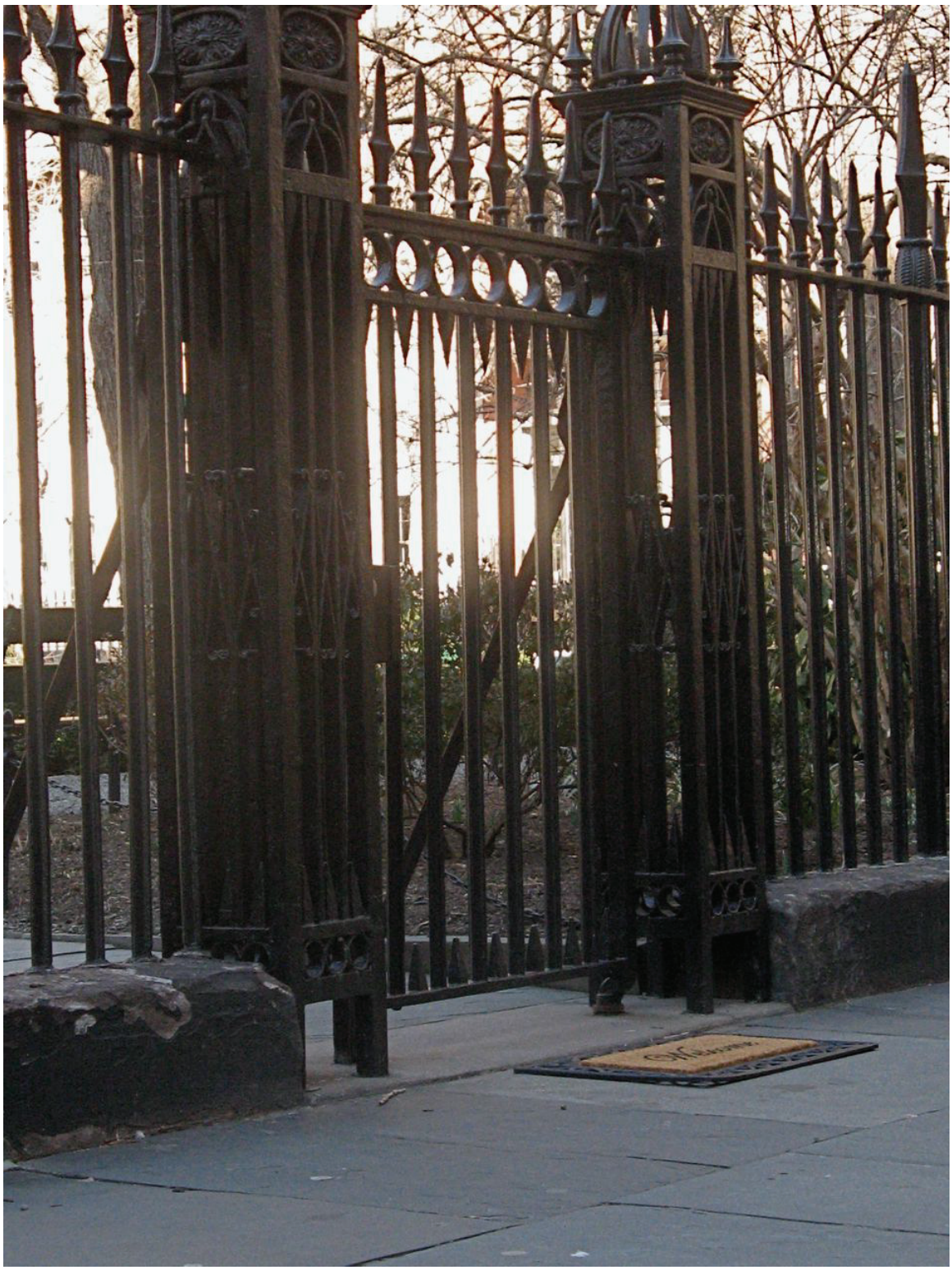

Figure 21. Jaclyn Meloche, *Welcome*, 2007-2008

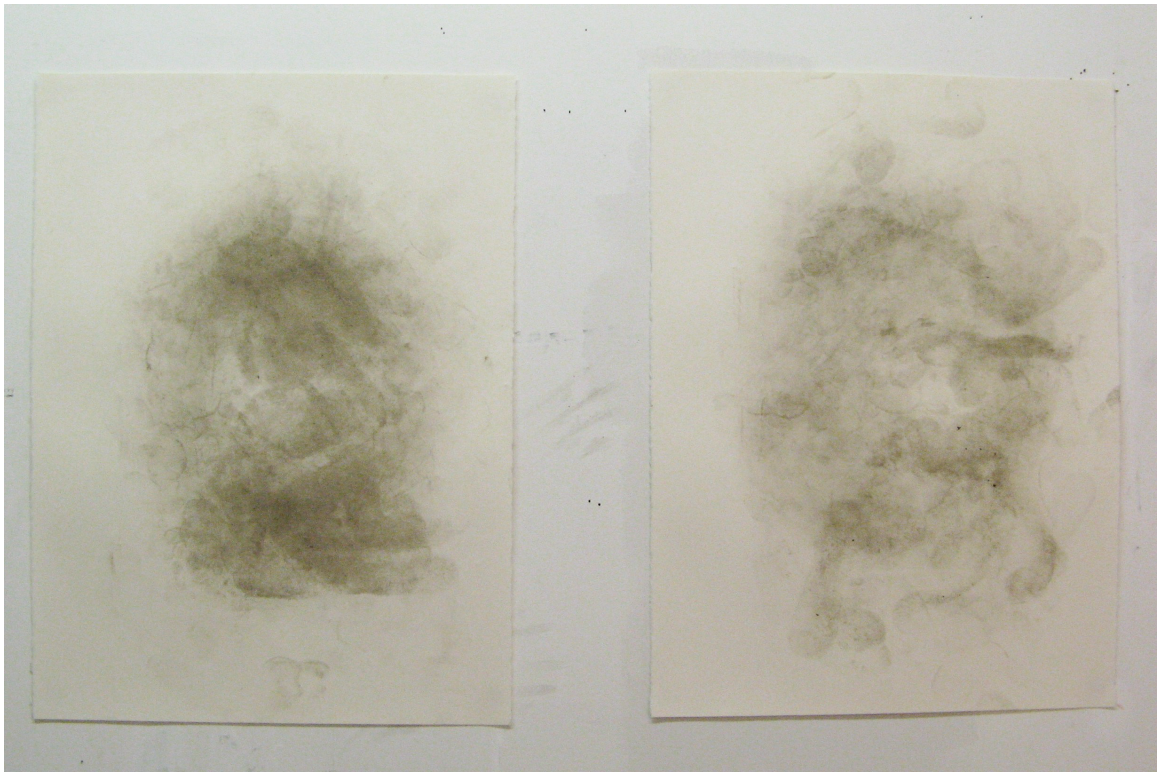

Figure 22. Jaclyn Meloche, *Dust Drawings*, 2007-2012

Figure 23. Jaclyn Meloche, *[365 Days] Into My Bedroom*, 2011-2012

Figure 24. Jaclyn Meloche, *Citing I*, 2012

Figure 25. Jaclyn Meloche, *Citing IV*, 2013

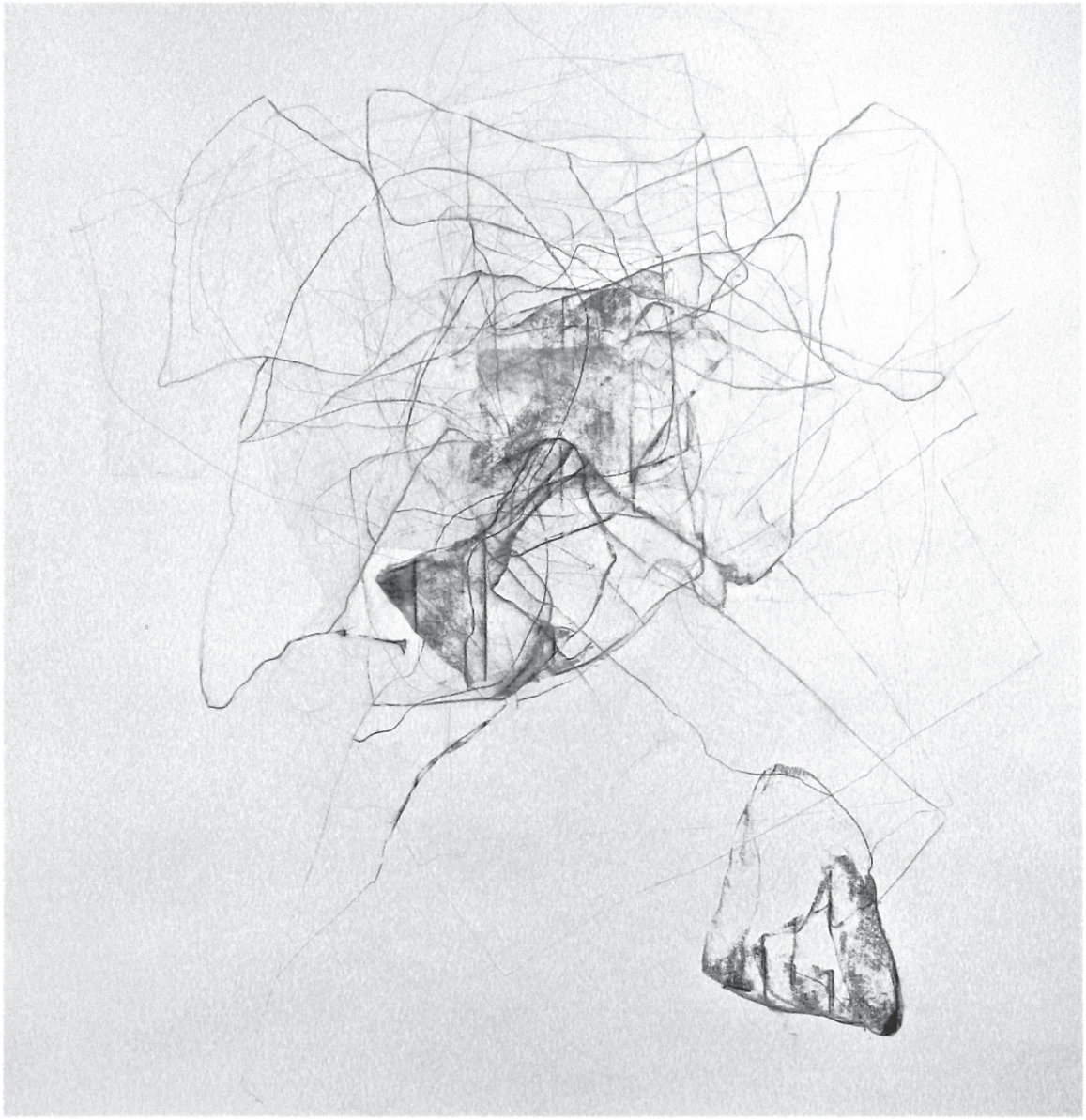

Figure 26. Jaclyn Meloche, *Water[ed]*, 2013

Figure 26. Jaclyn Meloche, *Make Me Pretty*, 2012

Figure 28. Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1964

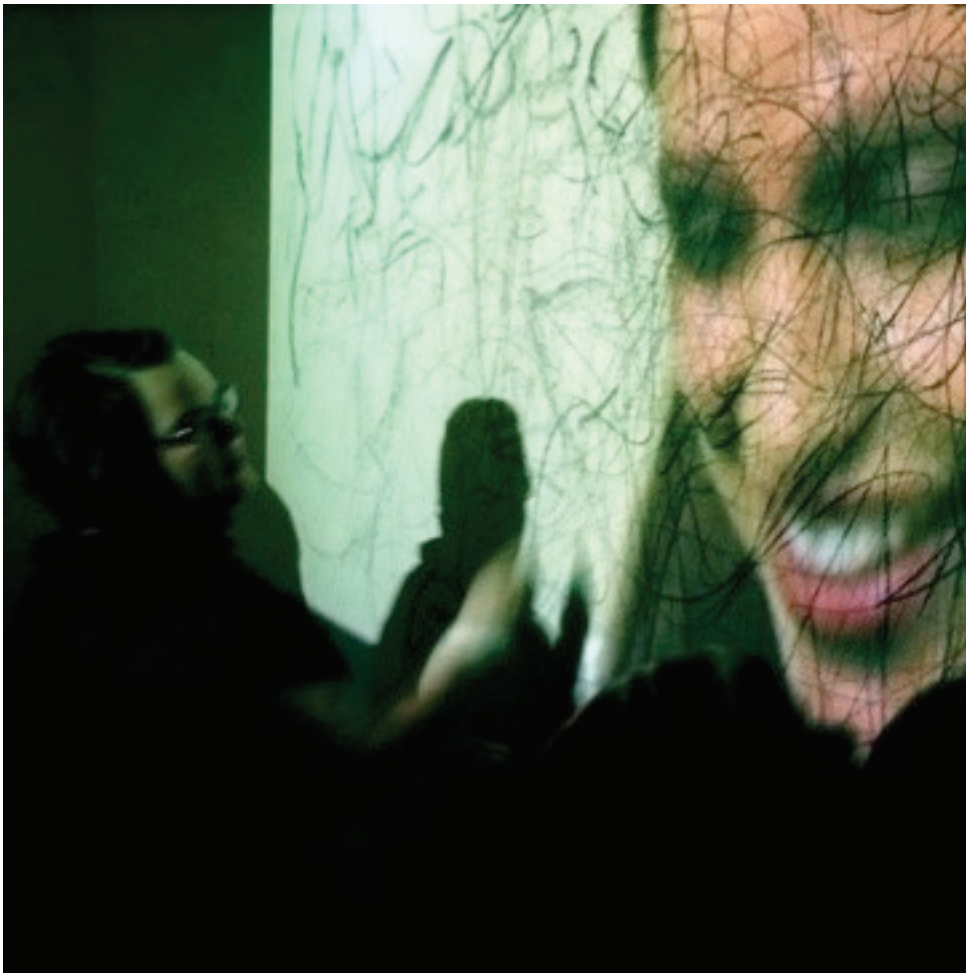

Figure 29. Jaclyn Meloche, *Tracing Thirty*, 2013

Figure 30. Jaclyn Meloche, *Horsing[s]*, 2013

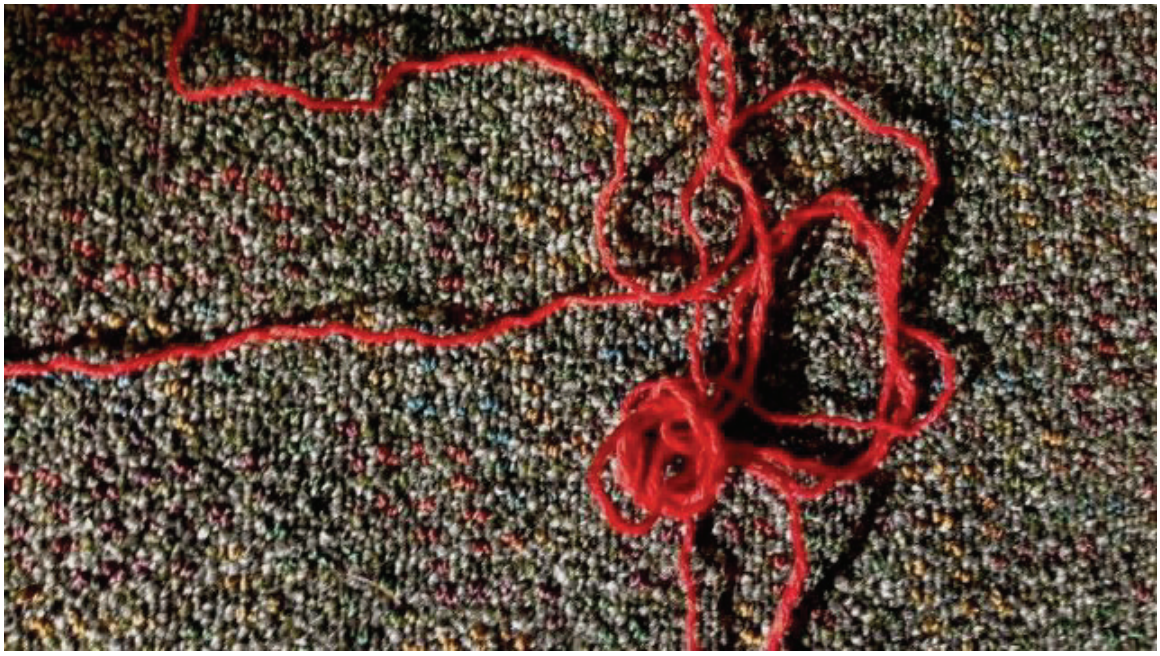

Figure 31. Barbara Meneley and company, *Connecting*, 2014