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*How can art practice provide a rebalancing and re-evaluation  
of the canonic legacy of Kurt Schwitters?*

Jackie Haynes

MA Textiles

Thesis submitted to the University of Cumbria in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

I, Jackie Haynes, declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in  
substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

June 2022



**Plate 1** *Plank & Ball, Milk Float* (top) **Plate 2** *Arc* (left) **Plate 3** *Rope* (right) from *Decommissioned Doremifasolatido Group Residency Florence Art Centre Egremont, Cumbria 2016*



**Plate 4**  
*Hugo the Ball*  
*Dada Deadpanel UK—Z*  
Collaborative Performance  
with Alice McCabe and James Mansfield  
Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich, 2016  
Documented in *Artist Book 2017*



**Plate 5**

*Zurich Through the Cheesehole*

*Cheesehole Photography*

Presentation for

*Dada Deadpanel UK—Z*

Collaborative performance with

Alice McCabe and James Mansfield

Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich

2016



**Plate 6**

*Red Herring Guffing Through a Smoke Screen (left)*

**Plate 7**

*Secreted (right)*

Audio installation for *POE II*

*Legacy Alumni Exhibition*

Manchester Metropolitan University

2017



**Plate 8**

Sch!!!!!!!

Performance with *Artist Book 2017* Installation

University of York

2017



**Plate 9**  
*Nothing/Niente*  
Performance with Dadamilano  
Argelab, Milan, 2016  
Documented in *Artist Book 2017*





**Plate 10**

*Manchester Merzpie*

*New Work*

Group Stand

The Manchester Contemporary

Manchester, 2016

Documented in *Artist Book 2017*



**Plate 11**  
*Family Meal*  
Workshop  
*My Recoverist Family*  
Film by Amanda Ravetz  
Portraits of Recovery, 2017  
Documented in *Artist Book 2017*



**Plate 12**

*Secreted*

Audio Installation

*Legacy Alumni Exhibition*

Manchester Metropolitan University, 2017

Documented in *Artist Book 2017*



**Plate 13**  
*Flat and Round for Nothing*  
*Nothing Abandoned*  
Group Exhibition  
Paradise Works  
Salford  
2017



**Plate 14**

*?Value Added (2014 —)*

Cosey Fanni Tutti (left), Maria Fusco (right)

Signing *Cosey Complex*

Book returned to

Manchester Metropolitan University Library

2017



**Plate 15**  
*Ibidem*  
Footnotes  
PhD Transfer  
University of Cumbria  
Carlisle  
2017



**Plate 16**

*Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*

Poster Artwork

Co-produced with Heather Ross

Vallum Gallery, Carlisle

2018



**Plate 17**  
*Dinner for Three*  
Performance and Installation  
*Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*  
Exhibition Co-presented with Heather Ross  
Vallum Gallery, Carlisle  
2018





**Plate 18**

*L-R: Donutkebabs, Interpunktion, Raft, Glob*

*Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*

Exhibition

Vallum Gallery, Carlisle

2018



**Plate 19**  
*Decken*  
*Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*  
Exhibition  
Vallum Gallery, Carlisle  
2018



**Plate 20** Classified Leftovers (above)

**Plate 21** Botanical Chlorosis (left)

Both:

*Total Archive*

Installation

*Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*

Exhibition

Vallum Gallery, Carlisle

2018



**Plate 22**

*Fracas: Capturing the Rupture*  
Audio with Heather Ross  
Overlooking  
*Total Archive*  
*Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*  
Exhibition  
Vallum Gallery, Carlisle  
2018



**Plate 23**

*Glob*

*\_Airholders\_*

*Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*

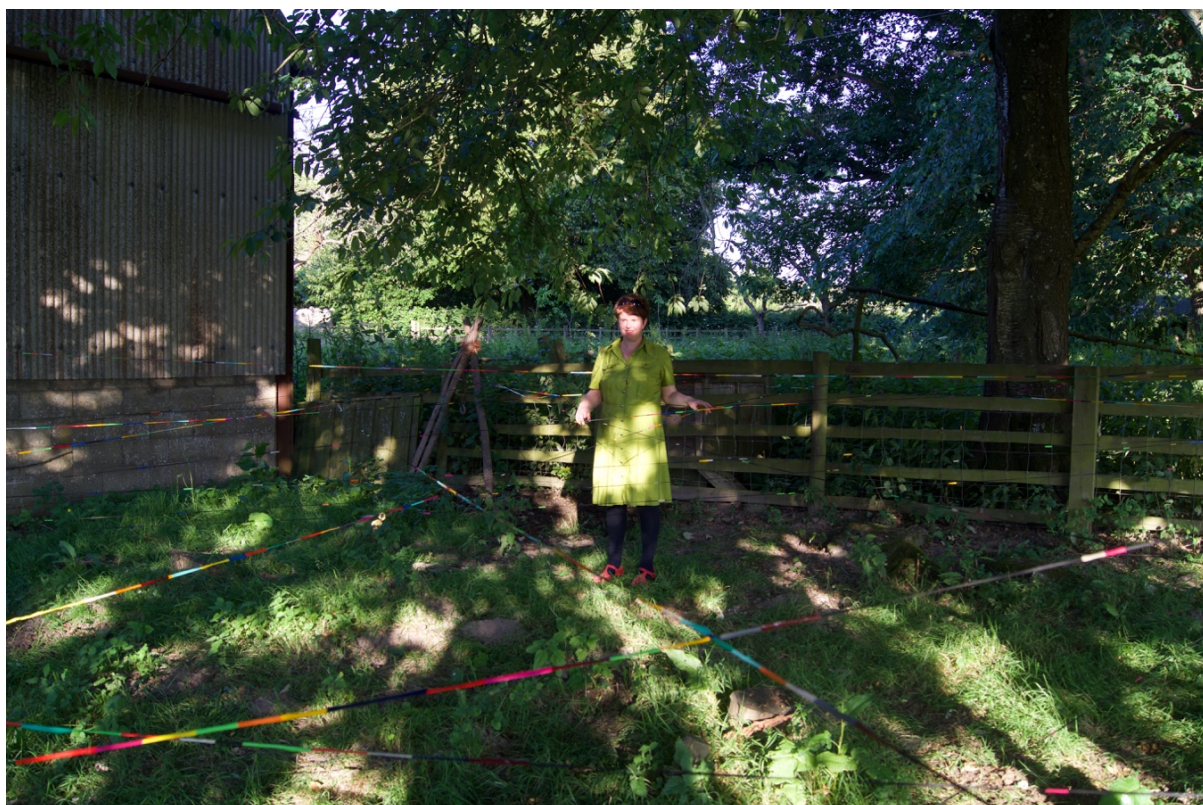
Exhibition

Vallum Gallery, Carlisle

2018



**Plate 24**  
*Almost Things, Fast Dinge, Beinahe Dinge, Kunterbunte Dinge*  
*\_Airholders\_*  
*Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*  
Exhibition  
Vallum Gallery, Carlisle  
2018



**Plate 25**

*Planning Performance*  
*With Elasticated Lines of Enquiry*  
*Artist Camp Residency*  
Group Exhibition  
Sidney Nolan Trust  
Powys  
2018



**Plate 26**  
*Planned*  
Artist Camp Residency  
Group Exhibition  
Sidney Nolan Trust  
Powys  
2018





**Plate 27**

*Stone & Ring (Ringboy)*

*Artist Camp Residency*

Group Exhibition

Sidney Nolan Trust

Powys

2018



**Plate 28**  
*Drapes*  
*Being Nomad*  
Exhibition  
Righton Building  
Manchester Metropolitan University  
2018



**Plate 29**

*Collider I*

*Post-Residency Event*

Group Event

No.70, Manchester Metropolitan University  
2018

**Plate 30**

*Collider II*

*Artist Camp Residency*

Group Exhibition

Sidney Nolan Trust

Powys

2019



**Plate 31**  
*Time, Manners, Place*  
Wearing *Das Kleid*  
Holding *Fireworkskins/ Die Feuerwerkshäute*,  
Performance and Group Exhibition  
*Merzgebirge*  
Kunst Keller Annaberg  
Annaberg-Bucholz, Germany  
2018



**Plate 32**

*Grotto for Mina Loy*

*Gathering*

Group Exhibition

Hatton Gallery, Newcastle

2019



**Plate 33**  
*In Conversation*  
*Grotto for Mina Loy*  
*Gathering*  
Group Exhibition  
Hatton Gallery, Newcastle  
2019



**Plate 34**

*Knee*

*Grotto for Mina Loy*

*Gathering*

Group Exhibition

Hatton Gallery, Newcastle

2019



**Plate 35**  
*Subject*  
*Grotto for Mina Loy*  
*Gathering*  
Group Exhibition  
Hatton Gallery, Newcastle  
2019





**Plate 36**

*Nonsenso Unico*

*The Augusta Bolte Trilogy (2019—)*

*The Horizontal*

Performance

*Dadameno*

Ameno, Italy

2019



**Plate 37**

*Aspect Ratio, Angles for Augusta*  
*The Augusta Bolte Trilogy (2019 —)*

*The Angular (Part I)*

with Collaborative Performance  
with Alice McCabe and Ben Osborn

*Viva Dada*

Kunsthhaus Dortmund

2020



**Plate 38**

*Kleptocurrency*

Dada Poster Auction

J.A.B.

Collaborative Performance  
with Alice McCabe and Ben Osborn

*Viva Dada*

Kunsthhaus Dortmund

2020



**Plate 39**  
Poster (left)

**Plate 40**  
*The Vertical: Poster Presentation* (right)  
*The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* (2019 —)  
J.A.B.

Collaborative Performance  
with Alice McCabe and Ben Osborn  
*Viva Dada*  
Kunsthau Dortmund  
2020



**Plate 41**

*The Tea Ceremony*

J.A.B.

Collaborative Performance  
with Alice McCabe and Ben Osborn

*Viva Dada*

Kunsthaus Dortmund

2020

Photo Credits: All photos are artist's own, with thanks to SONA for Plate 36 (*Nonsense Unico*) and to Volker Kreiger for Plate 42 (*The Tea Ceremony*) for the video footage from which still images were taken.

## *Plates*

A new body of original artwork by Jackie Haynes  
April 2016 – March 2020

The above images shown in *Plates* have accompanying wall text panels introducing the artworks in chronological order. *Plates* are positioned at the beginning of this thesis to foreground the primary role and function of art practice-based research in relation to its written exegesis responding to the question:

*How can art practice provide a rebalancing and re-evaluation  
of the canonic legacy of Kurt Schwitters?*

The name *Plates* seeks to echo the book making practice of integrating visual images which are produced separately then bound together with the text. The term, wall text, is intended to imply a physical exhibition which corresponds to the text akin to an exhibition catalogue essay. The allusion to the exegesis as an exhibition catalogue essay, bound together with *Plates* and the wall texts demonstrates how all three support and co-constitute each other. The artwork and exegesis are presented together with the intention of surviving digitally and in hard copy in the same place.

*Plates* could also stand alone, in the sense that an exhibition can be viewed without reading the exhibition catalogue essay, and similarly the essay can be read without experiencing an exhibition first-hand. The opportunity of the doctorate is that both artwork and exegesis can be presented together explicitly as my doctoral contribution to knowledge.

The artwork in *Plates* implies the newly reconfigured knowledge that the exegesis then draws out in relation to the research question. The images and information in *Plates* are repeated in the exegesis by using, for example, similar but not necessarily the same visual images. The written analysis reasserts the liveness of the photographs and video images presented in *Plates* as aesthetically considered proxies of the original public events.

The following images are justified alternately to the left and right to correspond curatorially to the chicaning motion of the *clinamen*, in order to form a theoretical connection of angular oscillation which is pivotal to this thesis. Defending the atomistic doctrine of the classical philosopher Epicurius, Lucretius' notion of the *clinamen* focuses on 'the unpredictable swerve of atoms [which] sets things in motion and initiates new patterns and movements... It is through these material movements and productive processes of matter that the world is made.' (Bolt, 2013: 2). The 'art first' positioning of *Plates* reflect how my artworks set this inquiry in motion through the inclining etymology and energy of the *clinamen*.

## Jackie Haynes

*How can art practice provide a rebalancing and re-evaluation  
of the canonic legacy of Kurt Schwitters?*

### Abstract

Through art practice-based research, this inquiry sets out to reveal and reassess the enduring contemporary resonance of art and literature by the German Dada artist Kurt Schwitters.

My methodology of 'errantry' goes in search of adventure, an artistic research adventure of making artwork and performance 'on-the-move'. Commitment to my methodology has generated portable materials, processes and artwork dissemination methods by notionally walking alongside Schwitters' oeuvre and inclining towards it, as if in conversation.

The body of new artwork foregrounded in *Plates* proceeds the Introduction and Navigating the Research Realm chapters, which situate my inquiry and contributions to knowledge in the overlapping fields of contemporary art, art practice-based research, feminism and scholarship of Schwitters, Dada and De Stijl. Chapter Three examines Schwitters' short story of *Augusta Bolte* through performance methods, Chapter Four examines the scope and effects of my artworks in relation to Schwitters as 'Transformative Sites', and the Conclusion reasserts and substantiates my contributions to knowledge.

My interpretation of Schwitters' resourcefulness adds value and an environmentally sensitive dimension of my recycled art materials, artworks and methods of dissemination. Schwitters' dadaistic collaborations are reconfigured through my artwork by the attachment of feminist theories, methodologies and conceptualisations in the Special Collection of Feminist Strategies. I have made inroads into the over-emphasis of Merz as Schwitters' only 'named brand' which tends to exclude his Tran texts and the *i*-poem, particularly for an anglophone audience. My artistic research unlocks collaborative insights into Dada. Texts by Melchior Vischer, László Moholy-Nagy and Theo Van Doesburg's two aliases, Aldo Camini and I.K. Bonset, illuminate Schwitters' oeuvre through *Augusta Bolte*. My parallel study of Mina Loy and Schwitters exposes commonalities thrown into relief by their differences, whilst contributing to discourse on a canonically overlooked female Dadaist.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

### 1. The Inquiry

The German artist Kurt Schwitters is the subject of this inquiry which revolves around three distinct but interconnected aspects of his oeuvre, namely 'Merz', 'Tran' texts and 'i'. Merz was Schwitters' main neologism for his oeuvre, made between 1919 and 1948. The word Merz is a fragment Schwitters took from an advertisement (Webster, 1997: 68-69) to make his work distinctive. Schwitters scholar Megan Luke (2021: 122) distinguishes between Schwitters' *i*-drawings and Merz collages and texts made from fragments:

Unlike Merz drawings (collages), which reconfigure pieces of found materials into integrated abstract compositions, *i*-drawings posit the found fragment itself as the whole. The acts of cutting and composing, fragmentation and synthesis, thereby collapse into a single gesture.

Schwitters' focus on shortening 'the path from intuition to the realisation of the artwork' in his *i*-drawings, interchangeably referred to as '*i*-poems' (2021: 122) coincided with the publication of his Tran text, the short story, *Tran Nr. 30 Auguste Bolte (Ein Lebertran.)* in 1923 (henceforth referred to as *Augusta Bolte*).<sup>1</sup> Augusta's conspicuously failed attempts to shorten the path between intuition and realisation are played out in her frantic doctoral research.

Schwitters' naming of works as Merz, Tran and *i* aids the navigation of his non-linear oeuvre. Tran texts are Schwitters' response to critics, where he converts negative criticism from the press reacting mainly to his Merz works, into content for new narratives. Like Merz, Tran texts turn the mirror round onto society which is the source of Schwitters' contemporary material. Showing command of his varied processes, the expansive Merz and Tran forms contrast with the minimal and singular *i* gesture. All three however, redeploy materials which he acquired from the public domain. Schwitters' criteria for choosing materials produced works from what he regarded as different forms of detritus (Luke, 2014: 31). Specifically, Merz was a collage process of selecting discarded fragments and offsetting them against

<sup>1</sup> I refer throughout to Pierre Joris's translation, *Extr. #30 Augusta Bolte (a liver extract.)* (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 137-164).

each other, *i* was a single gesture exercised upon an identified unit of found material, and Tran texts contested critique.

The purpose of this study is to focus on particular aspects of Schwitters' artistic and literary work from within his biographically lived experience, as accounted for by Gwendolen Webster (1997). The particular aspects which I have located are situated within the full context of Schwitters' entire oeuvre. Visual works are accounted for in the Catalogue Raisonné (Schulz *et al.*, 2000), his literary works are in Schwitters & Lach (2004) and his *Merz* journals are fully annotated in *Die Reihe Merz 1923–1932* (Schwitters *et al.*, 2019). I selectively make reference to these resources without dwelling for long upon historical or biographical orientation, in correspondence with my mobilised 'making-on-the-move' methods of artistic research. Errantry is an umbrella term for my methodology under which my making-on-the-move methods in both art practice and writing accumulate throughout the inquiry, and is discussed further in Chapter 2.

The *Plates* section documenting my artwork prior to this Introduction, demonstrates and emphasises the centrality of my artworks in my inquiry and is in itself a curated artwork. In this Introduction, I situate my artworks and written thesis, referred to collectively as the research inquiry, and account for my interest in Schwitters. I propose the interrelating significance of my contributions to knowledge in Contemporary Art, Schwitters, Dada and De Stijl Scholarship, Artistic Research and Feminist Strategies arising through my artistic and written practices.

## 1.2 Situating the Inquiry

In 1930, Schwitters directly addressed his future readers, inadvertently responding to questions such as why an inquiry into Schwitters, and why now? In 'Ich und meine Ziele' ('Myself and my Aims'), published in his journal entitled *Merz 21 erstes Veilchenheft* (First Violet Booklet), Schwitters states:

if you people of the future want to do me a special favour, try at least to recognize the important artists of your day. It is more important for you and a greater pleasure for me than if you discover me at a time in which I have long been discovered. (Webster, 2007: 242).

Schwitters reflects in this text on the dwindling collaborative community he relied upon to develop his art practice, a text which Schwitters scholar, Gwendolen Webster refers to as ‘a requiem for the artist manifesto.’ (2007: 174). His prospective plea draws attention to his longing for recognition from contemporaries as an important artist. He infers that art is mainly relevant in its own time, with evidence indicating the contrary in commentaries by numerous artists, art historians and theorists subsequently citing his influence. I demonstrate how Schwitters illuminates his contemporary network beyond its own time from my contemporary vantage point.

Schwitters’ desire for contemporary recognition recalls the belligerent rebuttal of future Dada scholarship by Schwitters’ friend and collaborator, Jean (Hans) Arp, in his ‘Déclaration’ published in *Dada* journal in 1921.

I am convinced that this word has no importance and that only morons and Spanish professors can be interested in dates. What interests us is the Dada spirit and we were all Dada before the existence of Dada...The morality of idiots and their belief in geniuses gives me the shits. (Biggsby, 1972: 4).

Arp contests overemphasis on the term Dada, which limits its scope by failing to foreground the atemporal ‘Dada spirit’. Like Merz, the neologism ‘Dada’ has entered the contemporary imagination as a provocative, far-reaching and international four-letter word. Dada was significant in Schwitters’ network and like Merz and De Stijl is an untethered spirit still resonant today. Merz’s developmental relationship to Dada has persisted and both retain a mutual context in current discourse. Merz is often spoken of in relation to Dada although I have found, conversationally, that Dada does not as readily evoke Merz.

Megan Luke and translator Timothy Grundy published *Myself and my aims: writings on art and criticism/ Kurt Schwitters* (2021), an annotated anthology of Schwitters’ texts for an anglophone audience. At the online book launch, Luke explained that a key motivation for the translations was as a step towards guiding readers back to the original languages of the texts, highlighting an aim of my thesis to contribute to and animate further research. Luke also alighted upon one of my key findings when she remarked upon Dada’s prevalence compared to De Stijl in commentaries relating to Schwitters, commenting on how De Stijl played a formative role for his mind as a theorist. I expand upon the theoretical influence of Schwitters’ friend and collaborator, Theo van Doesburg’s avant-garde Dutch art movement,

De Stijl, illuminating how Schwitters demonstrated proficiency in selecting influential peers in his oeuvre's formation.

Schwitters scholar Georg Jäger's 1984 commentary on Schwitters' short story of *Augusta Bolte* introduced me to formative allusions couched by Schwitters within the text, including literature by Van Doesburg's alias, Aldo Camini and Dadaist outlier and novelist, Melchior Vischer. In his essay, Jäger stops short of naming Van Doesburg's other alias, I.K. Bonset. Through performance as research I looked further into Camini, Bonset and Vischer's literature and discovered layers of contemporary resonance in *Augusta Bolte*, engaging me with primary and secondary texts only available in Dutch, German and Italian. I.K. Bonset's work, translated into English by Michael White, is limited to 300 copies. Aldo Camini's text, *Caminoscopia*, which was serialised in De Stijl between 1921 and 1932, remains untranslated as far as I am aware. I have foregrounded and made inroads into the gap in anglophone scholarship of De Stijl's influence on Schwitters.

Generative artistic activity empowered by subsequent generations' rediscovery of Merz, Dada and De Stijl's contemporary resonances, shows evidence to the contrary of the Nazi campaign which berated the historical avant-garde's so-called cultural degeneracy in the *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition in 1937 (Webster, 1997: 281). My conspicuous use of terms associated with artistic generativity, deliberately reinforces my opposition to the Degenerate Art campaign. My participation in the celebratory international exhibitions, interactions and scholarship of the 2016 Dada Centenary, the 2019 Merz Centenary and the 2020 'First International Dada Fair', has been a generative force in my inquiry.

Physicist and philosopher Karen Barad's 'method of diffractively reading insights through one another' (Juelskjaer, 2012: 12) proved useful as I sought to acknowledge Schwitters' legacy as an inheritance. Like Barad's diffraction method (2012: 12), my approach:

'...does not traffic in a temporality of the new as a supercessionary break with the old. On the contrary, diffraction is a matter of inheritance and indebtedness to the past as well as the future.'

Recognising the mutual indebtedness between Schwitters and his significant contemporaries through a diffractive lens also revealed the effects of their collective interactions. My examination of Schwitters and his significant contemporaries is limited to Schwitters' development. The effects of Schwitters' oeuvre upon his contemporaries is

beyond the scope of this inquiry with the exception of László Moholy-Nagy's *Huhn bleibt Huhn* (Once a Chicken, Always a Chicken), which is based on *Augusta Bolte*, and Melchior Vischer's in-text references to Schwitters.

### 1.2.1 Thesis Title, Research Inquiry and Research Question

Thesis title asks *How can art practice provide a rebalancing and re-evaluation of the canonic legacy of Kurt Schwitters?*

In response to this question, my research inquiry examines present-day meaning and resonance of aspects of Kurt Schwitters' oeuvre (1919-1948), through and within my contemporary art practice. The gap in current research rebalanced and re-evaluated by my inquiry, is the under emphasis on the role of interpersonal collaborations and reciprocal influence between Schwitters and his peers, and the connections between his literary and visual works. The thesis title a proposition which implies interconnecting research questions.

1. How and to what effect do I identify, develop and remobilise the contemporary relevance of Schwitters' oeuvre through art practice methods?

I devised, explored and adapted my art practice methods according to the internal logic of each artwork, with reference to the research proposition. I was attentive to the changing and accumulative effects caused by my methods arising from multiple interfaces, including Schwitters' oeuvre, my chosen materials and sites. Each artwork emerged through its own processes, developments and effects, with insights captured experientially via artworks, documentation and this exploratory, written exegesis. Collaborations such as the *Dinner for Three* (2018) performance with fellow Schwitters researcher, Heather Ross<sup>2</sup> differed in that our contributions' internalised logic was externalised in our discussions. Collectively produced artwork, such as the workshopped artefacts in *Grotto for Mina Loy* (2019), were not contingent upon each other's existence, although the artwork's collective effects arose from the artefacts' proximity.

<sup>2</sup> Artist A & Artist B is the interchangeable name for my collaboration with Heather Ross, coined in October 2021.



My artwork is both artwork in and of itself, and also research into Schwitters. As I cannot reliably articulate the interface between my artworks and an audience's unaccounted subjectivity, I share my insights by offering a rationale, stating my intentions and assessing the artworks' reception. Where appropriate I elucidate my artwork's research function at the interface with the audience, for instance in *Planning Performance* (2018) (see *Plate 25*). Otherwise, my artwork is presented as art with Schwitters' traceable inflections implied in the audience interface or articulated in the exegesis.

2. What insights into Schwitters can be gained by identifying aspects of his production?

My durational engagement with Schwitters revealed signifying mechanisms found beneath the surface of Schwitters' strategic prompts to look further. The temporal duality of Schwitters' *Veilchenheft* pronouncement (see page 7) appears as a strategic prompt to solicit attention by speaking simultaneously and compellingly to his contemporaries and future legatees. I learned to recognise Schwitters' prompts using artistic methods to locate relations across his literary and artistic forms. The unique qualities of my research through art practice reflect my interests in the opportunities that I both accept and create, while encountering and considering aspects of Schwitters' production.

3. What is meant by present-day meaning and resonance and what is its significance?

Present-day meaning and resonance between Schwitters' work and my own arose by being attuned to their identification, particularly for the purposes of my research. It is possible for meaning and resonance to arise that I do not recognise, and for meaning and resonance to be absent, depending on the viewer or audience's subjectivity. I have articulated some but not all meanings and resonances, selecting those drawn from aspects of my artworks which I wish to highlight. Meaning and resonance are not necessarily the same thing. Meaning refers to a sense of material understanding of Schwitters that I feel I have reached through my artworks, while resonance refers to temporal contemporary intersections. The significance of meaning reached through materiality is that my artworks' interface with an audience is centralised through my emergent findings of Schwitters' migrating motifs and peer influences.

Through my methodology of making-on-the-move, I have located and activated learning available in the past by recognising contemporary resonance as a component of current

agency. I selectively proposed parallels or intersections with comparable, modern-day concerns, such as disrupting wasteful commercial mechanisms.

### **1.2.2 The Scope of the Inquiry**

Without any particular works of Schwitters in mind from the outset, I was open to exploring any aspect, including his principles and strategies. My methodology of making-on-the-move determined my research scope with bricolage characteristics (Lévi-Strauss, 1966: 21). By using what comes to hand, I optimised my continual movement and return to methods, sites and thought processes. I intuited that by optimising my material and formal scope in as many relevant situations as I deemed beneficial, I would encounter Schwitters through multiple routes and with multiple effects.

### **1.3 Channelling<sup>3</sup> Kurt Schwitters**

In the April gales of 2014, a large tree blew down in my local park, leaving a gap in a long avenue of lime trees. At that time, I sought forms to express the conceptual weight of words for artworks in a solo exhibition at Manchester's Grosvenor Gallery. Walking around the tree's top end as it 'lay in state' before being removed, and later recalling the horizontal tree of Eija-Liisa Ahtila's video work, *Horizontal Vaakasuora* (2011), the idea for *Tree Top Pie* (2014) marked the moment where, prior to the gales, the treetop was privy only to birds and flying insects. I spelt out the words *Tree Top Pie* in pastry on the crust covering the pie filling of lime tree twiglets, picked from the tree top and protruding through the crust. *Tree Top Pie* became the prototype for the ongoing site-responsive *Merz Pies* series, developed into a recipe, principally with the crust as a landscape shaped by a locally sourced pie filling of protruding twigs, rocks and other elements.

I produced the first *Merz Pie* on the site of Schwitters' last Merzbau in the English Lake District, when my initial awareness of Schwitters was mainly within a Dada context. As a consequence, I produced artworks and organised events connected to Merz and Dada for two years from my studio in Islington Mill, Salford. I developed my art practice with Islington

<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, Funnelling, see page 100.

Mill Art Academy and co-founded the post-MA group, Collective North. Having built up a Merz/Dada 'head of steam', my artistic lines of inquiry have since reached neighbouring European countries, notably Italy, Germany and Switzerland, in a correspondence with Schwitters' transnational legacy.

### **1.3.1 Two Art Practices Walking Alongside One Another**

My relational attitude towards Schwitters was to notionally walk alongside, incline towards and become conversant, to set correspondences between our respective practices in motion. I envisaged Schwitters' voice coming in sideways on an angle whilst walking along together, as if on a windy day when the words could get blown away, affecting my understanding in such a way that I would need to make every effort to comprehend what was being said. My will to understand recalls the effective endeavour of artist Tracie Morris's *Re-Sonate* (2017), in her direct conversation with Schwitters' sound poem, *Ur Sonate* (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 52-80). I approached Schwitters in two different ways. Initially I wandered freely amongst his visual and written works, and then in a change of pace, I advanced directly (and appropriately, as it turned out) to his short story of *Augusta Bolte* (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 137-164). I analysed my findings in Chapter 3 through an accretion of responsive methods under the rubric of *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* (2019—), which is in itself an artwork. In Chapter 4, 'Transformative Sites' recalibrates and shows the effects of my findings from my initial indirect approach to Schwitters. In this inaugural iteration of Transformative Sites, selected, shape-shifting instances and intersections emerging from my thesis writing process are temporarily held still for observation. My insights into both Schwitters' and my artworks arise from the interactions between the mobilised, collective, collaborative and material constituencies of my Schwitters-inflected practice, through the mechanisms of pivots, turns and folds of my artistic research.

### **1.3.2 Methods of Inquiry**

My inquiry facilitated a freedom of movement aimed at the most far-reaching findings possible, by methods emanating from my errant making-on-the-move methodology. I use 'errant' in the sense of travelling in (re)search of artistic adventure in order to become conversant with Schwitters. The mobility of this concept recalls Schwitters scholar Isabel

Schulz's reference to the 'Merzbauten' (Schwitters' four Merz buildings) as multiple 'workspaces', described by Schwitters as 'a sculpture in which you can go for a walk' (Webster, 2016: 73). My research field formed as it unfolded alongside my learning and engagement with Schwitters. Diverging from my longstanding clothing and costume-making practice, errantry did not lend itself to sitting behind a sewing machine. Scissors as agent of change and extension of hand and eye endured from my former practice. I replaced stitching and fabric with self-adhesive vinyl's sticky properties, used extensively in my artworks. I ceased relying on a solid work surface for cutting out, instead cutting on any surface or none, recalling Schwitters' short story, *The Flat and the Round Painter* (1941), who paints in mid-air. I devised forms and dissemination strategies in response to temporal, site-based circumstances and encounters.

## **1.4 Contributions to Knowledge**

The body of this inquiry's artwork contributes new knowledge through my ambition and intention to apprehend Schwitters through previously untrodden routes for a contemporary audience. The effects of the artwork are critically interpreted and illuminated in the exegesis. My approach revealed new perspectives of my subject matter and generated unforeseen encounters, shaping my contribution to knowledge in the four overlapping fields of Contemporary Art, Schwitters, Dada and De Stijl Scholarship, Artistic Research and Feminist Strategies.

### **1.4.1 Contemporary Art**

#### **Collage, Performance and Still and Moving Image**

My increasingly low carbon art practice contributes methods, thought processes and artworks to contemporary art's accelerating field of sustainable, environmental knowledge.<sup>4</sup> I have largely ceased buying new materials and recalling Schwitters' methods, I prefer to repurpose, use up surplus stock and redeploy 'found' materials. Rather than buying and

<sup>4</sup> I am a founding member of Climate Justice Artists Manchester; Spark (working title), a new low carbon artists network; Manchester Art Gallery Climate Justice Group (2020-2022) and I write reports for activist group, Climate Emergency Manchester.

cutting into a length of cloth and leaving behind a remainder, I now piece together fragments or use pre-existing pieces, notably of surplus self-adhesive vinyl. Where I use vinyl from a roll, I eventually use it all, including the roll where possible, for example in *Footnotes* (2017) and *Aspect Ratio* (2020) (*Plates* 15 & 37). For the latter, I used fabric left over from my fancy dress business and cut its cardboard inner tube in half to make the tube portable and to hold out the costume's shape. While motivated by recycling principles and disrupting wasteful commercial mechanisms, I am also aesthetically motivated by self-adhesive vinyl. The durational period of art making created the conditions for combining the vinyl's many colours with the surprising textures and forms made possible by the adhesive and the vinyl's responsiveness to the scissor cut.

*Grotto for Mina Loy* (2019) exemplifies my contribution to the contemporary field of collage, discussed further in Chapter 4 as a Transformative Site. I expanded collage's possibilities to explore how artist and poet Mina Loy and Schwitters' collage principles intersected with their lived experiences and reappeared in their respective literary forms. From discarded commercial materials, Mina Loy collaged the figures in *Communal Cot* (1949) based on the rough sleepers in her neighbourhood (Burke, 1996: 421). I echoed Schwitters' and Loy's approach by re-using materials leftover from my former practice, notably my stock of latex and foil balloons, which I would not countenance buying now for low carbon reasons and do not wish to contribute to their commercial demand. Schwitters' use of advertisement graphics resonates with my surplus vinyl usage similarly left over from the advertisement industry.

The tools for my cutting and thinking processes appear metaphorically in Barad's 'cutting together-apart' theory (2014: 19-20). Barad differentiates between interactions and her neologism, 'intra-actions' (Stark, 2016, n.p.) acknowledging the mutual constitution of the cuts before, during and after, not just the pieces left on either side of the cut. The intra-active cuts in my collage practice echo the significance of the cut in Schwitters' collages. For Barad (2014: 19-20), the cutting action 'entails the enactment of an agential cut' which 'involves a very unusual knife or pair of scissors!' Barad's terms helped me think through how and what I cut into and cut from in my artwork and the citation and redaction processes in my writing, in relation to Schwitters' cutting and forming of artworks and literature. Scissors and hole-punches provided the most expressive cut lines and layered textures.

Within the timescale of this thesis, mobile iphone capabilities have shaped my practice of using what is available to hand. I used moving images, still images and recorded sound as

collage and performance materials for both time-specific and repeatable artworks. An example is the digitally printed fabric used for *Artist Book 2017*, initially used for *Sch!!!!!!!* (2017), a site-specific performance with dispersed fabric Chapters, discussed further as a Transformative Site in Chapter 4.

Both my planned and site-responsive collective, solo and collaborative performances form an intersection with the aforementioned Contemporary Art, Schwitters, Dada and De Stijl Scholarship, Artistic Research and Feminist Strategies. Expanded collage artforms worked as active agents in performance and are discussed further in the *Dinner for Three* (2018) collaboration and the three iterations of *Fireworkskins* (2018).<sup>5</sup> Performance as research refers to my embodied and emplaced research, situated at the interface with an audience. Dada's active performance legacy (Decorating Dissidence *et al.*, 2020) and the opportunities generated by the 2016 Dada centenary, shaped the conditions of my performances' production. Co-presenting *Dada Deadpanel, UK—Z* (2016) at Cabaret Voltaire recalled Schwitters' participation in the 1923 *Dada Tour of Holland*. Theo van Doesburg proposed the tour as a shared platform to Schwitters. Revealing how performance time was apportioned, Schwitters replied:

You ask what I'd like to do on tour. We must discuss this. I have a number of turns, material enough for several evenings. But if all the other gentlemen you name take part, there will only be a quarter of an hour for each. (White in Van Doesburg, 2006: 11).

Schwitters and van Doesburg's correspondence demonstrates an art practice legacy of using a bricolage-like approach to availability of site, material and time, resonant in my collaborations which were part of performance programmes such as *Viva Dada* (2020). By broadening my focus on Schwitters, the influence of his peers' work in his work came into view. I enacted my performance as research methods within subject relevant networks at Dada festivals in Switzerland, Italy and Germany. Performing within these particular networks helped me to recognise the dynamics at play between Schwitters and his peers,

<sup>5</sup> *Fireworkskins*. Available at: <https://vimeo.com/257081785> [Accessed on 1 June 2022].

similar to my thinking in support of making collage in order to experientially understand both Schwitters' and Loy's collage principles.

#### 1.4.2 Schwitters, Dada and De Stijl Scholarship

Schwitters' friend and collaborator, Kate Steinitz (1968: 48) acknowledged his Dada context, saying that 'Kurt's material was so loaded with Dada that it was always living and vital.'<sup>6</sup>

Hans Arp's insistence that his peers 'were all Dada before the existence of Dada (see page 8) indicated a collective attitude. The cultural tide of Schwitters and his co-associated peers evokes overlapping avant-garde movements and collectives. Commenting on Dutch and Russian Constructivism's stylistic influences, Schwitters scholar Annegreth Nill (1994: 330) notes: 'What appears to have impressed Schwitters about these movements...was the anti-individualist stance in the call for a collective artistic activity.' *The Auguste Bolte Trilogy* (2019) expands upon Schwitters' 'collective artistic activity' including Constructivist and Dadaist Theo Van Doesburg's aforementioned De Stijl aliases, I.K. Bonset and Aldo Camini.

At the online book launch of *Myself and My Aims*, (Luke and Grundy, 2021) editor Megan Luke expressed 'an inkling which became unavoidable' concerning 'how attentive Schwitters was to De Stijl, more so than Constructivism, per se'. Luke commented, 'I actually think that Schwitters is deeply, deeply indebted to somebody like Theo van Doesburg', resonating with Barad's indebtedness and further embedding my diffractive reading of Schwitters through his peers (see page 9). Secondly and also pertinent to my inquiry, Luke's remark confirms the need for exploration of Schwitters and Van Doesburg's interactions, which my artistic research was concurrently examining. Luke and Grundy reflected on how a society accounts for a person's right to contradictions within their identity as both a social and aesthetic value. Luke stated 'Schwitters is an artist who is incredibly 'live' for contemporary artists today', a comment coincidentally and usefully allied to my artistic research.

<sup>6</sup> While Steinitz positively emphasised Schwitters' dadaist vitality, Tristan Tzara and Theo van Doesburg articulated Dada's proliferation through metaphors including microbes, disease and infection (White, 2006: 89), suggesting a contemporary re-evaluation of Dada, in terms of the Covid-19 pandemic, which is beyond the scope of this inquiry.

My doctorate was funded by University of Cumbria's first Kurt Schwitters Scholarship, following in the wake of renewed interest in Schwitters' time in Britain. Notable examples of renewed interest included the Royal Academy's Modern British Sculpture exhibition, featuring a replica of Schwitters' final Merzbau exterior (Youngs, 2011: n.p.) and Tate Britain's *Schwitters in Britain* exhibition in 2013 (Wilson, 2013: n.p.). The commissioned artworks by Adam Chodzko and Laure Prouvost for *Schwitters in Britain* further revealed his contemporary relevance. Prouvost, whose work I discuss further, proceeded to win the Turner Prize with *Wantee*, named in recognition of Schwitters' English companion. Coinciding with the beginning of my inquiry, the 2016 Dada centenary celebrations functioned as a public-facing vehicle and context to the lesser known Merz. In 2020, *Take Dada Seriously (It's worth it?)* (Decorating Dissidence, 2020) was a month-long digital project exploring Dada's contemporary relevance. As stated on the project's website:

there is much to critique in Dada's approaches too. Not least the appropriation of African and indigenous art, lack of gender parity and approaches to sexuality. We use this platform as a way to challenge art history and open up a global perspective on the movement. We aim to reclaim avant-garde techniques that can recharge us politically today, whilst being mindful of its failures.

Decorating Dissidence's intersectional feminist reclamation of valuable avant-garde techniques echoes my intent to locate generative alternatives to art historical legitimization. I have crossed paths both in person and through publications with artists and scholars engaged in exploring Dada and Merz's contemporary resonance, although anglophone resonance with De Stijl is less evident. My inquiry is situated in an expanding, international research network, perceptible at Schwitters-related exhibitions, performances, archives, symposia, and in journals and other texts, where different perspectives are celebrated and shared.

Artistic methods simultaneously conducting research and producing artwork are relatively unusual approaches in the art-historical field of Schwitters' scholarship.<sup>7</sup> In this underpopulated research field, I have identified underdeveloped areas of knowledge, particularly the migration of motifs across Schwitters' visual and literary works, and the

<sup>7</sup> To my knowledge, Heather Ross (Newcastle University) and I are the only artistic doctoral researchers focussing solely on Schwitters at the time of writing.



influence of peer-group collaboration. I overcame initial limitations in the field, which included having to establish the case for artistic research of Schwitters, prior to being invited to share platforms with Schwitters experts as an artist and early career researcher.

I reviewed the '100 Years of Merz' Symposium at the Sprengel Museum, Hannover, for the Kurt Schwitters Society Newsletter (2019a: 11-16) and emphasised the potential role of artistic research. Gwendolen Webster (2016: 78) states 'in the years immediately after Schwitters' death, artists had begun to adopt him as a role model'. In the symposium's plenary session, she reinforced this message, noting 'an assessment of the response of contemporary artists' is an important factor and 'a long overdue latecomer' in the critical reception of Schwitters' Merz', and that 'artists just get Schwitters, right away', enriching research with different perspectives.' (2019a: 15). Schwitters' transformative agency was examined in the symposium from many theoretical perspectives, closing on an artist's perspective. Heather Ross's examination of Schwitters' *Silence* poem for her film, *The Loud and The Soft Speakers* (2019), reactivated Schwitters' materiality and demonstrated the effects of an artist who 'gets' Schwitters by accessing understanding beyond the theoretical.

Overcoming my perceived limitations in a field largely populated by historical scholarship was facilitated by acknowledgement from within this field, indicating pathways for artists to demonstrate that arts research can access understanding that is beyond pure theory and historical analysis.

### **1.4.3 Artistic Research**

My doctoral contribution to the expanding field of art practice-based research required a custom-built methodology to accommodate my methods, subsequently contributing a potential case study to practice as research anthology texts. Rather than making generalisations about artistic research, practice as research literature pointing to the 'methodological abundance' proposes that the 'methodological field is wide open. Not only is a wider array of different methods used and available in any given field, but new innovative methods and ways of gathering data are being developed.' (Hannula *et al.*, 2014: 22, see also Barrett *et al.*, 2010). The European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) also concurs with this perspective and released 'The Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research' (2020)

advocating for full recognition of art practice-based research across Europe. The declaration states that artistic research:

incorporates many aspects and features that are not, or not solely, text based, such as artefacts, movements and sounds. Researchers need a variety of presentation platforms that combine these aspects and features in relevant forms and thus deviate from or expand the standard format of journal articles and/or research repositories/archives.

Outwardly stating diverse art research forms helpfully differentiates artistic research from other forms of research. However, critics of ELIA's framing of this declaration contest 'the grotesque neoliberal-bureaucratic language, art schools' land-grabbing claim to own and define artistic research. Both, of course, done with the best intentions to emancipate artistic research' (Cramer & Terpsma, 2021: n.p.). I attended the 12<sup>th</sup> Society of Artistic Research conference online in 2021 and learnt of the members' Research Catalogue Exposition facility, expanding the existing platforms for art research dissemination which include the British Library's current Ethos PhD repository and UK Universities' own repositories. While both repositories have limited search functions and accessibility, the new platform for artistic practice dissemination aimed largely at other artistic researchers is a useful option until a coherent solution is found for more widely accessible platforms.

Schwitters' inter-medial forms correspond compellingly with those advocated in the Vienna Declaration, and also with Cramer & Terpsma's opposition to defined artistic boundaries. In Schwitters' 1939 Christmas letter to his wife Helma, he asks 'Isn't it strange that one can, so to speak, sit next to oneself and objectively evaluate oneself? That sounds odd but it isn't.' (Luke, 2014: 2), sounding much like the analytical and polyvocal processes of the artistic doctorate.<sup>8</sup> His critical, theoretical and reflective writing on art anticipated contemporary, meta-cognitive artistic research, with many of his reflective letters and journal articles annotated in Luke and Grundy's 157 translations (2021).

Two developing communities and contexts for my inquiry are artistic research in general and artistic research of Schwitters. The public dissemination of my artwork at Dada festivals, exhibitions and residencies overlaps the two communities through performance as research,

<sup>8</sup> Schwitters would surely be a contender for an Honorary Doctorate for Artistic Research.

finding resonance with Hannula *et al.* who state that through artistic research, 'one is allowed to push the envelope to explore the limits of practice... a participatory act and reflection with a strong performative element' (2014: 3-4). My continuation as an artistic researcher in both overlapping communities is poised for development. *Angles for Augusta* (Part II), a research lead which I have set up to be beyond the scope of this inquiry, and my ongoing collaboration with Heather Ross as Artist A & Artist B are both constituted by multiple art forms including performance. Hannula *et al.* propose that artists as researchers should be 'Running around and altering their positions' in 'a very productive moment of enjoying one's freedom and responsibility as a researcher' (2014: 167). The methodology generating this inquiry, *Angles for Augusta* (Part II) and my contribution to Artist A & Artist B concur with Hannula *et al.* in their respective inbuilt dynamism.

#### **1.4.4 Feminist Strategies**

I have actively sought research pathways differing from the historical avant-garde's canonical legitimisation that posthumously secured Schwitters' place in Western Art History. In *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters*, Schwitters scholar Dorothea Dietrich (1993: 1-3) traces the path to Schwitters' canonical legitimisation alluded to in the title of my thesis. Dietrich concludes that 'postmodern theories are beginning to unmask modernism (and thus the dichotomy between the old and the new) as a myth created by the dominant culture.' Severing the old from the new while benefiting from inheritance but not acknowledging indebtedness, seemingly creates an opening for myths. Dominant culture's mythologizing of Schwitters understates his networks' significance, creating a role for intersectional research to reassess the lack, and reinstate the severing of the old from the new, into an 'agential' cut (Barad, 2014: 19-20) which acknowledges indebtedness and inheritance.

I sought to challenge the idea of Schwitters as a solitary genius by acknowledging the reciprocal significance of his peers from the outset. With an expanded research horizon in mind, I scoped out my approach to feminist strategies at a one-week intensive course in *Feminism and Contemporary Art*, led by *n:paradoxa* journal's founder and editor, Katy Deepwell. I intuited that prioritised reading of established and legitimising avant-garde literature benchmarks would inflect the material thinking necessary for my artwork. I aimed not to oversteer towards canonical legitimation and instead made room for lesser-heard voices in the field. My starting point was the out of print book, *Women in Dada: Essays on*

*Sex, Gender, and Identity*, edited by Naomi Sawelson-Gorse (1998). The order in which I ingested literature as textual matter affected my artistic practice's material progression, while the order I ingested art, dialogue and situations seemed less of a hindrance, due to my perception of their malleability. I anticipated and acted upon my wary intuition with an 'art first' approach. I selected literature to read alongside my artwork which I felt would balance my openness to any aspect of Schwitters oeuvre. In doing so, I made space for resonance between what I was making, reading and seeing, including live and documented exhibitions and performances. My strategy led me to aspects of Schwitters' literature and artwork that became pertinent to my inquiry and I developed a sensory attunement to selecting literature according to my appetite. Through this evolving strategy, I noted that the canonical route would have stayed with Merz as the main element of Schwitters' practice, potentially jeopardising what I came to understand through Tran and I of his peer-to-peer collaborations and motifs which migrated across his art forms.

I found alternative strategies in *Mina Loy – Navigating the Avant-Garde*, a USA-based collaborative project focusing on the lesser known British Dadaist (Churchill *et al.*, 2020: n.p.). The *Mina Loy* project reframed the avant-garde as '*en dehors garde*' meaning outside of, as opposed to ahead of the guard. I understand the 'Garde' as canonical legitimisation by the 'dominant culture', proposed by Dietrich (1993: 1-3) to be mythologists of how the avant-garde is constituted. *En dehors garde* proposes alternative direction, turning away from canonical legitimisation and returning with differing and even contradictory perspectives to alter knowledge constituency and broaden avant-garde's legitimation. Allied to Barad's agential 'inheritance and indebtedness', by turning away, *en dehors garde* does not seek to negate canonical legitimisation, therefore the 'Garde' remains. Rather, by 'swerving off course' (Juelskjaer, 2012: 12) the new trajectory deviates while acknowledging where it deviates from.

Aspects of artist and theorist Bracha L. Ettinger's *Metafeminist Notes* (2019) remained close to hand throughout my inquiry. In *Metafeminist Notes*, Ettinger problematises what she describes as modernism's 'surface crisis', favouring instead a 'multilayered subreality' (2019: 11). I found Modernism's contemporaneous context and Ettinger's attention to layers helpful when mapped onto Schwitters. Ettinger (2019: 4) explores layers through her 'borderlinking' frame of reference, a thought process co-joining all relevant constituencies. For example, I visualised borderlinking the multi-layered materiality of my artistic Schwitters research with Barad's temporal 'inheritance and indebtedness' (Juelskjaer, 2012: 12) to connect their

specificities. Ettinger (2019: 17) forms connections borderlinking between inside kernels of different objects and subjects' and dissolves the borders through their linkage. Schwitters deployed a similar metaphor of kernels (Dietrich, 1993: 132) and husks (1993: 129) as a distinguishing classification critiquing his fellow Dadaists in favour of the kernel. I reinforced links between Schwitters and his peers to make room for lesser-heard voices and new perspectives, and to seek out Schwitters' motifs, whose pathways then became visible in his visual and literary works. Ettinger's internalised metaphors of 'different objects and subjects' insist on proximity for a connection to be made. Through proximity between Schwitters, his peers and migrating motifs, a co-affecting materiality arose between my new perspectives and Schwitters' legacy.<sup>9</sup> I kept research material to hand when making artwork, for instance, I took Barad's 2003 'How Matter Comes to Matter' paper to *Doremifasolasido* residency (2016), while cognitively remaining in proximity to Schwitters' textual, visual and sound works. Leaning into a proximity between artwork materials and Schwitters ensured that I recognised and articulated the 'multilayered subreality' (Ettinger, 2019: 11) of correspondences between my work and that of Schwitters and his networks. Like Barad's agential cut (2014: 19-20), I understand this movement as one gesture.

## **1.5 Navigating the Thesis**

Each chapter has a different approach reflecting the consequences of my non-canonical route.

### **Chapter 1. Introduction**

I have mapped out how I situate my artworks and the written exegesis of their effects in relation to the research inquiry. I have referred to Barad's diffraction theory to express the multiple inheritances and indebtedness in my intersecting research fields of Contemporary Art, Schwitters, Dada and De Stijl Scholarship, Artistic Research and Feminist Strategies.

### **Chapter 2. Navigating the Research Realm**

Chapter 2 explains my theoretical framework and methodology through *Interface with Feminism and Contemporary Art* and *Interface with Nomadic Methodologies* respectively. I

<sup>9</sup> Proximity was a recurring theme that I suggested as a possible name for what is now Proximity Collective.

establish my collection of feminist strategies and contemporary art contexts and lay out my methodology of errantry.

### **Chapter 3. *The Auguste Bolte Trilogy: An Art Practice-Based Study of Kurt Schwitters' Short Story of Augusta Bolte.***

In *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* (2019 —), I explore the compressed layers of Schwitters' short story of the protagonist, Auguste Bolte. I reveal the otherwise obscured effects of Schwitters' allusions for contemporary reconsideration of Schwitters, his peers and transmedial motifs.

### **Chapter 4. Transformative Sites**

In Chapter 4, I propose a series of configurations under the rubric of Transformative Sites to expand on the effects of my artworks. I draw out routes to contemporary resonance with Schwitters and his networks from within Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy: An Art Practice-Based Study of Kurt Schwitters' Short Story of Augusta Bolte.*

### **Chapter 5. Conclusion**

The conclusion reflects on the intentions and outcomes of the artwork documented in *Plates* and the exegesis. I also draw attention to ongoing research stimulated by and beyond the scope of this inquiry.

## Chapter 2. Navigating the Research Realm

### 2.1 Two Interfaces

The term 'interface' for *Interface with Feminism and Contemporary Art* and *Interface with Nomadic Methodologies* draws attention to my methods and selected theories' proximity to the research question (see page 10). My art practice featured prominently as a research navigation method, prompting and indicating texts, and functioning as a mechanism for an art practice-based review of literature.

### 2.2 Interface with Feminism

At the *Feminism and Contemporary Art Summer School*, my tutorial with Katy Deepwell helped to situate my inquiry within the diversely populated fields of intersectional feminism and contemporary interdisciplinary art. During the tutorial we discussed the feminist practice of citation, tracing texts and exhibitions through referencing as a way of finding lesser-heard voices, but without precluding those more established. My making-on-the-move methodology consequently became a mobilised navigation of relevant texts and exhibitions, contributing to feminism's multiple perspectives by accessing Schwitters by means of alternative routes.

#### 2.2.1 Canonical Legitimation

Art historian and cultural analyst of international, postcolonial feminist studies in the visual arts and visual culture, Griselda Pollock (2012: 5-6) proposes an alternative to:

a linear history of beginnings, fadings and endings... [in] the image of a landscape, with many different features, diverse settlements, reworked connections, new highways and recovered byways, and shifting geologies as well as refashioned surfaces.

The landscape proposed by Pollock resonated with the research realm I visualised and populated with artworks from methods actively connecting me to my research question.

Deepwell gave Summer School attendees a durational perspective of feminism in art's history. Her perspective illuminated my research landscape with significant art historical moments between Schwitters' death and the time when my interest in Merz and Dada began in earnest, in 2014. Deepwell recommended reading canonical Dada texts which I strategically read later rather than from the outset, such as Bürger *et al.*, (1984). She drew attention to Schwitters' *Merz Barn's* 2013 reconstruction at the Royal Academy and the role of my 2016 scholarship in re-instating Schwitters. As Schwitters' legatee, my funded scholarship was an opportunity to enact the solo activities, collectivism and collaboration of my contemporary artistic research, to reveal the artistic effects of mutual indebtedness between Schwitters and his peers.

### **2.2.2 Special Collection of Feminist Strategies**

I 'collected' the following strategies from feminist scholarship, notionally keeping them within reach for reference alongside my materials and growing connections to Schwitters. The theoretical strategies I brought together are to be imagined assembled as if placed non-hierarchically on the shelves of a Special Collections library. All of the texts are present and support each in their substantial critical mass. Their specificities and relationalities make them special in this collective context. Additions to the collection and their use in the thesis were contingent upon the coalition of my ideas. The criteria for inclusion in the collection were metaphors of movement to help mobilise my research, steering away from canonical 'go-to' texts. Avoiding pre-determined paths meant finding alternative relevant texts, which eventually began to form correspondences through their proximity. Like the handling of collage materials, decisions for the Special Collections were made by selecting and moving elements together according to the logic of my imposed criteria. Like any library, certain texts will be drawn upon and referred to more than others at any given time, which does not decrease the necessity for the presence of the lesser referred to texts. In this inquiry Karen Barad and Bracha L. Ettinger's texts may appear as key theories through the editing process, particularly in relation to my expanded collage practice, although all placements within the Special Collection are equally valid and necessary, and maintain their collective framing as Feminist Strategies.



### **Sara Ahmed**

At the intersection of feminist, queer and race studies, independent scholar Sara Ahmed (2013: n.p.) examines how institutional and everyday power is secured and also challenged. Her 'paradox of the footprint' problematises:

how paths are created by being followed and followed by being created. The more a path is travelled upon, the easier it can be to travel upon that path...we can be directed along a path by being supported in a direction. This is why leaving a well-trodden path can be so difficult: it can mean leaving a support system.

Ahmed evokes the supportive companionship kept or followed in the face of collective struggle. My mobilised artistic methods resisted the default of canonical texts in order to create new paths determining their own legitimation, rather than reinforcing a well-trodden but narrow path of least resistance. My aim is to make my new path citable, leading to traceable, lesser-heard voices. Rather than canonical citation often referring only to itself or other canonical texts, I found that alternative paths of citation do not necessarily preclude the canonical while also including lesser known perspectives.

### **Griselda Pollock**

Griselda Pollock's paper *Unexpected Turns: The Aesthetic, the Pathetic and the Adversarial in the Long Durée of Art's Histories* (2012, 1-32) is an alternative path debating the canonical. Recalling the feminist practice of citation (see page 25) and Ahmed's supportive pathways, Pollock elucidates how the 'resurgence of feminism has been a world-wide intellectual revolution that has radically altered the entire field of knowledge.' (2012: 21). 'Unexpected Turns' is a metaphor of revolutionary movement suggesting the freedom to find pathways to centralise the researcher's interests, detached from any *a priori* expectations and the weight of canonical legitimation.

### **Bracha L. Ettinger**

In an example of the feminist practice of citation and how alternative paths lead to revealing perspectives, Pollock (2012: 4) cites and advocates for contemporary artist and theorist Bracha L. Ettinger, who:

asks if the aesthetical domain has within it some useful knowledge or even subjective dispositions that being proto-ethical, foster inclinations towards respect, care and compassion for the other, which can subsequently enter into and transform another sphere of public debate and action.

Compassion and inclination, Ettinger's metaphor of movement, resonates with the supportive pathway proposed by Ahmed (2013) and proposes alternative routes for transformative action. Ettinger mobilises the image of inclination with her neologism *fascinace*, inclining towards connectivity. Pollock (2012: 2) relates Ettinger's *fascinace* as 'the affect and desire-laden aesthetic feel charged up from infancy's investment of sight with many levels not of anxiety and dread (Freud/Lacan) but of voluptuous intensities and yearnings for connectivity'. Ettinger's mechanism for progressing along alternative paths challenges dominant discourse by proposing a change in the gaze's direction, resonating with *en dehors garde's* turning away and return (see page 30).

In a critique of modernism, Ettinger's 'Metafeminist Manifesto' seeks 'DEPTH AFTER THE ERA OF THE SURFACE' [sic] (Ettinger, 2019: 11). Although Schwitters is contemporaneous with modernism, his literary and visual artwork's textual and textural properties demonstrate that his work does not correspond wholly with Ettinger's description (2019: 11) of 'the flat surface of modernity with its obsession for the bigger, the vaster, the immersive, and the monumental' with the notable exception of the *Merzbauten* (Merz buildings). Ettinger's probing beneath the surface for an articulation of relationality is a useful metaphor for the layering of collage materials, and for my manoeuvres between *Augusta Bolte's* textual and textural allusions.

### **Karen Barad**

Physicist and philosopher Karen Barad (Juelskjaer, 2012: 12-13) proposes an ethical and generative one-cut movement, 'cutting-together-apart', already deployed in my introduction (see page 23). The possibility of self-determination is maintained without breaking with inheritance and indebtedness.

If 'turning' indicates 'swerving off course' that's one thing, but if it is meant to indicate a 'turning away from' or 'moving beyond', a sense of getting on with it and leaving the past behind – that's not how I understand my own project.

'Swerving off course' acknowledges the past while moving in the direction of an uncertain future, which is how I viewed my initially unknown research. Swerving inclines away from a given course, whereas Ettinger inclines towards one. Bringing these theoretical inclinations and movements into proximity sets off a chicaning action, sustaining the motion and supporting my expanded collage methods by simultaneously creating and supplementing the navigation of my research realm.

### **Barbara Bolt**

The swerving metaphor is reinforced by art theorist Barbara Bolt's account (2013: 2) of the unpredictable swerve of the '*clinamen*' (see Abstract, page 1). Bolt traces feminist New Materialist philosophy back to the classical philosophical world. She relates how Epicurus focuses on 'the unpredictable swerve of atoms [which] sets things in motion and initiates new patterns and movements...It is through these material movements and productive processes of matter that the world is made.' This transformative and mobilised train of thought complements my methodology's errant research movements and also the material thinking of using what comes or can be kept to hand. My making-on-the-move using portable or found materials created responsive and 'unpredictable swerves'. The swerves oscillate between what I seek in the research question and what I discover through artistic research. Both Barad and Bolt refer to the movements discussed within the disciplines of particle physics and atomic physics respectively. Their metaphors' small scale yet dynamic movements helped me to expose the relational and incremental effects of my material methods and research findings. Using these theories as touchstones, I noted my findings and correspondences as they inclined in and out of proximity with each other.

### **Donna Haraway**

In *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, academic and ecofeminist Donna Haraway (2016: 147) refers to mud, muddling and muddying the waters 'as a theoretical trope and soothing wallow to trouble the trope of visual clarity as the only sense and affect for mortal thinking.' Haraway challenges the visual sense to stir up the muddy water to evoke senses not limited to optics. The stirring motion is a metaphor for a commitment to 'Staying with the Trouble', which I interpret as tenaciously finding things out by deploying my senses through artistic research.

Haraway's call for a multi-sensory commitment echoes Ettinger's alternative to privileging the scopic gaze (Pollock 2012: 2). Extending the metaphor, I imagine dislodging Schwitters'

canonised Merz brand as if it were an intransigent mass, baked into a dry riverbed. My artistic research methods' fluid thinking, energized by my errant artistic research adventure, notionally washes over the mass and muddies the surrounding water. The binding mud dissolves and releases the canonized Merz mass, dispersing into multiple muddled directions. In this metaphor, all readings of Schwitters' Merz are released in the newly-mobilised muddy water, visually limited by its cloudiness and encouraging new modes of perception due to having to look more attentively.

**Suzanne W. Churchill, Linda A. Kinnahan, and Susan Rosenbaum**

In the digital project, *Mina Loy: Navigating the Avant-Garde* (2018a), *en dehors garde* authors Suzanne W. Churchill, Linda A. Kinnahan, and Susan Rosenbaum relate how the term *en dehors garde* was generated in conversation with scholar Nancy Selleck, who began her career outside academia as a professional ballet dancer.

Taking a cue from classical ballet rather than warfare, we propose the term *en dehors garde* to describe the strategies of writers and artists whose mode of experimentation does not conform to the 'martialised', oppositional stance associated with the historical avant-garde... 'Avant' means 'before', implying that artists are in front of culture and ahead of their time, arranged in a spatial and temporal hierarchy, militant and prepared for attack. 'En dehors' means 'toward the outside', implying that artists are turning away from the center or norm, moving in a circular motion, with an eye toward the center. Upon return, the center is transformed, adjusted, and reformed by the arc of the revolution.

The digital Mina Loy project, simultaneously contemporary art practice, art history and feminist theory, deployed the *en dehors garde* alternative. Turning outwards from an acknowledged centralised position, like 'unpredictable swerve', 'unexpected turns', '*fascinace*' and 'muddling and muddying', *en dehors garde* proposes an alternative thinking through of emergent proximities achieved through incremental movement. It swerves, turns and redirects its movement towards non-binary, non-confrontational and generative thought and action.

I devised errant artistic methods commensurate to the task of forming a correspondence with Schwitters' mechanisms and motions. My overlapping Special Collection of Feminist Strategies enacts my preference for untrodden paths around a notional and purpose-built

'research realm'. By not working in any particular studio, gallery or workshop, I sustained a responsive 'fleet of foot' approach to materials, opportunities and lines of inquiry. I set enough scope to correspond over time with Schwitters' dynamism, reflective thinking and artistic developments. Schwitters managed his networked practice, encouraging and accommodating response and change, until change led to the chaos experienced beginning in 1929 until his life ended in exile in 1948. (Webster, 1997: 229).

### **2.2.3 Demystification of the Canon**

Mina Loy historian Amy Morris (2013: 82) states that 'Recent scholarship has demystified canon formation, to the point that literary value is perceived by some as 'an artefact' created by material and cultural mechanisms'. Scholarly demystification has led to my encounters with Schwitters' lesser-commented-upon literature and artworks by not overdetermining what these might be or how I might reach them. I steadily ingested relevant primary and secondary source material to remain within reach of Schwitters, his networks, intersectional feminism and contemporary art to connect with resonances arising from my art practice's correlations to the research question. I revealed new routes connecting Schwitters' migrating motifs, his *i*-poems and fellow artists by my art practice-led method of reviewing literature. I followed up with literature such as avant-garde magazines and subject specific scholarship which informed my *Augusta Bolte* artworks and the exegesis.

### **2.3 Interface with Nomadic Methodologies**

This interface reflects on the development of my methodology with examples from my art practice. The characteristics of movement and change in the Special Collection of Feminist Strategies correspond with nomadic subjectivity in Rosi Braidotti's *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (2011) and Maria Tamboucou's *Non-Nomadic Subject of Feminism* (2020). Within the extensive academic field of thinking about the nomadic, I found a correspondence to my practice in the writer, poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant's concept of errantry (1997). With reference to Glissant, I developed the articulation of my methodology of errantry to more accurately express the dynamic interaction between my art and writing practices and the research question. As previously stated, 'errant' is a term I adopted for its engagement of the senses evoked in the word's meaning of going off in search of adventure (see page 13). I extended 'search' to mean artistic research, to account

for its mobilised sensory characteristics. I felt it important to maintain my purposeful take on nomadic urgency to sustain my pace, a restlessness that I assess as both a virtue and a necessary dynamic. Errantry aptly describes my artistic practice's passing through and stopping off to make and recognise connections illuminating both Schwitters' work and mine.

### **2.3.1 Rosi Braidotti's Theory of Nomadic Subjectivities**

Braidotti (2011: 6) proposes a generative approach to feminist nomadic thinking, which 'rejects melancholia in favour of the politics of affirmation and mutual specification of self and other in sets of relations or assemblages.' Her rejection of melancholia echoed my intention to be resourceful and affirmative. Later, it echoed the affirmative attitudes of Ettinger's *fascinace* and Haraway's multi-sensory commitment (see page 29). Braidotti's allusion to assemblages evoked a promising connection to Schwitters' assemblage practice (McBride, 2007: 254). Similarly, Braidotti's 'mutual specification' recalled my material and time-contingent artworks and methods' relationally constituted site and situation responsiveness. As an alternative to melancholia, Braidotti (2011: 5) instead proposes:

the cartographic method... a theoretically based and politically informed reading of the process of power relations. It fulfils the function of providing both exegetical tools and creative theoretical alternatives, so as to assess the impact of material and discursive conditions upon our embodied and embedded subjectivity.

Braidotti's nomadic theory worked effectively as an initial motivational force, and I, as an 'embodied and embedded subjectivity', conceived of my cartographic method as the aforementioned research realm (see page 31). I notionally populated the research realm with artworks functioning as 'exegetical tools' to explore Schwitters and as expressive art forms to share with audiences. All artworks and resonances within the realm are connected by retraceable pathways recalling Ahmed's traceable 'paradox of the footprint' (see page 27). With Braidotti's cartographic methodology and theoretical tools in mind, I sought to emplace my art practice and subjectivity, physically and experientially into site and situation responsive conditions. Emplacement is a term which 'attends to the question of experience by accounting for the relationships between bodies, minds and the materiality and sensoriality of the environment.' (Pink, 2009: 25).

Braidotti (2011: 5) distinguishes between the 'nomadic subject' and 'the experience of peoples or cultures that are literally nomadic', specifying that 'It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of traveling.' Her emphasis on subversion resonated with my proposed subversion of Schwitters' canonisation. My methods, however, explicitly performed the emplaced and experiential act of travelling, often by train and carrying materials between places. Schwitters also absorbs train travel into his practice, noted in this anecdote by architect Mies van der Rohe.

Once Schwitters was on a train, carrying great roots from trees with him. Someone asked him what the roots were, and he replied that they constituted a cathedral. 'But that is no cathedral, that is only wood' the stranger exclaimed. 'But don't you know that cathedrals are made out of wood?' he replied. (Motherwell, 1951: xxvii).

Van der Rohe's anecdote demonstrates how the act of traveling with conspicuous materials in public offers unexpected exchanges and opportunities as a method for thinking and experimentation (Fig. 1). Schwitters' reference to wood also recalls Michael Craig Martin's *An Oak Tree* (1973). In this conceptual work, Martin insisted that a glass of water on a glass shelf was an oak tree, alluding to materiality's potential for transformational interconnectedness.





Figure 1. *\_Airholders* (2018) Photographed on Manchester to Carlisle train, 2018.

Braidotti's grounded 'exegetical tools' eventually proved incompatible with my 'fleet of foot' practice methods. I prioritised the physical and intellectual weight of my materials, Schwitters' primary and secondary source material and my making-on-the-move methods. Braidotti's tools consequently became a touchstone for my collected feminist strategies of movement.<sup>10</sup>

A bricolage practice involves collecting and keeping materials to hand (Handforth and Taylor, 2016) whereas my peripatetic practice prioritises portability over storing materials and I collect materials for immediate use. Concepts, processes and materials needed to travel well with the inquiry. The feminist strategies travelled well with my practice's errantry, coalescing into a collection while fragmented from the contexts of their larger bodies of work, although traceable through citation. Together the strategies formed a supportive and specific pivot in proximity to the active correspondences between my artworks and Schwitters.

### **2.3.2 ?Value Added (2014 —)**

?Value Added is an ongoing artwork (see *Plate 14*). The process involves taking out a library book, asking the author to sign it, then I return it with the newly added value of the signature. I also seek to indicate a connection between the inscription and the book's content.<sup>11</sup>

At the New Materialisms Conference in Paris in 2017, I experienced Braidotti's charismatic 'rock opera' keynote speech, as she referred to it. Iris van der Tuin was also a keynote

<sup>10</sup> The title of Rosi Braidotti's retirement farewell lecture (13 June 2022) 'Affirmative Ethics: We Are Rooted But We Flow' resonated with Glissant's nomadic discourse on rootedness (1997: 11).

<sup>11</sup> To date I have 6 signed books returned to Manchester's University libraries.



speaker at this conference, and I took a library copy of her book, *Generational Feminism/ New Materialist Introduction to a Generative Approach* (V.d. Tuin, 2014) to read on the journey. I explained *Value Added* to Van der Tuin who said the best thing would have been to get Rosi Braidotti, who she considered as her generational New Materialist mother-figure, to co-sign it. Unfortunately, the interaction remained incomplete on this occasion, as Rosi Braidotti had already left.

### 2.3.3 Maria Tamboukou's Non-Nomadic Subject of Feminism

The New Materialisms Conference program listed Maria Tamboukou's paper, *The Non-Nomadic Subject of Feminism*. I attended the conference and learnt of New Materialism's breadth, activated in feminist studies across multiple disciplines, although Tamboukou's paper was withdrawn. I contacted her as I was interested in her paper's potential for nomadic thinking in my methodology's development.

As a founding member of Manchester Metropolitan University's Nomadic Reading Group, along with Mor Cohen and Kaija-Luisa Kurik, I would certainly have proposed discussing Tamboukou's paper. The reading group became a collective and presented *Being Nomad* exhibition (2018) and event for *Prologue*, an Arts and Humanities postgraduate festival at Manchester Metropolitan University (henceforth MMU). Tamboukou offered us a quote from her research for use in *Being Nomad*. Materially citing feminist practice, I collaged her text across the front of *Triptych*, a three-part configuration of *Being Nomad* journal's only hard copies (Fig. 2). We exhibited *Triptych* at the *Being Nomad* event and took a copy each, meaning that the quote was disseminated as we moved on with our studies and practices, and the form became dispersed like *Artist Book 2017's* Chapters (see page 16).

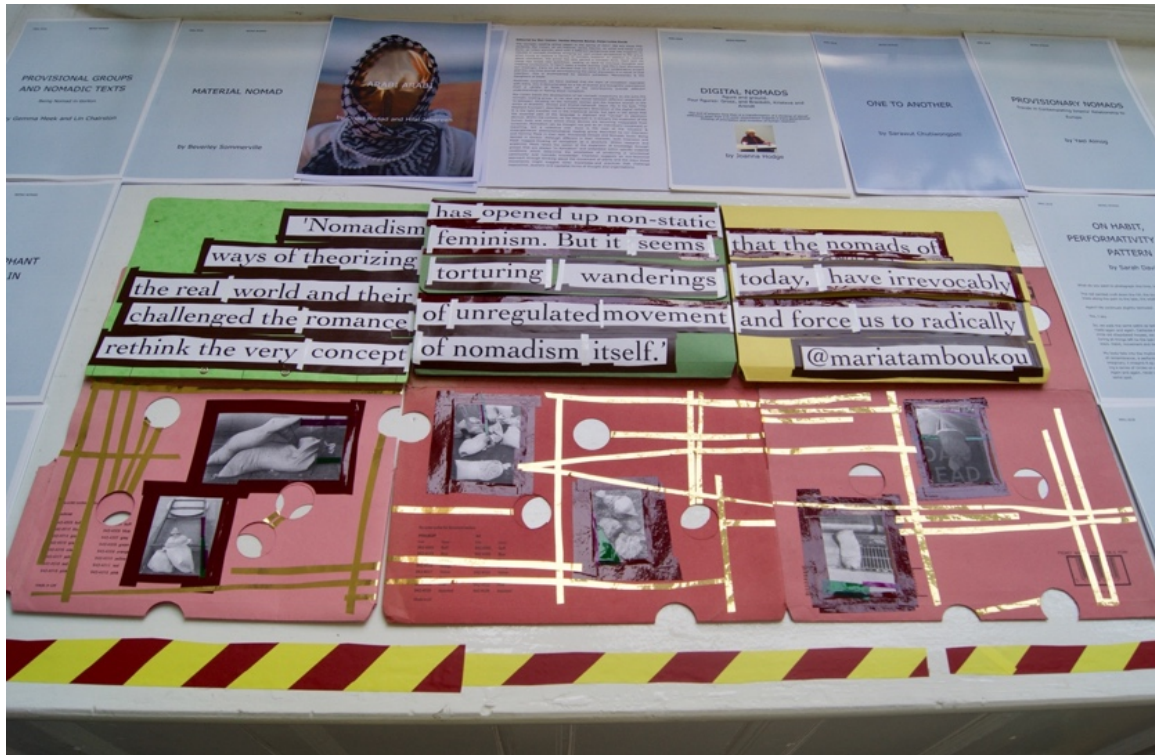


Figure 2. *Triptych* (2018) Quote by Tamboukou and my photographic study of sandbags. Exhibit for *Being Nomad*. Righton Building, MMU, 2018.

My initial interest was piqued by Tamboukou's *Non-Nomadic Subject of Feminism* although I wrongly anticipated that feminism itself would be considered non-nomadic. I imagined a feminist counter argument re-evaluating the 'nomadic' as a shared struggle, refusing to move in response to the disingenuous framing of choice as flexibility (Braidotti, 2014). Three years after the conference, in 2020, Tamboukou published her paper which I now recognise as a counter argument to Braidotti's 'Nomadic Subject' and theoretical framework. Tamboukou (2020: 21) contends that 'the figuration of the *non-nomad* can bridge gaps between thought and the real' that is, between theory and practice. Tamboukou (2020: 18) explains how the *non-nomad*:

does not negate [Braidotti's] nomadism but rather points to its shadows and margins. As an emerging figuration, the *non-nomad* resembles lines of flight within the restrictions of the real; she demythologises fictions of free movement without shattering its political imaginaries.

Tamboucou emplaces material and experiential nomadic thinking by pointing to ‘shadows and margins’, whereas Braidotti’s nomadic cartography proposes theoretical tools. Schwitters initially enjoyed an increasingly difficult ‘nomadic subjectivity’, ultimately resembling a ‘non-nomad’ in the shadows of his exile, recalling Braidotti and Tamboucou respectively for the contemporary reader.

### **2.3.4 My Recoverist Family (2017)**

Tamboucou’s ‘*non-nomad*’ illuminates the unseen by turning its energy away from the dominant narrative, echoing *en dehors garde*’s turn away from the canonical avant-garde (see page 30). The ‘shadows and margins’ of Tamboucou’s ‘*non-nomad*’ recurred in the film, *My Recoverist Family* (Ravetz and Wahl, 2017). I undertook a commission which informed the film for Portraits of Recovery’s project, *UNSEEN: simultaneous realities* (2017) by arts organisation, advocating for recoveryism from substance and alcohol abuse in the LGBTQ+ community. The commission tested my developing methods within the continuum of my freelance art practice, as a member of a mobilised and discursive team with its own priorities. My responsibility of devising and delivering workshops provided a productive tension which required balancing the group’s willingness with my growing confidence in my developing methods and methodology. Negotiating, planning and gathering on site to carry out a workshop activity, largely in public, also required my attunement to the unexpected, so that the project’s consequences could coalesce and form content. My initial role developed from being the performance artist David Hoyle’s supporting artist, to becoming a participant in the project. The group progressed from being a gathering of participants to becoming the ‘Recoverist Family’ of the film’s title. I devised making-on-the-move workshops, forming content for *My Recoverist Family* (Fig. 3) directed, filmed and edited by Amanda Ravetz and Huw Wahl.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *My Recoverist Family* won an award from Reelheart International Film Festival, Toronto, and led to multiple outcomes including an academic paper for the Slovene Anthropological Society.



Figure 3. *Artist Book 2017* Chapter showing *My Recoverist Family* workshop (2017).

A co-written academic paper (Prest *et al.*, 2020: 36) examining the ‘unsettled narrative(s)’ within the film, credits how it ‘successfully captures these affective relationships, showing them in a state of constant movement and interchange.’ (2020: 36). The (non)nomadic workshop methods for *My Recoverist Family* generated exploration by turning towards the ‘shadows and margins’ (Tamboucou, 2020: 18) of the participants’ narratives. My contribution was described in the paper in terms of ‘movement, improvisation and creativity... Haynes brought her expertise of nomadic art practice and research into the project, introducing making activities and encouraging discussions undertaken on the move, working in temporary spaces and places.’ (Prest *et al.*, 2020: 35). Portraits of Recovery’s *UNSEEN: simultaneous realities* repositions and turns recoveryism into sensory social relations and support, made visible by the film.

### 2.3.5 Becoming Errant

My understanding and intention of using the word errantry is entangled in the roots and rhizomes of Édouard Glissant’s nomadic discourse (1997: 11), also present in Tamboucou’s discussion. In *Poetics of Relation* (1990), my methodology of pursuing unbeaten paths in (re)search of artistic adventure is illuminated by Glissant. He states:

The notion of the rhizome maintains, therefore, the idea of rootedness but challenges that of a totalitarian root. Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other.

Glissant cites co-authors Deleuze and Guattari's foundational nomadic discourse and critique of the totalitarian root. The totalitarian root recalls the dominant, self-referential canonical path to Schwitters, while my artistic methods and citations on their non-predetermined path of relationality and traceability, resonate with the rhizome's multiple roots. Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 380) elevate the 'path between points' of the nomad's movements so that 'every point is a relay and exists only as a relay.' Over the durational period of my inquiry, nevertheless, I found that stopping off points exceeded their function as a place to leave from, identifying further paths between points at the stopping off site.

To create new errant pathways within my artwork, I strategised relay points as 'adventures within adventures' for *Merzwomen and the Daughters of Dada* (2018) optimising the relatively long 'stop-off' at University of Cumbria compared to other artworks. Using my University access, I resourcefully used the studio space, workshop and grounds to explicitly stop off as if for respite. I came in from public to non-public space to develop, reflect and then present my artistic research's scope in an exhibition in University of Cumbria's public Vallum Gallery.

Errantry materialised in *Merzwomen and the Daughters of Dada* exhibits as artistic adventures through their transformation over time. *Total Archive*, *\_Airholders* and *Dinner for Three* materially and spatially altered during the exhibition, while *Fracas: Capture the Rupture*<sup>13</sup> projected via the viewers' ears and eyes from inside the gallery to the outside and beyond. Conversely, returning for two consecutive years to the six-day *Artist Camp* residency at Sidney Nolan Trust, Powys, exemplifies errant artworks made-on-the-move', enacted and activated in temporary places and situations.

<sup>13</sup> *Fracas: Capture the Rupture* (2018) Haynes, J. and Ross, H. Available at: <https://soundcloud.com/jackie-haynes-307318339/fracas-capturing-the-rupture> [Accessed: 15 June 2022].

The *Merzwomen and the Daughters of Dada* stop-off differed from *Artist Camp* in that although I carried work and materials between my Manchester hometown and Carlisle, the bricolage-like practice of using what comes to hand was facilitated by a capacity for storing work and materials and using heavy equipment. My productive stop-off increased my artistic interventions' depth while throwing my methodology of errantry into relief.

Having been initially motivated by Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subjectivities theory and then rerouted by Maria Tamboucou, I found articulation for my methodology with Édouard Glissant's relational errantry. Translator Betsy Wing (1997: xvi) introduces and illuminates Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, stating:

errantry follows neither an arrowlike trajectory nor one that is circular and repetitive, nor is it mere wandering-idle roaming. Wandering, one might become lost, but in errantry one knows at every moment where one is — at every moment in relation to the other.

Wandering and errors contribute to my methods but differ from errantry as a motivational methodology of cognisant movement in (re)search of artistic adventure. A consistently 'arrowlike trajectory' is at odds with my research realm's responsive creation and navigation. I seek to keep my inquiry's constituent parts in view of each other, with my methodology illuminated by the temporal and cognitive relativity of errantry. In practice, however, my direct approach to *Augusta Bolte* was relatively 'arrowlike', distinguishing it from my more responsive approach to Schwitters' other works.

A 'circular and repetitive' methodology would risk oversteering unnecessarily towards patterns. Patterns occurred organically, such as in my first visit to Sidney Nolan Trust, without knowing that I would return the following year. Seriality of forms, such as *Casts* (2018) and *?Value Added* were open-ended from the outset, as was my involvement in artist collectives such as Proximity, ARG and Nomadic Reading Group, begun without predetermined end points. Becoming truly lost was neither desired nor possible within the PhD supervisory structure, although cognitively not knowing energised the research.

My methodology of errantry's movements and navigation can be contextualised in relation to Situationist Guy Debord's spontaneous 'dérive' (2014), although the 'subversion of set conventions' (Braidotti, 2011: 5) orientates my processes away from the canonical. A

pathway between my unbeaten track and my citation signposting Debord's 'dérive' demonstrates how my situated feminism gains its strength, radical energy and agility by countering dominant cultural tropes without seeking to preclude them.

### Chapter 3. *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy: An Art Practice-Based Study of Kurt Schwitters' Short Story of Augusta Bolte*

'Augusta wiped away the beads of sweat, cooled down a bit and rejoiced in her heart that she could now relax somewhat'  
(Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 145).

"How hot it is here in Ameno –  
(*Bucket 1: splash!*) Maybe a storm is on its way –  
(*Bucket 2: splash!*) Oh, there it is –  
(*Bucket 3: splash!*) – and another one for good luck!"  
(Haynes, *Nonsense Unico*, 2019. Author's own translation from Italian).

#### 3.1 Introduction

Having discussed my aims, contexts, methodology and contributions to knowledge, this chapter analyses my artistic examination of Schwitters' fictional story of the troubled doctoral researcher, *Augusta Bolte*. Italics are used to distinguish between *Augusta Bolte*, Schwitters' novel, translated from German to English, and Augusta Bolte the protagonist.

The four research phases resulting in *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* (2019 –) are serialised in the structure of this Chapter in the following order:

1. Entry point: *Nonsense Unico* performance in Italy (August, 2019).
2. Reflection on *Nonsense Unico* (2019) and further research of *Augusta Bolte* text, resulting in collaged 'poster' artwork and script (August 2019 – January 2020).
3. Collaged 'poster' artwork and script enactment in Germany (January 2020).
4. Exegesis of *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* (February 2020 – April 2022).

In Schwitters' short but dense story of *Augusta Bolte*, the reader sees Augusta caught up within a rich, compacted mesh of undisclosed artistic, literary, historical and cultural allusions. A momentary pause in Schwitters' fast narrative pace was the entry point I



activated in the site-specific performance, *Nonsense Unico*. Through this initial move I accessed and explored the contents and subsequent effects of *Augusta Bolte*.

I followed *Nonsense Unico* with a six-month research period to uncover and reflect upon the aforementioned allusions in *Augusta Bolte*. I began to make connections between my artistic research and motifs recurring in Schwitters' other works. My focus on Schwitters and *Augusta Bolte* broadened and deepened by tracing pathways unlocked by *Nonsense Unico* between Schwitters and his peers' reciprocal influence.

My second performance in the third research phase was at *Viva Dada* Festival in Dortmund, Germany. With myself in Augusta's role, Augusta stepped out of Schwitters' narrative frame, acquiring the agency to take action and redress her doctoral research's troubled trajectory, while I simultaneously developed mine. I made a collaged poster and a script for presentation, with a print of the collage rolled up into a scroll for portability. I aimed to bring the narrative's allusions and influences up to the surface in a material interface with the audience. I intended to expose Schwitters' processes in *Augusta Bolte* for my research purposes and for the audience to enjoy and ponder upon.

The fourth phase is the exegesis of my art practice's effects and role in unlocking my understanding of Schwitters' allusions which significantly inform *Augusta Bolte*. I consequently traced Schwitters' allusions to other works and to the reciprocal influence on Schwitters by Theo van Doesburg and Melchior Vischer.

A brief synopsis of aspects of *Augusta Bolte* pertinent to its role in this thesis, is followed by an introduction to the allusions deployed by Schwitters in the story. I introduce Augusta Bolte and explain how I relate to her as a fellow doctoral researcher through the *Aug 'n' I* (2019—) characterisation and artwork. I underline our doctoral connection with Augusta's thesis dedication (see page 55) and Schwitters' footnote usage.

I introduce my artistic exploration of *Augusta Bolte* as *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy*, beginning with *The Horizontal: Nonsense Unico* in Italy, followed by *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* in Germany. These two elements are followed by *The Angular (Part I)*, beginning in Germany at *Viva Dada*. It is my intention to undertake *The Angular (Part II)* as post-doctoral research when the Augusta character has access to a printed copy of my completed thesis.

In *The Horizontal: Nonsense Unico* I contextualise my contribution to the *Dadameno* festival. From here I present a deconstructive analysis of my performance, in relation to my experiential, research data collection and estimate its effects upon the audience. I problematise Auguste's translation and transformation into Augusta (my emphasis) for the purposes of our onward doctoral trajectories.

*The Vertical: Poster Presentation* was delivered as one of six collaborative scenes at *Viva Dada*, with artist Alice McCabe and composer, Ben Osborn. We helped each other mobilise our chosen site within the venue with art objects, soundscapes and performance for our distinct purposes. For the *Poster Presentation* performance, we activated the collage artwork to emphasise *Augusta Bolte's* narrative textures and effects at play in the allusions. In my expansive version of the characteristically condensed doctoral poster presentation, details of Schwitters' allusions are released from their previously compacted configuration in *Augusta Bolte*.

### **3.2 *Augusta Bolte*: A Brief Synopsis**

Augusta Bolte is a fictional doctoral researcher observed by the author, Schwitters, conducting her fieldwork in public. In the action-packed narrative, she follows a group of people (Fig. 4), convinced that this will unlock the answer to her research question for her doctorate in Life Studies, through which she seeks the meaning of life.



Figure 4. *Nonsense Unico* (2019) Augusta follows a group of people. Piazza Beltrame, Ameno (video image).

Calamitous events unfold as the group do not behave in the way Augusta anticipated. Her indignation at the group's response results in her being stranded and her research grinds to a halt. Both the reader and Augusta are denied a solution to Augusta's doctoral woes and are deliberately left disorientated and dissatisfied. Schwitters himself finally concludes and announces that:

The reader might've thought that something would've happened here... Certainly the reader will think that Miss Dr. Lif would find out who or what is going on, but she finds out nothing... (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 163).

With Augusta abandoned and the reader dismissed, *Aug 'n' I* (2019) emerges from the wreckage of Augusta's research. Schwitters projected what the reader might have thought, encouraging speculation beyond the horizon of the story of Augusta's fate. Correspondingly, *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* projects beyond the horizon of my thesis.

In notes for his lecture, 'Getting to the bottom of *Auguste Bolte*', Schwitters scholar Roger Cardinal (2007: n.p.)<sup>14</sup> asks if Augusta is 'a paragon of Merz enterprise' or 'a projection of KS himself.' Cardinal's questions are reasonable given the absurd degree to which Schwitters demonstrates his tendency towards contradiction and reversal, with Augusta cast by the author as the vehicle.

### **3.3 The Role of *Augusta Bolte* in this Thesis**

Indicative of my methodology of errantry, *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* became the unintentional culminating artwork, in that I realised on arrival at the end point that the Trilogy's role was sufficiently fulfilled in respect of the research question. The role of *Augusta Bolte* and Schwitters' literature in general within his oeuvre are lesser known to the anglophone audience. The emphasis on Schwitters' visual output in public-facing forms of reception such as exhibitions, and the relative ease of visual communication which does not

<sup>14</sup> With thanks to Gwendolen Webster for Roger Cardinal's lecture notes.

rely on knowledge of the German language, possibly accounts for the reason why Schwitters' literature is less well known. As stated in the introduction, Schwitters' visual works are listed in the Catalogue Raisonné (Schulz *et al.*, 2000), his entire literary works which are mainly in German are in print only in Schwitters & Lach (2004) and his *Merz* journals, also mainly German, are in *Die Reihe Merz 1923–1932* (Schwitters *et al.*, 2019). As a digital resource, *Die Reihe Merz* (The Merz Series) lends itself to approximate digital translations should the anglophone researcher encounter it, which is how I navigated it with my slowly improving comprehension of German (see page 7).

My performance-as-research experience in *Nonsense Unico* suggested a promising basis for further exploration along with the connection between Augusta's doctoral pursuits and my own. Schwitters reflectively concludes the *Augusta Bolte* story with the statement:

I, as the author, state here that this is the conclusion of my attempt to offer an Augusta Bolte to the people. Many thanks! (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 164).

I too make an 'attempt to offer an Augusta Bolte to the people', making connections with my artwork to Schwitters' peers, and his greater and lesser known works. All constituent parts of my artistic research, such as site, seriality and materiality, remain connected throughout my 'offer' and support each other while making-on-the-move.

I have selected parts of my artistic research to be examined in Chapter 4's Transformative Sites, as a lens for examining and situating my work in the reader's imagination. I examined how conditions coalesced so that the work functioned for an audience. Although not explicitly framed as such, *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* is a contextualised transformative site anticipating Chapter 4.

*The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* serialises my exploratory *Augusta Bolte* performances into three parts. To reinforce the serialisation, I reported on *The Horizontal: Nonsense Unico* and *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* and *Angles for Augusta (Part I)* for the December 2019 and March 2020 editions of the Kurt Schwitters Society Newsletter (Haynes 2019b and 2020). Writing for a readership already invested in Schwitters provoked the need for clarity of purpose and expression in preparation for *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* analysis.

I have strategized *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* with the aforementioned *Aug 'n' I* to incentivise Angles for Augusta (Part II) as the second instalment of *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy's* third part. In doing so, I extend my inquiry's generative purpose with the continued contemporary resonance of Schwitters, his peers and migrating motifs. Through *Aug 'n' I* I allude to the social nature of artistic research and knowledge, enacted through my interactions with collective and collaborative residencies and reading groups.

### 3.3.1 Textual Texture in *Augusta Bolte*

The materiality of *Augusta Bolte* is characterised by surfaces glossed over by Schwitters to clear the way for Augusta's unstoppable research data-collection. I recognised how Schwitters' attention to textual friction in *Augusta Bolte* resonated with artworks I made prior to my examination of the story. My application of adhesive vinyl to materials such as stone, metal, concrete, balloons and cling-film and my reflection on their properties, such as how the surfaces changed over time, prompted me to look for textural layers below *Augusta Bolte's* glossy surface. An example from *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* is *Glob* (2018), an exhibit from a series of *\_Airholders\_* (2018) made from glossy adhesive vinyl, collaged over a large, inflated latex balloon and placed on top of a deflated version, weighted with concrete.<sup>15</sup> The relatively smooth surface initially deflected texture and surface depth, but over time, the deflating balloon and intensifying textures, amplified by colour and pattern, drew attention to the object being covered (Fig. 5). *Augusta Bolte's* reader, however, is rushed along by Schwitters and denied the time to observe the story's underlying textures. *Glob* is an ongoing work. Each deflated globe has a new inflated one placed on top so that the contrast draws attention to both. Similarly, in *Augusta Bolte*, my discovery of the narrative's textual texture does not obscure Schwitters' intention to gloss over, and instead brings it into focus.

<sup>15</sup> The deflated globe balloon, weighted with concrete, references planetary collapse due to climate breakdown. The deflated globe's inflated replacement wryly reflects indifference and inaction in the face of climate breakdown.



Figure 5. (Left) *Glob* (2018) Exhibit for *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*. Vallum Gallery, Carlisle. (Right) *Glob* (2018) Exhibit for *Being Nomad*. Righton Building, MMU.

My purchase on *Augusta Bolte's* underlying characteristics remained refracted by Schwitters' narrative plot devices until I began to recognise their texture and surface depth via my performance interventions. I enacted a slowing of artistic process with time-based works such as *Glob*, contrasting to and later exposing Augusta's frantic doctoral data-gathering. Schwitters emphasised the glossed-over and compacted layers in the text through repetition, and Augusta's research site, the smooth, hard, urban streets with angular corners.

At the next street corner 5 split off from the other 5 and went down one street, while the remaining 5 went down the other street... Augusta lost no time thinking, but quickly made up her mind and turned and ran back to the street corner. (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 142).

Seemingly nothing gets in the way of Augusta's research which would otherwise cause friction and slow her down, reinforced by Schwitters with an absence of street-level obstacles or surface texture. Even as events rapidly unfold, causing Augusta to deviate from

the street-level, Schwitters maintains the high-speed narrative by having Augusta ascend into a multi-level house, where she tears around causing havoc in the name of doctoral research.

The vertical change in the narrative's spatial composition corresponds with the range of spaces within Schwitters' other forms. Numerous examples include the textured and layered surfaces of Schwitters' collages and the angular protrusions creating or filling frame depth in his pictorial assemblages. Schwitters' *Merz Barn wall* (1947) (CR 3659.1)<sup>16</sup> has spatial protrusions echoed in the layout of his poem *Wand* (Wall) (1922), demonstrating how spatial revolutions occur across Schwitters' artistic and literary forms. In another example, Schwitters proposes an artistic and literary conclusion to his short story, *The Flat and the Round Painter* (1941) (see page 14) written while interned on the Isle of Man. The story characterises Schwitters' need to find space to make artwork while interned and the protagonist opts to paint in mid-air. The Painter's airborne paintings rhythmically form and re-form then they audibly wobble, bubble, burst and re-arrange themselves (Reichardt, 2010: 8-10), recalling Haraway's call to muddy the senses, so not to rely solely on the visual (see page 29). Schwitters' transfers painting into prose, applying his formulating and deformulating principle to the story in which 'poetry wrests words from their existing context, deformulates [entformelt] them, and inserts them into a new artistic context.' (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 137). The wobbling, bubbling and other examples of oscillation in Schwitters' works flood, ebb and flow into spaces. Augusta's shuttle-runs up and down the streets and then up and down the multi-level house, similarly, enact textual texture through movement and Schwitters' tendency towards accelerated and oscillating contradiction and inversion.

Through my performance as research interventions for *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy*, I aimed to access contradictions and inversions at play within Schwitters' work. I infiltrated Augusta's ponderous moments, specifically in *Nonsense Unico*, where she paused to cool down (see page 42) because the change in pace suggested an artistic opportunity. By filling the space of this pause with the materiality of the *Nonsense Unico* site, situation and action, I created sufficient friction to notionally throw out the anchors and slow the story down to observe below the text's surface.

<sup>16</sup> CR refers to Catalogue Raisonné, followed by the catalogue number. (Schulz *et al.*, 2000).

Schwitters maintains the narrative's momentum by disrupting the reader's flow of expectations with vertiginous twists and cul-de-sacs. A seemingly muddled mass of narrative elements emerges and cross-references within the story and beyond into Schwitters' oeuvre. The apparent non sequiturs in *Augusta Bolte* do not function in isolation but instead correspond to other non sequiturs within the text, such as Augusta's recurring and immobilising calf cramps (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 151). Schwitters scholar Julia Nantke (2017) examines cross-referencing within Schwitters' idiosyncratic ordering of patterns which she recognises in his literary and artistic forms as identifiable, repeated motifs, which I discuss in relation to *Augusta Bolte* (see page 76). Schwitters replicates and extends his layering technique across multiple forms, for instance in the paint dabs and strokes on his small sculptures such as Untitled ("Melting" Sculpture) (1945/1947) (CR 3256) (see page 182) and collages *Esir* (1947) (CR 3534) and *Smiling Through* (1946) (CR 3339), including the sculpture bases and the collages frames respectively.

### **3.4 Introducing Augusta Bolte**

My next intervention expanded Augusta's fictional persona, adding texture and content to create a more malleable characterisation to work with. *Abstract/Extract* (Part I) (2019) is an element of my artistic embellishment of Augusta's character, based on my interpretation of Schwitters' text. The Futura font, chosen for its use by Schwitters, is used in this thesis for script components of artworks. *Abstract/Extract* functions as part academic style 'Abstract' introducing Augusta and her research, and 'Extract' connects to the translated title, 'Augusta Bolte (a liver extract.)' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 137).

#### ***Abstract/Extract* (Part I)**

Augusta is a 31-year-old Anglo German woman. Her doctoral studies are affiliated to a University in England and one in Berlin. As an undergraduate, she was consistently bright and conscientious in both the sciences and humanities.

Her doctoral ambitions have escalated rapidly to the point where she now seeks to shed light on the Meaning of Lif(e). The 'e' in life is in brackets due to the connection made by her author and imagined director of studies, Kurt



Schwitters, between the German word *Leben* (life) and *Leber* (liver). Schwitters makes this connection using the story of Augusta Bolte as a literary device with which to critique his critics. He refers to this series of works as 'Tran' texts. Tran is an abbreviation of *Lebertran*, or cod-liver oil in German. This metaphor is used to activate attention to his conclusion that art critics would benefit from a stronger constitution with which to digest his avant-garde work which they criticise.

With the spectacular zeal of a new researcher embarking on a doctoral research project, Augusta hits the ground running. She identifies her first focus group and sets out on the street level field trip which takes her into a house where half of the group reside. A concoction of action research and mixed qualitative and quantitative methods result in a cocktail of disasters. Augusta runs up and down the stairs of the house of many levels searching for Annalouise Sündig from the group. In a switch from the quantitative method of counting the group of people proceeding along the street Augusta has identified Anna as the key person to interview in what transpires to be a destructive qualitative research method.

An imagined reappraisal of Augusta's horizontal and vertical research activities reveals a necessary rethink in her approach to avoid any further violence. This will provide the opportunity to re-focus on the more extensive methods required to make a doctoral contribution to knowledge.

Augusta's switch from quantitative to qualitative research methods, are the pivotal moment in which I accessed Schwitters' narrative, and began to develop *Aug 'n' I*.

### **3.4.1 *Aug 'n' I* (2019 —)**

The newly expanded Augusta character led to our imagined kinship, *Aug 'n' I* with Augusta as my peer and fellow traveller of the doctoral process. My handling and utilisation of our imagined, symbiotic peer-to-peer interactions and synergy embodied my relation to

Schwitters' work through performance and was transformational. *Augen* is the German word for eyes and *Aug 'n' I* is a play on the words eye, eyes and I.

Coincidentally, *Aug 'n' I* corresponds with Schwitters' distinction between 'Merz and i' expressed in his Dada peer, Hans Richter's magazine, *G* (1965: 150). Schwitters emphatically states "Kurt Schwitters is the inventor of Merz and i, and he acknowledges no merz or i artist other than himself. Yours faithfully." (from *Die Blume Anna*). Again, in his 1922 *i* (*A Manifesto*) Schwitters emphasises the distinctive *i*-form, which includes his *i*-poems, declaring 'I demand *i*, not as the only art form, but as a special form.' (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 122). Schwitters emphasises 'i' with a contrasting bold typeface which Luke observes happening 'when the letter appears in "ich", German for the subject "I" – a move that stresses his preoccupation with artistic subjectivity and intent.' Overlooking the *i*-form, Merz's canonical, historical reception as the sole 'brand' of Schwitters' supposed one-man avant-garde art movement is complicated by Schwitters himself. He distanced the *i*-form from the English personal pronoun, I, in his *Merz* journal, "*i*," *Merz 2. Nummer i* (April 1923), explaining 'It is the *I* that we already have in the English word, "will," as in the combination "I will," but it is not the "I". This vowel is the middle vowel of the German alphabet' (2021: 145). Schwitters' almost pained explanation of the pivotal 'i' adds an eye-rolling textual and textural layer to *Aug 'n' I*, which like *Augusta Bolte*, has multiple cross-references. It is unclear why Schwitters refers to the English language as opposed to any other to make his point. Dutch, for example, translates closely from 'ich' to 'ik'. However, Schwitters' contrariness is useful, adding texture to *Aug 'n' I* and dislodging Schwitters and Merz from a canonised rut, while resonating with a definitively contrary comment he made over twenty years later while exiled in England, in an unpublished manuscript entitled *My Art and My Life* (2021: 479):

only the wrong material used in the wrong way, will give the right way, when you look at it from the right angle. Or the wrong angle. That leads us to the new ism: Anglism. The first art starting from England, except the former shapes of art.

While exemplifying Schwitters' enduring insistence on inversion, contradiction and multiple radiating directions, including his **anglophone** play on words (my emphasis<sup>17</sup>), his reflection

<sup>17</sup> The etymology of anglo is debated to various junctions, some implying degrees of angularity: [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglia\\_\(peninsula\)](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglia_(peninsula)).

on 'Anglism' helpfully connects to my proposed solution to Augusta's doctoral search for the 'Meaning of Lif(e)', expressed in *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy as Angles for Augusta*.

Schwitters prematurely coined Augusta's failing systematic approach to her doctorate as the 'Miss-Augusta-Tactic' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 142):

Miss Dr. A Bolte knew the system and with it and through it, science. But she also had learned something through the precedents.<sup>18</sup> Her tactic in regard to the system had simply been wrong. On the other hand she didn't know another tactic right away. (2002: 148-149).

I propose helping Augusta to find new, effective tactics from the differing angles and perspectives of artistic methods, to counterbalance her overly scientific extreme mixed methods.

### 3.4.2 The Thesis Dedication

Schwitters' indicates both tangential and direct references to Augusta's doctoral research, beginning in the introduction, parodying the opening pages of a doctoral thesis. I selected aspects of the doctoral context which I share with Augusta and made them material.

'Dedication' is a correspondence between Schwitters' *Augusta Bolte* dedication page, in red, (2002: 138) alongside my dedication introducing *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy*. Footnotes which occur in my citations of Schwitters are numbered amongst my footnotes as a conversational gesture of our notionally shared path. Schwitters' thesis dedication disorients the reader because it is unclear where or even if the dissertation begins, despite Schwitters' footnote usage which implies academic writing.

Schwitters' first dedication to Augusta could be interpreted as Schwitters dedicating his story to himself as Augusta, as suggested by Cardinal (2007, n.p.). The dedication appears as a partial and contradictory auto-dedication, echoing Schwitters' contradictory auto-dedication in pencil on the title page of Melchior Vischer's Dada novel, *Sekunde durch Hirn* (Second through Brain) (1920). I located Schwitters' hand-written message on my visit to the Kurt

<sup>18</sup> 'A rare animal, lives in Siberia, has highly valued fur.' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 148).

Schwitters Archive in March 2020 (Fig. 6), which was translated by the Head of the Kurt Schwitters Archive, Isabel Schulz. Crediting and making acknowledgments for works appropriated or cited amongst Dada artists including Schwitters and Vischer, was a self-preserving strategy in their turbulent times, discussed further in relation to *Second through Brain*. As a gesture of reciprocal citation, this Dadaist characteristic recalls the feminist practice of citation as a mutually supportive principle, minus the feminism. Schwitters makes twenty-five footnotes in total, which appear abruptly and conspicuously throughout *Augusta Bolte*.

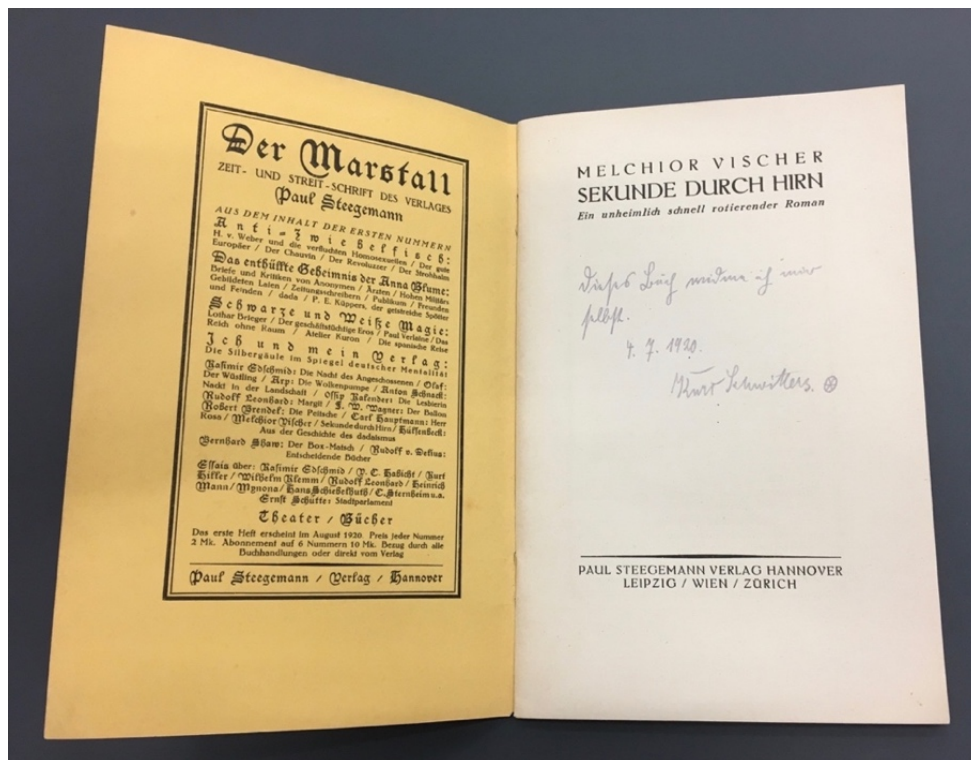


Figure 6. 'Dieses Buch widme ich mir selbst. (I dedicate this book to myself.) 4.7.1920 Kurt Schwitters'. Kurt Schwitters Archive, Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany.

## DEDICATION

### dedicated to

1. AUGUSTA
2. Art Practice-Based Research
3. University of Cumbria Institute of Arts,
4. All my dear collective & collaborative friends.

(a doctoral dissertation, Chapter 3)<sup>19</sup>

### dedicated to

1. AUGUSTA
2. Art criticism
3. The Lif faculty,
4. All my dear friends.

(a doctoral dissertation)<sup>19</sup>

The art practice-based researcher and author of this thesis offers an open source reassessment of the contemporary relevance of the artwork and literature Kurt Schwitters which is referred to herein.

The author reserves all rights, especially reproduction, translation, live presentation, and film rights.

Motto: I dedicate this book to myself.  
(Kurt Schwitters)

Motto: Of course one wishes everything good to all people, but the bad happens of itself  
(Doris Thatje)

### Poem:

Oh man, this inquiry took six years,  
This was no walk in the park.  
Although it started with a walk in the park.  
And it has the right to think.

### Poem:

O man, do not hurt this one,  
This is no pencil, this is chalk.  
It has the right to think  
So we won't insult it any further.

<sup>19</sup> with footnotes (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 137).

<sup>19</sup> with footnotes (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 137).

The second dedication to 'Art criticism' ensures the attention of Schwitters' critics in the art press, who are amongst his intended audience for *Augusta Bolte*. Schwitters wrote *Augusta Bolte* as a rebuttal to art critics' damning reviews of his avant-garde work in an increasingly hostile environment. In addition to *Augusta Bolte*'s status as a published short story, it is also serialised idiosyncratically as 'Tran No. 30' of Schwitters' twenty-nine Tran texts. Schwitters' Tran texts consist of literary works of varying lengths which he wrote between 1919 and 1924 (Luke and Grundy, 2021: xxi). My second dedication is to artistic research, to solicit the attention of fellow artistic researchers.

The third dedication to 'The Lif faculty,' becomes expanded by Schwitters in the story to the point wherein Augusta becomes the qualified embodiment of the faculty itself. 'What position would Augusta then be in if she were Dr. of Life, Miss Doctor Augusta, Miss Dr. Lif. A new faculty' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 146). Schwitters' use of exponential acceleration is a dominant characteristic of *Augusta Bolte* which I adopted as a cue for the pace and characteristics of *Nonsenso Unico*. My third dedication to 'University of Cumbria, Institute of Arts', is made in my anticipation of Schwitters' honorary art practice-based doctorate (see page 20).

The fourth dedication to 'All my dear friends' perhaps alludes to those amongst his networks who might recognise their influence in the narrative. I correspondingly make my fourth dedication to 'All my dear collective and collaborative friends', to acknowledge the significance of the social nature of artistic practice, both in Schwitters' and my own.

### **3.5 The Augusta Bolte Trilogy (2020 —)**

*The Horizontal: Nonsenso Unico* (2019).

*The Vertical: Poster Presentation* (2020).

*The Angular: Angles for Augusta (Part I)* (2020) & Part II, to be continued after my thesis publication.

### 3.5.1 *The Horizontal: Nonsense Unico* (2019)

The hilltop village of Ameno in the Northern Italian Lakes was the site for *Dadameno*, a six-day Dada Festival in August 2019. On arrival I was encouraged to find a suitable location to perform by organiser and performer Paul Dorn<sup>20</sup> who maintained the rapport with the festival audience with hand-stamped daily bills posted around the village, promoting the days' forthcoming event (Fig. 7).



Figure 7. *Dadameno* (2019) St. Pauli, promotional artwork promoting my performance. Above: *Ogni giorno piccolo show* (A little show every day). Below: *Oggi* (Today), *Seguire la freccia rosa* (Follow the red arrow).

<sup>20</sup> Paul Dorn of Dadamt (Dada Administration, based in Zurich), will be referred to henceforth by his performance name at the time, St. Pauli.

The Festival was mid-program and I weighed up how to pitch my performance's tone by listening to anecdotes and looking at documentation from audience and performers. My performance had the dual function of 'data collection' for my research and a Dadaist contribution to the festival. The scene I chose to enact from *Augusta Bolte* came from a mid-point within the story, without any lead-in for the audience other than the poster artwork and anticipation of some form of Dada aesthetic. The festival goers were attuned to expect the unexpected from a variety of live artforms, such as dance, music, drama, comedy and performance. A gratifying anecdote reflecting the festival's reception circulated around the village. A group of children ensured that their parents would return them from their day out by 6pm in time for the Dada Festival. They said they didn't know what the festival was about, but they liked it.

I chose to perform *Nonsense Unico* at an open road junction in Ameno, a relatively quiet village above the popular Northern Italian Lago di Orta. The aim of my performance as research was to temporarily co-inhabit the site alongside the village's everyday life. My challenge was to convincingly activate this unlikely location of a central and well-used crossroad as a performance destination for the audience. The portico adjacent to the crossroads made a convivial and comfortable place for the audience to watch. The performance happened with traffic and pedestrians, both human and animal, continuing their daily movements in and around the junction, meaning that actions had to be negotiated in the moment, mirroring the street-level action in *Augusta Bolte*.

Augusta Bolte<sup>21</sup> saw about 10 people on the street, who all advanced in one and the same direction. This seemed suspicious to Augusta Bolte, very suspicious indeed. 10 people were walking in one and the same direction.

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10. Something was going on there. (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 142).

<sup>21</sup>a. Augusta Bolte, Anna Blume, and Arnold Böcklin all start with the same letters: A.B. (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 142)

<sup>21</sup>b. Schwitters points out the recurrence of the initials A. B. in his literary characters, Augusta Bolte and Anna Blume, adding the Swiss symbolist painter Arnold Böcklin, in the above footnote. Similarly, Alwes Bäsensiel is another of his fictional characters. The coining of Artist A & Artist B is a happy coincidence.



The group of people agreeing to enact the scene with me were fellow *Dadameno* performer, Katke, and festival goers from Ameno (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. *Nonsense Unico* (2019) Explaining the performance plan to the group on site. Piazza Beltrame junction in Ameno, Italy.

My site-responsive aim was to create new associations both for the audience and my research, transforming what might be perceived as a relatively indeterminate space for passing through, into a moment where the place becomes attached through memory to the sensory experience of the performance. I used performance documentation to recall sensory elements and assess their effects. I located materials to supplement what I had prepared in advance and brought materials in hand-luggage in correspondence with Schwitters' peripatetic collecting and carrying around of materials in suitcases (Webster, 1997: 88). I enacted my methodology of errantry, making art while passing through a place.

'Nonsense Unico' (Italian for one-way nonsense) is St. Pauli's dadaistic play on words, transformed from the familiar Italian road traffic sign, *Senso Unico* (One Way) into nonsense by an art object (Fig. 9). St. Pauli's artwork was the key supplementary material I added to the script and costume I had brought with me. In the performance I carried the sign as a prop, which subsequently became the artwork's title. The arrow on the artwork emphasised Augusta's directional hurrying around while explicitly foregrounding the street level activity

and nonsensical play on words on the road sign, familiar to the mainly Italian audience. I arrived on site, carrying the sign to a generative junction, both figuratively and in reality. I symbolically challenged the singular perspective of a one-way system, alluding to narrow canonical readings of Schwitters, in favour of multiple readings radiating from the junction.



Figure 9. *Nonsense Unico* (2019) Left: *Senso Unico* (One Way) road signage. Right: 'Nonsense Unico' artwork by St. Pauli, Ameno, Italy.

During a hiatus in the performance as the group of 10 people disappeared around the block, pursued by myself as Augusta, St. Pauli outlined the connection between Dada, Schwitters' *Augusta Bolte* and my doctoral research for the audience (Fig. 10). While the audience seemed to enjoy the unusual activities happening in a familiar place, a productive tension arose for me in the event's liveness. My doctoral 'data collection' method occurred through my dual role as artistic researcher and enactor of Augusta's agency, in a partially improvised and partially planned scenario.



Figure 10. *Nonsense Unico* (2019) St. Pauli holding his 'Nonsense Unico' sign and introducing my performance. Piazza Beltrame junction, Ameno, Italy.

By following the group through the streets in pursuit of research data for Augusta's and my own doctoral fieldwork, Augusta was convinced, as was I, that the group of people walking together in the same direction meant that 'Something was going on there.' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 140). This conspicuously repeated phrase was the doctoral hypothesis which Augusta eventually hoped to illuminate with her research into the Meaning of Lif(e) [sic].

My additional criteria for the performance was a site-specific element to anchor the performance and audience's experience inextricably to place. The piazza had a municipal water fountain I used to heighten an unusually ponderous moment in *Augusta Bolte*. The moment was my entry point to intercept and disrupt the narrative's surface. Mirroring Schwitters' narrative, I as Augusta paused to reflect on her research methods, while recovering from the exhausting shuttle-runs she adopts to keep up with the group, when they split off into two directions (Fig. 11).



Figure 11. *Nonsense Unico* (2019) Augusta's shuttle runs indicated by arrows. Piazza Beltrame, Ameno, Italy (video image).

I deployed the elemental and sensorial properties of water from the municipal fountain, planting three buckets of fountain water with fellow *Dadameno* performer, Lady Woodada. In a call and response slapstick moment she threw the buckets of water over the Augusta character as she paused to cool down (Fig. 12).



Figure 12. *Nonsense Unico* (2019) Augusta cooling down in call and response action, see page 42 for script. Piazza Beltrame, Ameno, Italy (video image).

The junction hosted a confluence of performance elements, flowing together with the water's figurative and actual effects. The water remained as a temporary mark on the road to either evaporate by heat or be washed away by the incoming storm.

The audience's anticipation and my performance's purposeful intensity propelled my research beyond the enactment. The daily festival performances intervened into everyday life in the performers' chosen locations, enlivened by the gathering of residents and visitors. The 'Nonsenso Unico' sign, costume and water, together with the performance movements and gestures, offered the audience an experiential convivial aesthetic. Simultaneously, this activity provided a way for *Aug 'n' I* to reflect and conclude that 'something was going on' as the performance had exposed sufficiently rich potential for my expanded study of *Augusta Bolte*.

### **3.6 Auguste Transformed into Augusta**

Augusta's stepping out of Schwitters' narrative frame is a rupture signified in the incremental step translating *Auguste* from German into *Augusta* (my emphasis) in English and coincidentally in Italian. Re-enacting the text, I jettisoned a trail of clothes and accessories into the street, emphasising Augusta's act of resistance to Schwitters' seeming entrapment of her by weighing her down with excess clothing (Fig. 13). I borderlinked (Ettinger, 2019: 17, see page 22) the materiality of the trail of clothes, Augusta's torn doctoral gown and the drenching with water by dissolving their borders as discrete elements to be brought into proximity and seen in light of each other at the interface with the audience.



Figure 13. *Nonsense Unico* (2019) Augusta drenched, in dishevelled clothing. Video still suitably blurred in correspondence with the proposed dissolving of borders. Piazza Beltrame, Ameno, Italy (video image).

*Nonsense Unico* (2019) consequently established the next research phase for the formation of *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy*. I simultaneously re-situated Augusta as an effective researcher ready to critique and problematise her inquiry, with *Nonsense Unico* functioning as dual-purpose appraisal.

### **3.7 Viva Dada Festival, Dortmund, Germany (2020)**

I performed my second intervention for *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* at *Viva Dada* festival in Dortmund. My review of literature related to *Augusta Bolte* was largely from German and Dutch texts, providing material for the performance and my deconstructive analysis of *Augusta Bolte*. The performance was part of the two-week 2020 *Viva Dada* program, *International DadaMessedo*, a Dada festival commemorating the Berlin 'International Dada Fair' centenary. St. Pauli's *Allschall* (Space Sound) (Fig. 14) was at Kunstraum (Haynes, 2020: 20), with an exhibition and performances at Künstlerhaus Dortmund (Figs. 15–17).



Figure 14. *Allschall* (Space Sound) (2020). St. Pauli. Live 45-minute performance of hand-stamped sound poem scrolls. L-R: St. Pauli, Eddie Feldmann, Katrin Osbelt, Kattke. Unseen on the left, Anacker and Brum. *Viva Dada*, Kunstraum, Dortmund, Germany.



Figure 15. Sabine Küster and Krystiane Vajda (2020), Scenes from performance by including gold foil repurposed to make headdresses. *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund Germany. Available at: <https://www.kh-do.de/ausstellungen/archiv-ausstellungen/viva-dada-20> [Accessed on 1 June 2022].



Figure 16. Italian-themed buffet including bread baskets repurposed to make headdresses. Video message setting for absent Dadamilano performers, whose hotel booking was cancelled due to Italy's earliest Covid-19 cases (video image). *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany (2020).





Figure 17. *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* (2020) Vinyl collaged headdresses made from components brought in hand-luggage, bread baskets from the buffet and gold foil. *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany.

Artist Alice McCabe (London) and musician Ben Osborn (Berlin) and I, programmed as J.A.B., co-devised and collaboratively presented an hour-long performance in six scenes:

1. Introduction and Viewing of Dada Posters to be Auctioned.
2. *Aspect Ratio* in *Angles for Augusta (Part I)*.
3. *Night Gardening*.
4. *Kleptocurrency*.
5. *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* in *Angles for Augusta (Part I)*.
6. *The Tea Ceremony with Fires for Hugo* in *Angles for Augusta (Part I)*.

We considered Künstlerhaus Dortmund's spatial and temporal possibilities for our six scenes, preferring four connecting spaces rather than the stage set up in the main room, for our wryly serious and quietly tenacious approach to our intentions for the performance. The multiple elements brought together jostled within our chosen performance site's spatial boundaries, reconfiguring projection screenings, auctioneering, doctoral poster presentations and tea drinking.



Figure 18. *Dada Poster Auction* (2020) Financed by *Kleptocurrency* (2020), our contrived circular economy held in bread baskets (video image). *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany.

Our invention of *Kleptocurrency* for the auction was made up from items ‘liberated’ from the hotel breakfast buffet (Fig. 18) forming a correspondence with publicity for *Viva Dada*, which visually referenced Raoul Hausmann’s ‘Legen Sie Ihr Geld in Dada an!’ (Put Your Money in dada!). (Ades, 2006: 86).

We found the performance completely felicitous! Very clever how you made the audience being part of the action right at the beginning: The klepto currency idea is brilliant. Sausage, tea bags, sweets and chips used as objects of exchange in an equally genuine and sophisticated economic cycle. The money is nicked, the money is edible (some have eaten it, accidentally) and later, at the auction in part 3, it is used to buy imaginary values for it, biographies of artists, musicians, analysts etc. Beside everything else also a fine reversal of our weird economic world, in which money becomes more and more imaginary and at the same time is omnipotent, the symbolically generalised medium of communication in the economic system... There is so much in it from fun to criticism of capitalism. Crypto-currency and Eurobonds fade away behind this wonderful concretisation of “Legen Sie Ihr Geld in Dada an!”. Rabe would like to point out that she liked the Language of Love between the tea sausage and the liver sausage very much. Fragments of a language of love on two sausage packs, letter love, really great!

Osbelt, K. (2020: n.p.).

Alice’s *Night Gardening* projection performance (Fig. 19) and Ben’s *Fires for Hugo* sound piece overlapped productively with my research data collection, without any element oversteering performances in anyone’s particular direction.



Figure 19. Scene from *Night Gardening* (2020), Alice McCabe projected onto *Aspect Ratio* (2020) screen costume. *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany.

The following discussion of my three scenes are rearranged from the J.A.B. performance as follows:

Scene 5: *The Vertical: Poster Presentation*.

Scene 2: *Aspect Ratio*.

Scene 6: *The Tea Ceremony*.

*The Vertical: Poster Presentation* explored the vertical trajectory of Augusta's failing research, triggered by the moment when she turns from the horizontal street and enters a house of many floors (see page 48). *The Angular: Angles for Augusta (Part I)*, named *Aspect Ratio*, refers to the projection screen costume I made and wore for the performance. *The Tea Ceremony* with Ben's *Fires for Hugo* focused and expanded upon Melchior Vischer's influence upon Schwitters.

### 3.7.1 *Augusta Bolte* in Art and Literature



Figure 20. *Nonsense Unico* (2020) Augusta flees the tyranny of Schwitters' enclosed narrative and runs towards generative doctoral research. Piazza Beltrame, Ameno, Italy (video image).

Encouraged by *Nonsense Unico's* effects (Fig. 20), I looked further into *Augusta Bolte* to inform my next research move, aiming to reveal more of what Schwitters' high speed narrative glosses over and his writing's seemingly nonchalant evasiveness. In my second research phase, Augusta reappears in a composed state, ready to enact her agency as an effective researcher (Fig. 21).



Figure 21. Augusta, self-composed in *Aspect Ratio* (2020) costume and elongated headdress. *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany.

In terms of my *Aug 'n' I* narrative, the dynamic, newly liberated and stabilised Augusta gained control of her data-collection methods and prepared for the next intervention in her search for The Meaning of Lif(e) [sic]. As the enactor of Augusta's agency, I attribute Augusta's relative stability to my artistic methods. My accumulating awareness of peer influence and motifs migrating across Schwitters' forms illuminated a research path.

In the anthology, *Deutsche Erzähler* (German Storytellers), *Auguste Bolte* is one of 'a veritable treasure trove of thirty-three masterpieces' ('eine wahre Schatzkammer mit drei und dreeßig Meisterwerken') (Kaschnitz, 1971: n.p.) alongside works by Franz Kafka, Hermann Hesse, Bertolt Brecht and others. Schwitters' peer, László Moholy-Nagy based his filmscript, *Huhn bleibt Huhn* (Once a Chicken, Always a Chicken) on *Augusta Bolte*. Gwendolen Webster (1995: 144) illuminates Schwitters' influence on Moholy, stating that 'Kurt persuaded Moholy to use banknotes instead of paint' and that Moholy was 'fascinated by his colleague's bold use of humour as a weapon.' Schwitters' close friend and collaborator, Kate Steinitz (1975: 207) predicted that 'Auguste Bolte will convert some busy-bodies who try to do everything' while Cardinal asks (2007: n.p.), as do I,

is there something positive here? - a coded manifesto for a *Merz* approach to life?... An idealised self-portrait partly camouflaged through comic asides...?... the essence of Schwitters' art? A certain daft consequentiality... Or is it a serious, if somewhat arcane, statement about the human condition? Have we perhaps missed a vital clue?

Augusta is eventually abandoned by a taxi driver on a sandy military training ground, a markedly textured surface in comparison to the urban streets' smooth concrete (see page 48). Six years later, in Schwitters' and Steinitz's unpublished collaborative comic opera, '*Zusammenstoß*' (Collision) (1975: 208), the military site motif reappeared and like *Augusta Bolte*, frantic activity results in nothing:

the police strictly maintained order, busing the curious masses to the place of the collision, the military parade grounds at the outskirts of the city. There, the new planet passes nearby; it is a narrow escape, and nothing happens.

*Augusta Bolte* and *Collision* evoke the intrigue and intensity of Schwitters' dense collages, such as *Die heilige Nacht von Antonio Allegri gen. Correggio, worked through by Kurt Schwitters* (1947, CR 3616). Schwitters' militarily charged textural and textual sandy detail adds a startling layer to *Augusta Bolte*. I aimed to explore such layers by leaning in and looking closely at Schwitters' nuanced surface disruptions, bearing in mind Cardinal's caution (2007, n.p.) that Schwitters' 'perennial message is that everything he tells us is exactly the case — as well as exactly the reverse.' Schwitters' reversals, contradictions and inversions are exemplified in his statement on his relationship to Dada:

Dadá is a mirror reflection of the original dáda; hence the transfer of the accent to the second syllable – this is simply what happens with a mirror image (right=left)...I am a Dadaist, as I know this device intimately and I often hold it up to the eyes of mankind. And then all mankind sees itself reflected in the mirror! Then things go sour.' (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 196).

Reflected in this statement are Schwitters' inherent paradoxes and his mutable relationship to Dada. Schwitters' makes a net contribution to Dada through his promiscuous attitude towards Dada's collective struggle to hold a mirror to mankind. Much is happening in Augusta's research making Schwitters' entreaty to look away appear as a Dadaist bluff.

Gerd Winkler's 1974 black and white film adaptation of *Auguste Bolte* for German TV stays close to Schwitters' narrative. Winkler nevertheless omits scenes and adds content, such as the bourgeois caricature of Schwitters as Augusta's father, and her studies are accentuated with PhD supervisory meetings. The additional characters resonated usefully with my *Aug 'n' / intervention*, showing the potential of portraying Augusta with agency beyond the limitations puppeteered by Schwitters.

Moholy's aforementioned film script (1936: 43) cites Schwitters in the title. "Once a Chicken, Always a Chicken", a film script on a motif from Schwitters' "Auguste Bolte" was written shortly after *Augusta Bolte* between 1925 and 1930. Moholy's film script migrates and transforms from his 1925 gelatin silver print with applied colour, indicating how migration of form and content was not exclusive to Schwitters at this time.<sup>22</sup> Moholy's script was published in the tri-lingual avant-garde publication, *Telehor*, focused solely on Moholy. The international *Telehor* journal is prefaced by historian Siegfried Giedion (1936: 29), who states:

the selection of any one single artist for separate study cannot hope to indicate the creative strength of our age, since this resides paramountly in its manifold manifestations, which despite their diversity share the same fundamental consciousness of modern civilization.

Giedion's caveat to *Telehor's* singular focus on Moholy corresponds with my intention to show Schwitters within a broader reading of his practice and times. Giedion's emphasis on 'the creative strength of our age' evokes a century-old path of diverse and shared consciousness, from Moholy's citation of Schwitters' *Augusta Bolte* to current contemporary interpretations such as mine, and contemporary artist András Böröcz's *Telehor* (2015).<sup>23</sup> A 'Cablogramme' (telegram) in I.K. Bonset's Red, October 1922 edition of *Mécano* illustrates the historical avant garde's legacy of collective creative strength at the Weimar 'International Congress of Constructivists and Dadaists'. Citing Moholy, who in turn cites Schwitters,

<sup>22</sup> *Huhn bleibt Huhn/Sirenenverdichtung* (Once a Chicken, Always a Chicken / Poeticizing the Sirens) (1925). Available at: <https://moholy-nagy.org/art-database-detail/195?prev=gallery> [Accessed 12 June 2022].

<sup>23</sup> András Böröcz has the initials, A. B., another happy coincidence (see Footnote 21b).

Bonset reports 'After much pressure, the first Constructivist egg is laid by the international chicken. Moholy's dynamic egg is simultaneously a chicken.' (Ades, 2006: 268).

Moholy's cyclical narrative holds Augusta within the story's frame, reinforcing my intention to break the cycle so that Augusta can explore her research question and seek the Meaning of Lif(e) [sic]. In Moholy's narrative, Augusta appears to have been hatched from a dynamic clutch of eggs, who raced through the streets to arrive at the door of a house. One of the eggs enters the house that Augusta soon appears from, flicking eggshells off her dress. Moholy's version relates to the action-movie pace and content of Schwitters' story, although Augusta's doctoral context is absent. The narrative is positioned at the end of the *Telehor* journal as a model script for his photography and filmmaking practice. Like Schwitters, Moholy does not resolve Augusta's potential. Instead he leaves her isolated and enclosed in an eggshell, rolling down a hill and coming to rest under a china hen with twinkling plaster eyelids. Schwitters' sculptures *Ohne Titel (Huhn)* (Untitled (Chicken) 1945/1947 (CR 3245) and *Chicken and Egg, Egg and Chicken* (1946) (CR 3395) demonstrate how his enduring motif migrated across mediums and time.

Moholy reconfigures, as do I, Schwitters' motif of a crowd of people walking along the street. In another contemporary, street-level interpretation of *Augusta Bolte*, artist András Böröcz bases his 2015 filmed performance, *Telehor*, on Moholy's narrative. Böröcz cites Moholy visually with ample use of the rampaging white egg motif, amplified to absurdity with an abundance of ping pong balls released from the first-floor window of a house, onto a roof of mirrored tiles and down into the street. Moholy cites *Augusta Bolte*'s street and house formation, reiterated by Böröcz and also by me in *Nonsense Unico* and *Poster Presentation*, although Böröcz performs unaccompanied apart from camera and operator. Böröcz lays out the eggs along a riverside railing in the morning and returns to lay them out again at sunset, reiterating Moholy's cyclical narrative.

### **3.7.2 *Augusta Bolte* in Secondary Literature**

*Nonsense Unico*, *The Vertical: Poster Presentation*, *Aspect Ratio* and *The Tea Ceremony* are responses to *Augusta Bolte* with their own internal artistic logic. The collaged poster of *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* articulated my secondary literature findings, activated through performance for further resonance. Similarly, the elongated headdresses worn to



accentuate the verticality of *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* asserted the role of art practice in the literature search and distinguished my methods from a more traditional literature review. Joris and Rothenburg's English translation of *Augusta Bolte*, available since 1993, supported my understanding of the anglophone scholarship of Roger Cardinal, Annagreth Nill and Patrizia McBride's analyses. My variable understanding of German, Italian and French facilitated my access to *Augusta Bolte* scholarship including texts by Giulia Disanto, Georg Jäger, Petra Kunzelmann and Julia Nantke.

Until recently, Schwitters' literary output has remained for English readers largely in the shadows of his other art forms. He is well-known in the anglophone world for his collages, his sculptural Merzbauten (Merz buildings) interiors and his sound poem, 'Ur Sonate', pronounced in German but transcending any particular language (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 293). The prominence of Schwitters' literary output for an anglophone reader received a significant boost with Luke and Grundy's publication of *Myself and My Aims: Writings on Art and Criticism / Kurt Schwitters* (2021).<sup>24</sup> In Schwitters' 'Introduction to Tran No. 30: *Augusta Bolte*', Luke (2021: 127) draws attention to differences between reprints of the introduction to *Augusta Bolte*, highlighting Schwitters' malleable writing processes.

I expanded on Schwitters' scholar Georg Jäger's two vital leads that led me to reflect upon avant-garde collectivity and reciprocal appropriation of ideas. Jäger's first lead was Schwitters' alliance with the Dutch De Stijl artist, Theo van Doesburg. Jäger refers to Van Doesburg's influence in *Augusta Bolte* by way of his literary alias, Aldo Camini. In recent scholarship, Maria Elena Versari (2020: 1) reassesses Aldo Camini's *Caminoscopia* text and his contribution to debates concerning identity in the 1920s. Although Versari does not refer to Schwitters in relation to *Caminoscopia*, she notes that Camini is 'the least studied among the avant-garde personas created by De Stijl's Theo van Doesburg' (see also Ades, 2006: 13).

Van Doesburg scholar Craig Eliason examines *Caminoscopia* in detail and comes tantalisingly close to discussing Camini's footprint in *Augusta Bolte*. He instead focuses, however, on patterns observed in Schwitters' writings, citing *Augusta Bolte* as an example.

<sup>24</sup> Dawn Ades's *The Dada Reader* (2006) also significantly boosted access to Schwitters for the anglophone audience particularly in relation to his peers, through the avant-garde's little magazines. *The Dada Reader* includes Mina Loy, but not Camini and Vischer.

Patterns in Schwitters' writings are noted and reconfigured into a far-reaching theory by Julia Nantke, who cites *Augusta Bolte* in her analysis. Nantke and Eliason cite Jäger's scholarship only in footnotes. Eliason (2002: 160 n.427) notes Jäger's observation of Schwitters' declaration of kinship between Merz and Van Doesburg's *De Stijl*, 'Georg Jäger calls Van Doesburg the "godfather" of Auguste and compares the text to the *Caminoscopie*.'

My methodology of errantry brought me to a relatively neglected scholarly junction of Schwitters, Bonset and Camini because I followed my artwork's inner logic, engaging with but not privileging the beaten path of art-historical discourse. The junction was formed by Jäger's contradiction (1984: 43) of Schwitters' scholar Hans-Georg Kemper's contention that Schwitters was influenced by Russian or Eastern European Constructivists, rather than by Van Doesburg. The apparent overemphasis on Russian or Eastern European Constructivists might account for the lack of commentary on Camini's influence on Schwitters, although Jäger's foregrounding of Van Doesburg was repeated independently by Megan Luke at *Myself and My Aims*' book launch (see page 17).<sup>25</sup>

Jäger's second lead proposed two novels by Melchior Vischer, supported by even less anglophone scholarship than Aldo Camini (Vichnar and König, 2015: 6). Vischer explicitly cites Schwitters, the book cover artist for his Dadaist novel *Second Through Brain* (see page 54). The influence of Vischer's novel *Der Teemeister* (*The Tea Master*) (1922) is alluded to in *Augusta Bolte*, indicating a further reciprocity between Vischer and Schwitters.

I emphasised the influence of both books in *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* and *The Tea Ceremony*, to create content and new configurations to set resonance with *Augusta Bolte* in motion. I clarified cross-referencing reciprocity within Schwitters' networks to actively broaden the emphasis on his artistic and literary legacy, to increase the possibility for contemporary resonance. Schwitters and Merz are often restrictively referred to as delimited, autonomous and a solitary 'single-member movement' (Ades, 2006: 286), even as recently

<sup>25</sup> *By the Book: Megan R. Luke & Jeffrey Saletnik in conversation*. University of Chicago Press (2021). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JVKF872wCA> [Accessed on 12 June 2022].

as 2022, 'Schwitters was a one-person *Gesamtkunstwerk*' (Foster, 2022). Reviewing Luke and Grundy's publication, Hal Foster concurs with Luke, 'Certainly the constructive dimension of Merz deepened as Schwitters collaborated with van Doesburg and Lissitzky in 1923 and after.' (2022, n.p.).

Ground breaking theories pertinent to my tracing of Schwitters' motifs across art forms and his peer interactions, are presented by Schwitters scholar Julia Nantke in her published dissertation, translated as *Patterns of Order in Kurt Schwitters' Work: Between Transgression and Orderliness* (2017).<sup>26</sup> In her deconstructive analysis, Nantke recognises and analysis the patterns of order to which Schwitters adheres, albeit on his own terms. In *Augusta Bolte*, Schwitters transgresses convention through Augusta's disastrous research methods.

Suddenly Miss Dr. Augusta entered the apartment as if it belonged to her, and in a friendly voice asked the young girl to follow her and to take a seat. Miss Dr. Augusta was an authority. That's why the young girl followed her. (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 154).

In this example, Augusta contravenes the threshold of domestic hospitality and academia by inviting herself into an apartment to conduct an interview, and proceeds to destroy the kitchen and her research prospects. Schwitters' comedic bait and switch strategy manipulates the reader's expectations, evoking humour and disbelief in a preposterousness which provoked my further inquiry. Nantke (2017: 108) notes Augusta Bolte's resemblance to a collage or assemblage, in the wide variety of layered materials that Schwitters applied beside each other. The recipient plays along by establishing connections between the elements and subsequently, intuits meaning. Nantke also analyses how 'Schwitters' work not only requires our active participation, but that this participation fulfils a structural purpose' (Webster, 2018: 27). I responded to *Augusta Bolte* initially in *Nonsense Unico* (2019) by placing myself inside the structure of the narrative action. In the second

<sup>26</sup> Nantke's publication reviewed with analysis by Gwendolen Webster:

[https://www.academia.edu/44109824/Book\\_review\\_Julia\\_Nantke\\_Ordnungsmuster\\_im\\_Werk\\_von\\_Kurt\\_Schwitters](https://www.academia.edu/44109824/Book_review_Julia_Nantke_Ordnungsmuster_im_Werk_von_Kurt_Schwitters)

performance for *Viva Dada*, I enacted elements of the story to explore the interwoven literary collage and assemblage-like characteristics of the story.

Repetition in *Augusta Bolte* adds extra weight on the reader's experience which does not slow down the text but instead makes it more energy consuming for the reader to keep up with Schwitters' pace. Schwitters seems to acknowledge the heavy textual load when Augusta jettisons ballast, ridding herself of clothing and accessories that slow her down. I recognised a parallel principle of my methodology of errantry, in which I minimised ballast to enhance my materials' portability. For *Nonsense Unico* (2019) I wore the majority of the clothes I brought for my visit to Italy in layers to be jettisoned in the performance, enacting Augusta's doctoral disarray to set up the critical reflection of my next research phase.

Tracing Schwitters' strategic repetition, Nantke (2017: 164) draws parallels between *Augusta Bolte* and Schwitters' texts written in the same period, including *Die Erdbeere* (The Strawberry) (1922). She explains how the narratives exemplify Schwitters' transgression of traditional literary codes through repetition. Schwitters' scholar Herbert Braun (1995: n.p.) analyses *The Strawberry*, centred around the seemingly innocuous explanation about how warmth radiating from a stove heats up a room. The explanation ends in violent, unreasonable behaviour without resolution, like Augusta's research. Oscillation between the rational and the absurd are devices common to *The Strawberry* and *Augusta Bolte*, causing uncertainty and derailing the protagonists' intentions. In both stories, the dominant character has a didactically superior viewpoint, disallowing contradiction, reacting badly to confrontation and reaching an impasse. Braun (1995: n.p.) explains how 'The complications increase and the motifs increasingly detach themselves from any rational anchoring and overload the conversation.' Schwitters continually returns to the tipping points between the rationality and absurdity of Augusta's quest for the Meaning of Lif(e) [sic], as if to accentuate her failing research's incremental processes and constituent parts. Through my performances, I stay longer than Schwitters seems to be proposing at the intersection of rationality and absurdity, to see, like Augusta, exactly what is going on. Schwitters seemingly drives Augusta to tipping points and then insists that she stays there to play out the absurdity.

The scenes in the house that Augusta enters correspond with Schwitters' release of multiple cultural allusions in the narrative. By contrast, the previous repetitive street-level scenes were notable for their content deficit during her horizontal and ineffectual shuttle-runs,

obsessive counting and nonsensical rhyming. Framing these scenes as axes on *The Horizontal* and *The Vertical* plane, created a graph-like space for a third element, *The Angular*, forming *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy*. The axes also suggest the height, width and depth of a frame. Due to Augusta's spatial exploration towards the back of the house, I conceived the third element as being multi-dimensional:

as she was beginning to feel uncomfortable she walked with some dignity toward the back of the house so as to ask there in some way after the young girl who had roughly three hours ago, split off from her 4 comrades to enter the house number 5. (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 150).

Augusta's spatial exploration of the house generated potential for new research angles for *Aug 'n' I*, accessed in the pause where Augusta experiences this rare moment of discomfort and self-doubt. In his *Augusta Bolte* analysis, Jäger (1984: 42) correctly asserts that Schwitters' choice of striking and heavily applied imagery and those requiring interpretation, are easily distorted through shifts in meaning. My insights into *Augusta Bolte* became malleable material for performance once I gained an understanding of Schwitters' allusions. By recognising in-text and transtextual connections and other motifs migrating across Schwitters' oeuvre, his shifts in meaning became traceable.

Schwitters scholar Petra Kunzelmann (2014: 329) focuses on *Augusta Bolte* in the literary context of Schwitters' Tran texts. Many of the Tran series are ripostes intended by Schwitters to directly provoke his critics. In *Augusta Bolte*, Tran functions as a structural device for energetically launching Schwitters' new story. Kunzelmann implies that Schwitters overcame criticism by repurposing it as Tran material so that it became subsumed into the action, soaring beyond the need for a more conventional rebuttal. Over time, Schwitters' generative Tran creation has since received credit, regarded as a German literature 'masterpiece' (see page 71).

### **3.8 Preamble to *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* (2020)**

The poster was a portable artwork of compressed information that I expanded upon in the performance. Similar to my curatorial process for my *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*

exhibits (Fig. 22), I gathered the components together to assess and inform their spatial and relational composition.



Figure 22. *Almost Things, Fast Dinge, Beinahe Dinge, Kunterbunte Dinge*. Exhibits for *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* (2018) gathered together prior to curation.

*Viva Dada's* centenary celebration of the 'International Dada Fair' provided a platform, like *Dadameno*, inviting the audience to expect the unexpected (see page 58). The materiality of J.A.B.'s curatorial process and performance benefited from our openness to assembling the scenes onsite in proximity to the audience. Like Augusta's German surname, Bolte, we had to be bold in the available time.

Responding to Schwitters' downplayed but pivotal moment through my performance opened onto a field of opportunities. I identified when 'Augusta did find the street again and entered the house' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 149), a moment quite easy for the reader to miss or consider inconsequential. I took Schwitters' relative under-emphasis as a cue indicating a second entry point into the narrative, after the effectiveness of the first cue for *Nonsense*

*Unico*, when Augusta momentarily paused to cool down (see page 62). Using the 'Miss-Augusta-Tactic' (2002: 146), Augusta expected the straight-backed horizontal and vertical rigour of her quantitative research methods to unlock her doctoral contribution to knowledge. After enacting the vertical axes of her research by running up and down the house's staircase, Augusta returned to the street's horizontal plane, causing a car chase. Prompted by the moment 'The man absconded into a house', Augusta interrupted the chase, 'She jumped out of the car, slammed the door shut and ran into —' (2002: 161-162). Right at the tipping point of vertical and horizontal, Schwitters disorients the reader by intercepting Augusta's return to the house and therefore the vertical axis, and her horizontal car chase resumes.

Schwitters' vertical and horizontal axes recall Cardinal's mathematically inflected questions (2007, n.p.), 'is there something positive here? - a coded manifesto for a Merz approach to life?' Cardinal implies a predetermined or interpretable framework for plotting and drawing conclusions from Augusta's overdetermined research movements. Schwitters scholar Bernd Scheffer cautions against mistaking an understanding of the meaning of Schwitters' words for an understanding of the content's significance (1978: 136). Augusta's ineffectual activities oscillate along horizontal and vertical axes, giving the reader a sensation of being shunted backwards and forwards across the lines of text, and up and down the margins of the page, as if gridlocked and searching in vain for meaning.

Like the scenes I scoped out prior to *Nonsense Unico*, I prepared the poster in advance and on arrival at Künstlerhaus Dortmund, located a performance site conveying the vertical levels of the house that Augusta entered. I attached the poster to the gallery wall above the stairs between the cellar and ground floor. Although not entirely vertical, the stairs formed a non-horizontal stage setting that Alice and I appeared into from the cellar below, with the aforementioned headdresses emphasising the performance's verticality (see page 66). Ben's live and distorted conversion of my pre-recorded poster presentation audio script, which I read as Augusta (see pages 87-91), created an aptly vertiginous soundscape.

From my doctoral studies' experience, the staple conference of the poster presentation format often used in PhD programmes typically delivers visual research content in progress, presented live to a supportive audience. I deduced that this method might untangle Augusta's doctoral deadlock. Despite her best efforts, Schwitters persisted in denying

Augusta a foothold into her research, implying that her endeavours were inconsequential anyway.

Nobody could attend to everything. Man had to make a choice. And he had to make a choice, not because he had to make a choice, but because in itself it didn't matter if he made a choice or if he didn't make a choice.  
(Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 162).

Schwitters seems to be recommending that Augusta gives up her doctoral search for the Meaning of Lif(e) [sic], in a rational but provocative tone, as if to resist scrutiny by the reader. I apprehended Schwitters' tone, however, as an invitation to scrutinise his provocation in a corresponding manner, as if to engage in a debate. Augusta might have found Schwitters' discouragement debilitating, as might I as a reader, artist and researcher, were it not for the points of entry revealed by my artistic methods prompted by secondary texts, notably Jäger's. The richly layered allusions in *Augusta Bolte* are surely devised for sensory appeal to a perceptive reader, despite or perhaps because of Schwitters' dismissive tone.

In the final scene, Schwitters introduced the movie form three times, appearing to plot out a film. Filmmaking is perhaps Schwitters' unrealised ambition (Luke, 2014: 136), noted in the dedication page (see page 55) as the author reserving his 'film rights'. (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 138). Tension built into the scene is released in a movie-like cascade of compacted action.

Now, on the very day that Augusta Bolte passed her Dr. Lif, Richard Eckermecker had gone for a walk in the street... A wild chase began, with Eckermecker as its goal. Like in a movie. Richard didn't know what to do. So he ran through a plate glass window into a delicatessen shop. There he first toppled the owner, then everything else. (2002: 160).

Schwitters accelerated Augusta's research, whipping up ripples of chaos. The name Eckermecker, the man Augusta identified as her future husband, alludes in German to someone whinging and moaning in a corner in contrast to the scene's dynamic action and to Augusta herself.



Jäger's analysis alerts the reader to the following mixture of popular and highbrow culture in *Augusta Bolte*. Jäger finds correspondences between Schwitters and the geometrically themed proclamations in Camini's *Caminoscopie* texts, while the commotion and abundant details in *Augusta Bolte* echo the pace of Vischer's *Second through Brain* novel. The toppling of bourgeois delicatessen products (2002: 160) recalls the 'freshly trimmed antibourgeois' citizen toppling out of Schwitters' *Die Raddadistenmaschine* (The Rotating Dada Machine) (1921a), while Schwitters' repetitions of the 'unheard of realisation' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 162) evoke Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Novelle*. Jäger proposes the Hannoverian poet and caricaturist Wilhelm Busch's *Max and Moritz* as the possible provenance of Bolte, Augusta's characteristic surname.

I recognised Schwitters' allusion to *Orestes Pursued by the Furies* (Bouguereau, W-A, 1862), with Richard Eckermecker cast as Orestes and Augusta in pursuit. I activated through performance the amassed allusions with visual citations in my poster, to sensorially deconstruct *Augusta Bolte*'s material components. Schwitters connects materiality to poeisis in his journal article for *Der Ararat*, published in 1921, two years prior to *Augusta Bolte*:

All experiences that stimulate the mind and the senses are materials for the poetic work. Do not use materials according to their relationships as objects, but only according to the logic of the work of art. As the intensity increases with which the artwork demolishes the objective rational relationships that connect objects, the possibilities for artistic composition increase. (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 74).

The excitement of brain and emotions indicated in the graph-like imagery of this text are evident in Schwitters' cultural references as material constituting *Augusta Bolte*. Through 'the logic of the work of art' Schwitters transforms materials from their former cultural references. When explored through my performance as research, I presented the materials anew in a contemporary re-reading. Schwitters' allusions are almost imperceptibly interwoven into the narrative and their recognition is limited to a German and Dutch language reading audience familiar with the culture of Schwitters' time, thus reinforcing the potential for an anglophone audience. *Augusta Bolte* appeared paradoxically full of artistic research potential to me, prompted by the seemingly unproductive tension that Schwitters creates for Augusta between her research atrophy and overdetermined action.

The script I wrote for *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* exposes the expansive research lying dormant until activated below the poster's surface. In the *Viva Dada* performance, material resonance amongst all six J.A.B. scenes formed unanticipated connections to *Augusta Bolte*. For instance, the stock of posters in our Dada auction were left by former Director of Cabaret Voltaire, Adrian Notz, from a previous Dada centenary event at Islington Mill in Salford. Dadaists depicted in the auctioned posters coincidentally reappeared in *Poster Presentation* and *The Tea Ceremony*, such as Theo van Doesburg and Mina Loy respectively.



Figure 23. The poster for *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* (2020).

### 3.9 *The Vertical: Poster Presentation in The Angular: Angles for Augusta (Part I)* (2020)

I printed some of the fourteen images the same size as their digital source, while others were enlarged or reduced (Fig. 23). I considered the images' juxtaposition, noted below, but my priority was to lay out the work to achieve an approximate visual balance. The audio and spotlighting played a pivotal role in communicating the poster's content and effects for the audience. The poster's layout was animated by dynamic navigation, using spotlights to trace cues from the audio to demonstrate a correspondence with the script. I followed the audio prompts with my torch and Alice, less familiar with the script, followed my torchlight with hers (Fig. 24).



Figure 24. *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* (2020) *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund Germany.

Alice and I further emphasised our performance's verticality by our ducking up and down movements on the stairs. Our coordinated movements contrasted with the spoken script's soundscape fragmented live by Ben. Augusta's dynamic motivation and my determined efforts reflected my intention for the performance to entertain in the *Viva Dada* Festival, while implying Augusta's repeated research mantra that 'something was going on' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 140).

The following script is a component of *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* which mixes references to Schwitters' text in a continuation of *Abstract/Extract*, my artistic embellishment of Augusta's character based on my interpretation of Schwitters' story (see page 50-51). The references in bold correspond to the visual elements in the poster. The script is followed by reflections from audience members, from correspondence during the pandemic lockdown (see also page 65).

### 3.9.1 *Poster Presentation* Script (2019)

#### ***Abstract/Extract (Part II)***

Hello. My name is **Auguste Bolte**. I was named by **Kurt Schwitters** as the young incarnation of Wilhelm Busch character **Witwe (German for widow) Bolte** from his **Max & Moritz** stories which continue to be popular to this day. **Die Fromme Helene** (The Devout Helene) is also a character from this story who you might recognise here pasted to a section of Schwitters' famous **Hannover Merzbau**. I am in the first year of my PhD which is an inquiry into the Meaning of Lif. 'Lif' differs slightly from life and indicates that something is amiss. I am based at The Lif faculty and I am also the protagonist of Kurt Schwitters short story, *Auguste Bolte*, written in 1923 and published by Berlin publishers, Der Sturm. This is a **photograph** of an original edition of *Auguste Bolte* taken at the Kurt Schwitters Archive at the Sprengel Museum in Hannover, earlier this year. Although it says 5th edition, it was in fact the first and is an example of Schwitters' mischievousness. Kurt Schwitters cast me as a doctoral researcher in his story. Around that time, he was working on a book cover for Dadaist

author, Melchior Vischer called *Sekunde durch Hirn*, or **Second through Brain**, as seen here in a later English translation. Assuming that Schwitters was familiar with the contents of the book, he may have been inspired by the female character who also had the title of Doctor. If this is the case, I have to say that I am not very flattered\*. Kurt Schwitters is also my Director of Studies and probably the best person for the job. The Lif faculty is in the Arts & Humanities Department of a University.

In the first phase of my study, I conducted my inquiry independently of the faculty research community. I have only recently become aware of this community through a mandatory induction into the Postgraduate Research Development Programme. Following my first supervisory meeting, the outcomes of my initial 'extreme mixed methods' approach were reflected upon and discussed. We concluded that my research design might benefit from interaction with my peer-group and PhD cohort. To this end, I have elected to present my research in this departmental lift\*\* as an amalgamation of an elevator pitch, a 3-minute thesis presentation, a lightning talk, a Pecha Kucha and a poster presentation.

My initial quantitative research method of observing a focus group of 10 anonymous participants, became transformed into a mixed methods approach, although more under duress than by design. My first cycle of data collection became untenable when the group of 10 suddenly divided into two. Due to my own inflexibility, especially in the face of the unexpected, I was unable to respond adequately. It was not dissimilar to going through Schwitters' *Raddadisten Machine*, whereby you go in with an idea which makes perfect sense, then after being rotated around the machine, you come out completely disorientated. The *Raddadisten Machine* was a short story by Schwitters which appeared in *Der Ararat* journal in 1921, shortly before my story was published.

Unprecedented events occurred in my first inquiry and formed the basis for the novella form of Schwitters' account of my research and I. Here is an image of **Goethe's novel, *Novelle***. There is credibility in the belief that my story was an uptake by Schwitters of Goethe's 'Novelle' form of literature. The 'outrageous event' which punctured and disrupted the usual everyday life activities, was central to the form of the novella. I am sorry to say my research methods, which I considered reasonable but with hindsight would have been better discussed with my supervisor in advance, did disrupt everyday life and escalated into violence. This was unethical and I am reflectively taking measures here today to ensure that this does not happen again. Had I anticipated such an outrageously disastrous and unprecedented outcome, I would have made arrangements for additional help with my data collection. That said, like Schwitters in his novella, I am in pursuit of the unprecedented event as part of my doctoral contribution to new knowledge. Unprecedented and in particular outrageous events, constitute content in the form of a data narrative but cannot be to the detriment of participants.

My rationale in choosing to follow the group of people walking in one and the same direction down the street, came from an intuitive sense that something was going on, which would then go on to form a fruitful line of inquiry prompted by rhyming words and phrases. Unfortunately, without warning, the group divided, and I was woefully unprepared. My attempts to salvage the data collection by alternately following each group failed. This was because my 333 $\frac{1}{3}$  horsepower shuttle-runs were the maximum resource I physically had at my disposal at that time. The sight of my shuttling activities was enough to strike fear into Richard Eckermecker, who might otherwise have proved to become an ally of my research project, and my husband. Here is a section from ***Orestes Pursued by the Furies***, a painting by William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1862). It is brought to mind through Schwitters' observation of Richard Eckermecker, who after my PhD I must marry although admittedly I have a long way to go, both with the PhD and Richard. Schwitters describes Richard's reaction to me, which was as if he had been whipped by the Furies.

Richard, like Orestes, was highly sensitive and wore homemade blinkers while similarly here we see Orestes covering his ears. Interestingly, one of the Furies was called August by Athenians in Ancient Greece, who were too afraid to refer to her by her real name, Megaera. Could this be where Schwitters got the idea for my name, or was it because Augusta is the German word for sublime?

Returning to my research, the divided group then entered a house and disappeared into their various apartments. This further compounded the problems with what I now realise was an overly scientific and empirical approach to the perhaps more humanities-based interrogation of the Meaning of Life. Forced to confront the breakdown of my purely quantitative approach, I sought to remedy this by switching responsively to a qualitative method. Unfortunately, this action research-led method also failed spectacularly, resulting in a series of **debilitating calf cramps**. In modern times, it is possible to buy medication for cramp such as this brand on sale in the Farmacia Crespi,\*\*\* close to where I carried out my initial horizontal shuttling research. In the story, however, I am advised to simply “whup it with a felt shoe.” Rather than prolong the futile search for the disbanded group, I refocused instead on one participant and attempted unsuccessfully to interview her. This failed due to inadequate questionnaire design which would have benefited from a trial run to test its efficacy beforehand. Rather, this resulted in my destroying her kitchen and the burning of the tea I had requested, which returns us to a second Vischer novel, which also features tea being set alight.\*\*\*\* I acknowledge and take full responsibility for these abominations which will be retro-fitted in my forthcoming ethics checklist.

I have had time to reflect on this failed field trip and data collecting process while recovering from the paralysing calf cramp and injuries which I also had to endure. During the preparations for my qualitative interview method, a wire doormat was unexpectedly brought down over my head at approximately 2 horsepower, by an inhabitant of the house. I have yet to determine how



quantitative and qualitative methods might work together in my favour. In this developmental stage of the thesis argument, I have more experience and therefore confidence when operating along the horizontal axis of the everyday street level and on the vertical axis of a multi-level house, aided, where possible, by a lift. \*\* I have begun to consider that starting my research from number one on my list of methods, is not such a reliable way to proceed. Where does the arbitrary number one come from anyway? – asks Aldo Camini in his **Caminoscopie** manifesto. And who is Aldo Camini? It is Theo van Doesburg writing as one of his pseudonyms. And who is Theo van Doesburg? It is Schwitters' friend whose **De Stijl** movement Schwitters considered to be the big brother of Merz. That's who.

In the reassuring space of this lift, \*\* I seek to improve my methodological approaches with the help of this Poster, to work towards a third and as yet unidentified dimension to my research design. All feedback and any questions gratefully and graciously received.

\* Jäger noted that Vischer's unflattering depiction of Miss DDr. Bathseba Shearer may have influenced Schwitters' Miss Dr. Augusta Bolte characterisation.

\*\* In the absence of a lift at Künstlerhaus Dortmund, we used a stairway.

\*\*\* Farmacia Crespi, Ameno, Novara Province, Italy.

\*\*\*\* The burning tea was proposed by Jäger as a reference to *Der Teemeister* by Vischer, and formed the basis for *The Tea Ceremony*.

### **Audience Reflections**

Your own works, the Ameno sequences etc., were very well embedded in the whole show, as films on the really living screen, that worked perfectly – also thanks to the congenial sounds of Ben. The pictures glowed on the moving surface, fragile, colourful and crazy, that had a special, fascinating aesthetic. And here too, very concrete, analogue art projects in the tradition of Dada were combined with digital technology. The whole thing, as already mentioned, had something almost lyrical.

...the Auguste Bolte scene on the stairs, the beautifully choreographed back and forth. To be honest – the three of us didn't really know Schwitters' Auguste Bolte at that time. The tracking, the back and forth, the special logic/unlogic becomes most likely clearer when you know the little story (as we do today).

KA/TI, Rabe and Brum

Osbelt, K. (2020: n.p.).

### 3.10 Navigating the Collage

The aim of this section is to draw out aspects of contemporary resonance of Schwitters' story of *Augusta Bolte*, brought to light through my collage artwork's role in the performance. *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* embodies insights into Schwitters which exceed the capacity of this thesis. From this rich junction I have selected insights relating to *Nonsense Unico* (2019) and *Angles for Augusta (Part I)*, with the rest poised for future artistic exploration in *Angles for Augusta (Part II)*.

#### 3.10.1 Cramp



Figure 25. Poster collage artwork section showing 'Crampyx' product (2020).

A photograph of 'Crampyx' cramp gel punctuates the collage with a contemporary image (Fig. 25), while introducing the Schwitterian trope of everyday banalities of cramp into my artwork (Giedion-Welcker, 1930: 177; Banalitäten. *Merz 4 Journal* (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 167) and Genz, (2009: 227)). Spotting the product on the pharmacy shelf while preparing for *Nonsense Unico*, I noted the correspondence between responsively collecting images for collage with a mobile phone, with Schwitters' practice of collecting everyday materials for collage. Schwitters labours Augusta's cramp to the point of absurdity, forcing the bemused reader to wonder about the significance of this motif (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 151). The cramp incidents initially seem inconsequential, presented amidst Augusta's febrile research activities, but they put a strain on the reader and provide content for my artwork, while Schwitters paradoxically rushes headlong towards the story's end.

### 3.10.2 Max und Moritz by Wilhelm Busch



Figure 26. Poster collage artwork section showing Wilhelm Busch's cartoon drawings of Witwe Bolte (top right) Max, Moritz and The Devout Helene (bottom) (2020).

Schwitters scholar Karsten Imm (1994: 53) elaborates on how Augusta Bolte's surname has been attributed to *Witwe Bolte* (Widow Bolte) from Wilhelm Busch's *Max & Moritz*, which

began in 1865 and continues to feature in German popular culture. As stated previously, the cartoon face of Busch's *Die fromme Helene* (The Devout Helene) character reappears in the collage, shown pasted to Peter Bissinger's *Hannover Merzbau* replica at the Sprengel Museum (Luke, 2014: 92). Unaware of this cultural reference, Helene's reappearance first alerted me to the narrative scope of Schwitters' migrating motifs, which prompted me to trace seriality in my works, analysed in Chapter 4 Transformative Sites. Helene's questionable devoutness appears to have won her a special place in proximity to Schwitters' *Cathedral of Erotic Misery*, the elaborate column in the *Hannover Merzbau* (Webster, 1997: 208).

### 3.10.3 *Second through Brain* by Melchior Vischer



Figure 27. Poster collage artwork section showing *Second through Brain* and *Sekunde durch Hirn* (2020).

The placement of two parallel pictorial references to Vischer's novel *Second through Brain* reflect their correspondence as the 1920 original and the 2016 English translation (Fig. 27). The front cover designed by Schwitters (Schmalenbach, 1970: 22) is overlaid with *Second through Brain* in an aesthetically compatible contemporary design. I agree with Vischer scholar David Vichnar's argument (2015: 45) for resuscitating Vischer's novel because the 'second' portrayed 'speaks not only of its time, but also anticipates much of the following

century and our own time'. By narrative association, I propose that Vichnar's perspective applies also to *Augusta Bolte*. The English translation and my exploration of *Second through Brain* predate the recent and overdue translation into Vischer's native Czech. Contemporary Czech writer, Louis Armand (2021: n.p.) indicates Vischer's scope, 'Gradually an international reappraisal seems to have begun, one with potentially far-reaching consequences for the history of European avant-gardism'.

Schwitters accelerates Augusta's ineffectual and ultimately devastating rushing around towards collapse, with numerous compacted details too problematic to pay attention to. Vischer deploys a similar device, packing the 'second' in the title with thoughts rushing through the protagonist Jörg's brain, as he plummets to his death. Both Schwitters' and Vischer's accelerating narratives suggest to me a useful lens and linkage to the acceleration of current intersectional global catastrophes such as climate injustices and the Covid-19 pandemic. Vichnar (2015: 44) compares 2015 to 1920, stating 'what used to be avant-garde tactics and reserves for special occasions is now called TV News Show and happens on a daily, hourly, minutely, secondly basis'. In current times, compacted details compounded by unreliable access to reported facts, complicate the capacity for paying due attention in order to make effective challenges. Vichnar (2015: 44) suggests that *Second through Brain* is a reminder of the necessity for aesthetic description to lead to revolutionary change and for fiction to keep up the pace with civilisation's general acceleration. This suggestion recalls Schwitters' layered play with narrative pace in *Augusta Bolte* which I emphasised through *Nonsense Unico's* high energy, *The Vertical: Poster Presentation's* layers and *Angles for Augusta's* expanded trajectory.

Vichnar (2015: 44) recognises, as do I, Vischer's 'logical step toward overcoming his WWI traumas by creating an international network... of creative brains with which to weather whichever future storm may be in store.' In a contemporary parallel, the Covid-19 pandemic is cited as the reason for the 2021 Turner Prize shortlist, composed exclusively of artist collectives (Brown 2021: n.p.). Contemporary collectives and collaborative art practices, including my own, can look to Schwitters and his associated avant-garde networks, including Vischer, for useful precedents. By being well practiced in paying attention to the details of their times, they developed the artistic means of analysis and articulation, to recognise and exploit their societal tipping points.

*Second through Brain* and Schwitters' 1920 publication, *Anna Blume Dichtungen* (Anna Blume (Flower) Poems) share the same Hannover-based publisher, Paul Steegemann.<sup>27</sup> Vischer weaves the name of Steegemann's series of publications, Die Silbergäule, (The Silverhorse) into *Second through Brain*, 'He was a bricklayer, had a white face, dark moustache, fell from roof, broke his neck, stood up & rode on a silverhorse forth as a student.' (Vichnar & König, 2015: 76). Steegemann was responsible for the guerrilla act of pasting Schwitters' ubiquitous *Anna Blume* promotional poster around Hannover (2015: 85). Schwitters' *Anna Blume* poster also features in *Second through Brain*, in a series of commercials. 'Advertising offered "ANNA FLOWERS" impudently' (2015: 85) comes into the protagonist Jörg's view as he falls from the 40th floor scaffold of a building that he was working on. Vischer describes a 'besmeared' environment, comparable to contemporary times, and seeks to align himself with Dada. He names Dada in the text and directly acknowledges Schwitters, and numerous Dadaists including himself are interspersed throughout the narrative,

Do you think me crazy? Oh no! it's only my environment that's moronic, civilised, besmeared, hence me the oddball... We rubble, we rubble, & if da da, from the ground up... the whole big DADA. - 'Here's to you, Huelsenbeck, Baader & Schwitters. We have no pity. (Vichnar & König, 2015: 97).

The reappearance of Vischer's tea-burning scene from *The Teamaster* in *Augusta Bolte*, 'Meanwhile the tea was burning. This may possibly be the only occasion in the history of the world in which tea burned' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 155), is pointed out in Jäger's *Augusta Bolte* essay. Schwitters' faux-disingenuous reference demonstrates their good-natured cultural connectivity and amplifies the value of their contemporary reappraisal. Schwitters' and Vischer's paths crossed when Schwitters produced his book cover at a prolific moment in their development. Schwitters' intention to use Vischer's novel as a resource for ideas is indicated in Schwitters' wry auto-dedication 'I dedicate this book to myself' (Fig. 6). The practice of borrowing, citing and appropriating in this way amongst avant-garde artists and writers, indicates reciprocal written and artistic survival strategies in collective and

<sup>27</sup> Whether Schwitters was commissioned by Paul Steegemann or by Vischer to design the book cover of *Second Through Brain* (Schmalenbach, 1970: 80) is unclear.

collaborative methods, comparable with the current culture of co-production exemplified by the 2021 Turner Prize.

The *Second through Brain* book cover depicts the 'second' passing through Jörg's brain with four vertical, downward pointing arrows and a beheaded man, falling headfirst towards a ground level disc. The arrows and beheaded man motifs reappear in Schwitters' watercolour drawings such as Aq. 37. *Industriegebiet* (1920) (Industrial Zone) (CR 760). Augusta's street-level shuttle runs which I enacted in *Nonsense Unico*, are recalled and correspond significantly to the ground level's horizontal plane. *Second through Brain's* narrative realism, according to Vichnar, 'freezes its temporal duration, collapses its spatial boundaries and lampoons its habitual underpinnings.' Jörg's vertical descent corresponds to Augusta's tearing up and down the stairs and *Poster Presentation's* verticality. Through the collage I drew all three into proximity for this contemporary rereading.

#### 3.10.4 *Die Raddadistenmaschine* (1921)

Two fragments of Schwitters' poem, *Die Raddadistenmaschine* are placed apart from each other in the collage to reflect their original overleaf layout in the avant-garde journal, *Der Ararat* in 1921 (Fig. 28). 1921 was the same productive year that Camini wrote *Caminoscopia*, also featured in the collage.

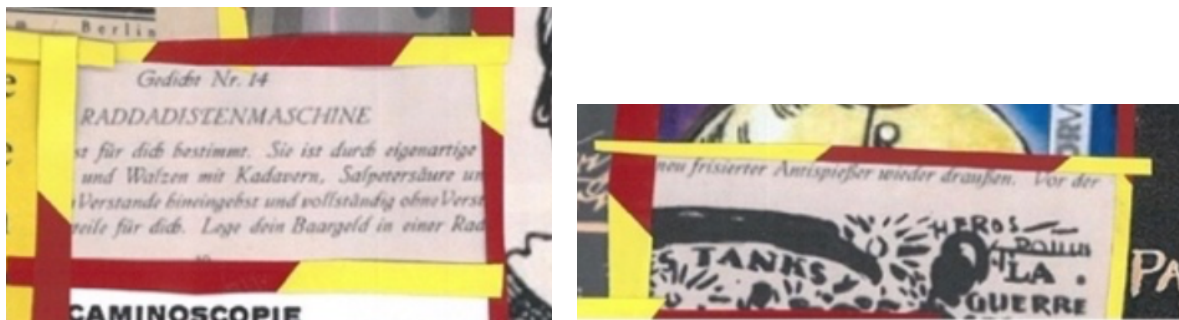


Figure 28. Poster collage artwork section showing two fragments from *Gedichte No. 14, Die Raddadistenmaschine*, (*Poem No. 14, The Rotating Dada Machine*), in *Der Ararat* journal (1921a: 10-11) (2020).

In Robert Motherwell's canonical *Dada Painters and Poets* anthology (1950: 55-66), Schwitters' *Merz* essay is followed by two of five poems published in *Der Ararat*, translated

into English. Motherwell leaves out *Die Raddadistenmaschine* without explanation, perhaps accounting for its relative lack of anglophone contemporary reappraisals, reinforcing the role of artistic practice which instigated its resurfacing in my artwork. *Die Raddadistenmaschine* exemplifies Schwitters' insistence on demolishing 'the objective rational relationships that connect objects', according to the preceding *Merz* essay, optimising possibilities of artistic form (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 74) (see page 83). Although Schwitters numbers *Die Raddadistenmaschine* as a *Gedicht* (prose-style poem), it reads like a dadaistic advertisement for a life-changing and life-affirming experience (Fig. 29).

### **The Raddadist Machine**

The Raddadist Machine is just what you need. It is a strange combination of wheels, axles and rollers along with cadavers, nitric acid and Merz constructed in such a way that you go in totally sane and come out totally mindless. This gives you huge advantages. Invest your cash in a Raddadist treatment and you will never regret it: you will never be able to regret anything anymore after the treatment. It doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, the Raddadist Machine will even release you from money per se. You enter the funnel as a capitalist, pass between several rollers and are dipped in an acid bath. Then you come into contact with a few corpses. Vinegar drips Cubism dada. Then you get to see the great Raddada. (Not the President of the World, as many assume.) Raddada radiates wit and is stuck all over with some 100.000 petitbourgeois needles. After you have been spun to and fro, you will be read my latest poems until you collapse senseless. Then you will be tumbled and raddadated, and all of a sudden you will appear outside the machine as a freshly-trimmed antibourgeois. Before treatment, you shudder at the needle's eye; afterwards you can no longer shudder. You are now a Raddadist and you enthusiastically worship the machine. – Amen.

Figure 29. *Poem No. 14, The Raddadist Machine*, Kurt Schwitters, (1919) (Stahlhut & Müller-Alsbach, 2004: 120).

Jäger introduces *Die Raddadistenmaschine* into his *Augusta Bolte* commentary to indicate the disorientating effect that the *Augusta Bolte* story has on Augusta herself. Jäger (1984: 48) proposes that *Augusta Bolte* resembles the *Raddadistenmaschine* in that the reader



enters into Schwitters' story of *Augusta Bolte* with their reasoning intact, but exits devoid of all reasoning. Jäger stops short of any further discussion. On further consideration, I found the contemporary significance of *Die Raddadistenmaschine* convincing in that Schwitters presciently proposes his invention as the consumer's answer to anxieties provoked by capitalist society, and the similarly bewildering effects of *Augusta Bolte* suggest a shake-up capable of illuminating the Meaning of Lif(e) [sic] sought by Augusta.

While inside the machine, Schwitters declares 'you will be read my latest poems' as the customer is 'tumbled and raddadated' into an altered state, between the funnelled entrance and abrupt exit. The dynamic, inclining *clinamen* motion (Bolt, 2013: 3) and chicaning in the *Raddadistenmaschine* contraption evoke a deconstructed state, exposing a greater surface area and an openness receptive to Merz poetry. The ordered process resonates with my approach to the order in which I ingested secondary literature for an optimal artistic outcome (see page 22).

A contemporary production of *Die Raddadistenmaschine* was presented online as an audio with accompanying illustration, during the Covid-19 pandemic in April 2020. (Fig. 30).



Figure 30. *Die Raddadistenmaschine*. Online production by Deutsches Theater in Gottingen. Artwork by Gerd Zinck (Facebook post, 17 April 2020).

The audio production's timing during in-person theatres' widespread lockdown and subsequent move online, reinforces Schwitters' contemporary artistic and literary resonance by proposing strategies for negotiating life's unexpected twists and turns.

In Schwitters' visual works, the reoccurring funnel motif, along with the windmill, heart, arrow, falling beheaded man and others, all express movement. Schwitters' assemblage, *Konstruktion für edle Frauen* (Construction for Noble Ladies) (1919) (CR 431), has a physical funnel placed on the raised end of an axel or lever-like object, recalling *Die Raddadistenmaschine* by suggesting that the *Construction* is set in motion by entering the funnel. In Schwitters' *Ohne Titel (Du Drucksache)* (Untitled (You Printed Matter)) (1919a) (CR 510), a figure appears to fall head-first through a structure with a funnel-like entrance. An arrow points to the rubber-stamped address of Schwitters' Berlin residence, perhaps indicating the source of yet more Merz and promises of well-being in the new post-*Raddadistenmaschine* life as a fearless 'freshly-trimmed antibourgeois' (Stahlhut & Müller-Alsbach, 2004: 120). The funnel-like motif persisted in Schwitters' 1946 poem, *Pin*, in which the reader is invited to:

'kleep through our brush, kleep through our penn,  
Kleep through our penhole, our pinhole our PIN,'  
(Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 117-118).

The funnelling imagery implores the reader to persevere with Schwitters and his PIN collaborator Raoul Hausmann's explorations through to the end, a virtue which I also deploy through the extended *Aug 'n' I* trajectory.

Apposite to *Augusta Bolte*, the falling figure reappearing in Schwitters' cover illustration for Vischer's *Second through Brain* (see page 54) wears a similar hat in the rubber-stamp drawing. Arrows indicate the same downward trajectory in both artworks, with Vischer's name replacing the funnel, casting the author as the dynamic agent of change. The inaccuracy of conflating Schwitters' generative Merz with the nihilistic Dada (Vichnar & König, 2015: 15) is exemplified by the fortunate figure tumbling through *Die Raddadistenmaschine* towards a brighter 'Merzed' future, contrasting to the dadaistic Vischer's Jörg, who ends his headlong fall as 'Egg spritzed on the asphalt, broke forth into yolk, mixed-in slimily with the muck, and expired.)' (2015: 98). *Die Raddadistenmaschine* alludes to the word dada in a literary visualisation of Merz. Dada and Merz are blended

together to form a survival mechanism for the person imagined passing through this device and the reader, and perhaps also for Schwitters himself.

### 3.10.5 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Novelle*



Figure 31. Poster collage artwork section showing Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Novelle* (2020).

I chose an edition of Goethe's text *Novelle* for the illuminating yellow cover's effect within the overall collage composition (Fig. 31). Jäger attributes Augusta's hypothesis that 'something is going on' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 140) to Goethe's *Novelle*, in which a nobleman saves a princess from an escaped tiger. Goethe intended for his story to define *Novelle* as a genre with an 'unheard-of' or 'unprecedented event' as the central premise (Jäger, 1984: 41). Eckermann's anecdote (2007: 20) describes how the term came about in 1827 when,

We talked over the title which should be given to the novel... "I'll tell you what," said Goethe, "we will call it 'The Novel (Die Novelle);' for what is a novel but a peculiar and as yet unheard-of event? This is the proper meaning of this name."

Eckermann's account provides context to Schwitters' 'unprecedented event' repetitions and echoes his pragmatic tone. The abrupt announcement of Augusta's successful doctorate (see page 45) is an unexplained and 'unheard-of' about-turn, alerting me to look again despite Schwitters' paradoxical assurance that there was nothing to know anyway. I doing so, I noted how Goethe's 'unheard of realisation' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 162) echoed both mine and Augusta's prospective doctoral contributions to knowledge.

### 3.10.6 William-Adolphe Bouguereau's *Orestes Pursued by the Furies*



Figure 32. Poster collage artwork section showing a detail from William-Adolphe Bouguereau's *Orestes Pursued by the Furies* (1862) (2020).

A section of William-Adolphe Bouguereau's 1862 painting, *Orestes Pursued by the Furies* shows Orestes' horrified look, his hands covering his ears and Megaera's dynamic posture (Fig. 32). When Richard Eckermecker correspondingly encountered Augusta, he 'turned around horrified and took flight' and Augusta 'set herself in motion' whereupon Richard 'ran away as if whipped by the furies' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 158). The reader learns how shy Richard's 'dear mother had therefore made up two neat little blinkers, so that he wouldn't

have to see so many people all at once' (2002: 159) and how he 'had gone for a walk in the street wearing his blinkers as usual on the side of his head' (2002: 160). Schwitters repeats the Furies allusion, 'Then all of a sudden he took off, whipped by the already mentioned furies.' (2002: 161).

Schwitters bluntly states 'Augusta, whose name means the "sublime" in German' (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 146). The sublime illuminates the extremities of Augusta's attitude to her research and her ambition to discover the Meaning of Lif(e) [sic]. Evoking the Furies reinforces Augusta's emotional connection to Richard through the classical reference. In Greco-Roman mythology, however, Greeks used euphemistic names, fearful of uttering the dreaded name 'Erinyes', the Greek word for the Furies. Megaera was a goddess who ascended to earth (vertically) from the underworld as the avenger of infidelity, who was referred to by Athenians as Semnai, tantalisingly meaning August (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020: n.p.). Augusta pragmatically sets her sights on Richard as her future husband, introducing fidelity and connecting to the painting of the aforementioned Furies:

Anyhow, should she marry sometime, this would be the right man for her.  
Because this man showed respect for her. This man considered her – since it was her due given her spiritual importance, a person due respect (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 163).

Richard's reaction to Augusta recalls the dread encountered in *Die Raddadistenmaschine*. Schwitters wryly proposes an antidote to the sensation of dread, requiring subservience and respect to Augusta, and submission, cash and prayer to *Die Raddadistenmaschine*. Echoing my contemporary reassessment of Schwitters, Schwitters himself draws on art history to find contemporary resonance for his own artistic strategies at play in *Augusta Bolte*. The dynamism of the Furies allusion recalls the selection criteria of movement for the Special Collection of Feminist Strategies (see page 26).

### 3.10.7 Aldo Camini's *Caminoscopia*



Figure 33. Poster collage artwork section showing Aldo Camini's *Caminoscopia* (1921a: 81-82), in *De Stijl* journal (indicated) (2020).

*Caminoscopia* by Theo van Doesburg's alias Aldo Camini, was published in nine parts in *De Stijl* between June 1921 and January 1932 (Fig. 33). Jäger's correlations between *Augusta Bolte* and *Caminoscopia* were instrumental in my *Augusta Bolte* exploration although limited through the lack of an English translation. In 1921, Van Doesburg and Schwitters' collaborative friendship began as fellow-Dadaists, with commonalities including the founding of their own avant-garde movements, *De Stijl* (1917) and *Merz* (1919). Around the same time that Schwitters' wrote *Augusta Bolte*, Van Doesburg wrote under the pseudonym of Aldo Camini.

Van Doesburg (1921b: 51) introduced the *Caminoscopia* manuscript, mischievously claiming that he found it in a dusty pile of ephemera in a friend's art studio and discovered Aldo Camini, a previously unknown painter. He echoes Augusta's quest for the Meaning of Lif(e), claiming *Caminoscopia* promises to reveal to the reader the conception of life and its essential connection with a world constituted by new proportions and dimensions. Camini's spatial conceptions facilitated the triangulation of *Augusta Bolte* and *Caminoscopia* with the Horizontal, Vertical and Angular elements of *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy*.

Schwitters perhaps recognised Van Doesburg and Vischer as fellow self-publicists seeking peer-group support. Schwitters sought to collaborate with Van Doesburg during *Caminoscopia*'s early stages (Eliason, 2002: 11) although it was not until the year *Augusta Bolte* was published that they collaborated in person on their 'Holland Dada campaign'

(Webster, 1997: 130). Three of Schwitters' poems were published in the same *De Stijl* issue, featuring *Caminoscopie's* eighth instalment (Schwitters, 1921b: 80). Schwitters' *Gedichte 60* and *Gedichte 62* are spelt-out number poems and *Gedichte 63* features the German words *Wand* (Wall) and *Wände* (Walls).

From an extended analysis of the far-reaching correspondences I found between *Caminoscopie* and *Augusta Bolte*, I have selected those most pertinent to my inquiry.

### **A House with Many Floors**

My rationale for an upstairs and downstairs spatial configuration at *Viva Dada* to correspond with Augusta's progression from the horizontal street to the vertical house was prompted by Jäger (1984: 45-46):

"Consistent" and a "character" though she is, Augusta now turns into the instrument that made it fail: the "spirit", described by van Doesburg is "a house with many floors". A horizontal movement becomes a vertical movement.<sup>28</sup>

Jäger credits Van Doesburg, although it was Van Doesburg's alias I. K. Bonset (1920: 92) who penned the aphorism, "a house with many floors." Bonset's aphorism appears six years prior to *Het Andere Gezicht's* main story which was serialised in *De Stijl* between 1926 - 1928.<sup>29</sup> In his aphorism, Bonset turns the house upside down.

**From attic to cellar** The spirit is a house with many levels. The ground level is the attic, the highest the cellar. The life of every spiritual person (of every human spirit) is the precise representation of this idea. (White in Van Doesburg, 2006: 60).

<sup>28</sup> »Konsequent« und ein »Charakter«, wie sie ist, wendet sich Auguste nun dem Instrument zu, das sie scheitern ließ: dem »Geist«, von van Doesburg beschrieben als »ein Haus mit vielen Stockwerken« Jäger (1984: 45-46).

<sup>29</sup> With thanks to Michael White for pointing out that *Het Andere Gezicht* was the same title by Bonset for both the aphorisms and the main story.

The house's inversion proposed by Bonset recalls Camini's liberating imagery (1921d: 122) 'Wij zijn. Wij drijven.' (We are. We float.) and Schwitters' paradoxical inversions epitomised by the palindrome and an insistence that whatever the truth is, the reverse could also be true (Cardinal, 2007: n.p.). The commotion that Augusta causes in the house that she enters causes distress and destruction in her pursuit of the Meaning of Lif(e) [sic]. In a correlation with Bonset's aphorism, she figuratively turns the house upside down, and in an overdetermined correspondence with Camini's freefalling imagery, she actually destroys an inhabitant's kitchen (Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 155).

Camini's call to action is characterised by mechanical and electrical metaphors throughout his manuscript, whereas Schwitters' *Raddadaistenmaschine* functions experientially and manually (see page 97). Jäger shows how Schwitters' and Van Doesburg's thinking intersects to form an effective collaborative practice, rather than emulating each other. He differentiates Van Doesburg and other Constructivists from Schwitters, as Schwitters did not partake in the technological and mechanical trends to the same degree. *Augusta Bolte* is proposed by Jäger (1984: 47-48) as Schwitters' affirmative response to the mechanical excesses portrayed in *Caminoscopia*. He contends that *Augusta Bolte* is Schwitters' warning that the accelerating rate of thought and desire for knowledge needs to be controlled to avoid societal and environmental collapse. Camini seems to forecast characteristics of the internet's electronic communication while Schwitters doubles down on dadaistic destructiveness in *Augusta Bolte*, and both presciently foresee environmental collapse.

Eliason (2002: 3) describes Van Doesburg as 'an artist who dedicated his creative efforts to expressing a profound scepticism about the idea of universal and fixed style.' Schwitters and Van Doesburg evade fixity by continually renewing life, and constructing new selves (2002: 114) by seeking to resolve the pain of the past through spontaneous action in the present (2002: 17). My methodology of errantry and prioritising untrodden or lesser-trodden paths without precluding access to dominant pathways, corresponds with Schwitters and Van Doesburg's resistance to fixity.

### **3.10.8 Aspect Ratio in *The Angular: Angles for Augusta Part I* (2020)**

The research angles generated by *Nonsenso Unico* and the navigation of the collaged poster were pre-emptive moves intent on dislodging Augusta from her restrictive horizontal



and vertical research axes. In a windowless space displaying *Viva Dada* artists' reinterpretation of the first International Dada Fair in Berlin (1920), we turned out the lights to make a projection room, creating layered, contemporary responses to Dada. Wearing the *Aspect Ratio* costume which I made for the performance, I moved sideways slowly, to the left and right across the space, avoiding the other exhibits which occasionally caught the projector's light. Simultaneously, Alice manoeuvred a trolley carrying the projector screen to trace my movements with the light, echoing how we traced elements of *The Vertical: Poster Presentation* with our torches. Our combined movements altered the screen's dimensions or 'aspect ratio', disrupting and remobilising the images' surface and appearance. My movements were accentuated and made angular by the hand-held tube pushed into the screen costume's top corners. Ben created a responsive, accordion-based soundscape incorporating live sounds from the room and recorded sounds from the video projections. The performance had multiple sound layers, movement and moving artwork videos, projected from a moving projector onto a moving projection screen (Fig. 34).



Figure 34. *Aspect Ratio* (2020) *Planning Performance* (2018) video projected onto costume. *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany (video image).

## Audience Reflection

I think you are converting the methods and attitudes that shape Dada into a surprising, current form. For example, you combine digital and analogue in a very clever way. The human being as a screen, the film recordings on the projector - both meet and merge into a new impression that can only be experienced at this moment.

Osbelt, K. (2020: n.p.).

### 3.10.9 *The Tea Ceremony: The Angular: Angles for Augusta (Part I)*

Our *Viva Dada* performance's final scene was *The Tea Ceremony* (Fig. 35), inspired by Melchior Vischer's novel, *Der Teemeister* (The Teamaster) (1922). Jäger attributes Schwitters' paradoxical inclusion of a tea-burning scene in *Augusta Bolte* to *The Teamaster* (see page 96). Schwitters' play with paradox simultaneously created a connection with his contemporary, Vischer and a textual layer for the performance.



Figure 35. *The Tea Ceremony* (2020) Proposing a toast to the International Dada Fair centenary, not with tea but with leftover paintbrush water. *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany.

*P I Z Z A [elemental]* (2020) was my performance recital based on Schwitters' concrete poem, *Cigarren, [elemental]* (1921c in Schwitters *et al.*, 2002: 40) whose text is shaped like a plume of smoke. I selected this poem to accompany the tea and also because I had the vinyl lettering for PIZZA left over from a discarded signage job. I stabilised each letter on paper to activate the poem's materiality, served up the letters by laying them out on the floor and indicated to them as I recited the *P I Z Z A* poem (Fig. 36).



Figure 36. *The Tea Ceremony* (2020) Performance and script. *P I Z Z A [elemental]*. Viva Dada, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany.

### ***P I Z Z A [elemental]* Script**

PIZZA

P,I,Z,Z,A

PI

ZZ

A

A,P,I,Z,Z

Z,A,P,I,Z

Z,Z,A,P,I

I,Z,Z,A,P

P,I,Z,Z,A

Pizza?

(Alice) Nein danke!

(Jackie) Cigarren?

(Alice) Nein danke!

Ben's soundscape, *Fires for Hugo* (2020) refers to the Dadaist Hugo Ball, bringing Ball, Schwitters, Vischer and Loy into proximity in *The Tea Ceremony* (Fig. 37). *Fires for Hugo's* increasing intensity and volume enhanced our reading of Loy's "There is no Life or Death," poem (1914), which states:

There is no Space or Time  
Only intensity  
And tame things  
Have no immensity  
(Conover, 1996: 3).



Figure 37. *The Tea Ceremony* (2020) Mina Loy's dadaistic poem "There is no Life or Death," (1914) recited from Alice McCabe's *Poetry Petals* (2020). *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany.

The sonic intensity of *Fires for Hugo* subsequently reached roaring point, indicating the summit of the performance, materialised by flames drawn out from the top of our headdresses.

### **Audience Reflection**

The tea ceremony was also pretty absurd. We suppose, there's a connection to the rest of the performance that we didn't realise. Are we right? Which one might that be? If not: very good anyway! Then the whole thing is a crazy tea ceremony (by the way - why tea, as you drink from glasses?) with PIZZA and many names (which have something to do with Schwitters' Auguste Bolte, of course) and lots of „me“ - “I“ oder „Eye“ (German: „Ei“ = egg) and awesome giant mask heads, the inside of which you finally revealed: gold and silver...

We are happy to know such extraordinary artists!

Sending love and health to England cross the channel ...

KA/TI, Rabe and Brum

Osbelt, K. (2020: n.p.).

As Ben's soundscape roared, my flames became stuck in my headdress and so Alice dragged them out across the table from the crown of my elongated hat. (Figs. 38-40).



Figure 38. *Fires for Hugo* (2020) Ben Osborn's soundscape composed and mixed live to accompany headdress activation. *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany (video image).

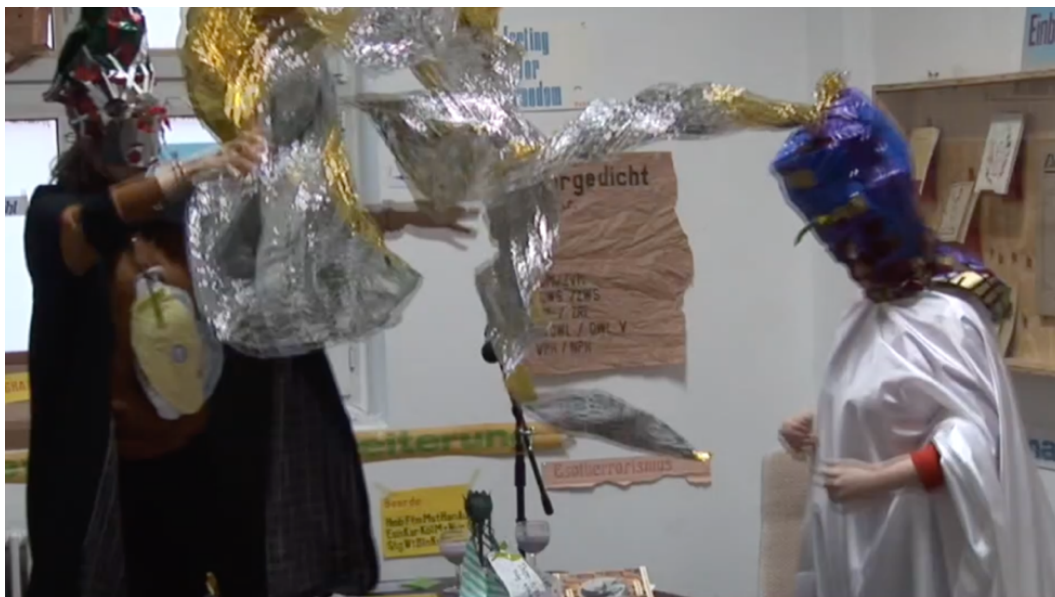


Figure 39. *Fires for Hugo* (2020) Alice dragging out 'flames'. *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany (video image).



Figure 40. Deep bows for the performance ending and my PhD's final art practice element, fortuitously just prior to pandemic restrictions. *Viva Dada*, Künstlerhaus Dortmund, Germany (2020) (video image).

## Collaborator Reflections

### Ben Osborn

We were three kleptomaniacs in a strange hotel. One of us was an academic whose essays about poems and art were poems and art themselves. One of us was a gardener who wanted to garden everything. One of us was a musician who wanted to translate everything into nightingales.

Osborn, B. (2020: n.p.).

### Alice McCabe

Living video - projected onto slowly twirling friend.

Living hedge opportunity to live and move again through friend.

Glorious ripples and shadows of new movements. Looked so soft and silky

And your video looked so drippy - like you were catching the images and the image was independent being.

McCabe, A. (2020: n.p.).

The steady and rapid turn-around of our six collaborative scenes allowed their disparate elements to jostle along together, and like *Nonsense Unico*, formed intersecting and revealing junctions. Our scenes enacted a collaborative dynamism supporting our collective and individual artistic aims while recalling specific Dadaists for the *Viva Dada* festival.

### **3.11 Summary Statement for Chapter 3**

In this chapter I have found two points of access and looked closely under the surface of Schwitters' short story of *Augusta Bolte*. I arrived at my performance as research methods for *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* through the artworks which preceded it chronologically. In the next chapter, I revisit a selection of illuminating moments from my artistic research preceding *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* and reflect on their contemporary contexts and effects.



## Chapter 4. Transformative Sites

### 4.1 Introduction

'Transformative Sites' is a compound term for a notional framing apparatus I devised to identify, select and articulate transformative aspects of my artworks within which my contributions to knowledge are implied. The artworks themselves are the sites of transformation and knowledge, configured from the internal content of their interrelated forms and concepts. During art making and on reflection, I considered what is being transformed and its significance. In this chapter, I propose relational configurations drawn out from the transformative effects of my artworks' crucial and specific factors, made in proximity to selected aspects of Schwitters' oeuvre. Transformative Sites take into consideration the configurations' relational sites and temporalities to provoke a range of readings from their various proximal effects. Significant factors discussed include materiality, space, time, movement, legacy, seriality, collectivity, collaboration and social interfaces with live audiences and exhibited works.

My artworks and research encounters became inscribed with traces of Schwitters' oeuvre through multiple moments of engagement. In an enactment akin to Bracha Ettinger's transformative borderlinking theory (2019: 4), my developing artistic elements oscillate together across an interface to produce reconfigured and co-constituted relations. Schwitters' oeuvre itself of course cannot become inscribed with traces of my work. Schwitters' unfolding legacy, however, is populated with Schwitters' oeuvre and works by artists, authors and other commentators' traceable interactions, expanding with the addition of my work. As such, Schwitters' legacy is a narrative of related interfaces and activity.

#### 4.1.1 Transformative Sites in Art Practice

Transformative Sites recall I. K. Bonset's dynamic aphorism which I recovered from deep within the layers of *Augusta Bolte* (see page 105). Bonset's upended house metaphor is a disruptive mechanism for changeable configurations and was pivotal in my search to articulate Transformative Sites. I read Bonset's aphorism not just as an inversion of the house's levels but as an entity which does not settle and continues to rotate, recognising this motion also at play in my artworks and research encounters. To observe transformation

within my artworks, I notionally hold their rotating sites temporarily still to observe the effects and recognise their inherent knowledge. The house's dynamic vertical rotation unlocked the connection between Schwitters' insistence on motion through inversion and my methodology of errantry and making-on-the-move.

From many possibilities, I have selected and framed eight artworks and one research encounter as Transformative Sites. As with the Special Collection of Feminist Strategies, the basis for selection of Transformative Sites is the range of mobilised dynamic and responsive characteristics, including co-constituency (*Decommissioned*, 2016), purposefulness (*Total Archive*, 2018), expansion and contraction (*\_Airholders\_* 2018), timeliness (*Secreted*, 2017), acceleration (*Fireworkskins* 2018), redeployment (*Decken*, 2018), speculative projection (*Artist Book* 2017), oscillating proximities (*Grotto for Mina Loy*, 2019) and a paused research encounter ('Muschelplastik', 2019).

#### **4.1.2 Surface and Spatial Disruption as Transformative Site**

My intention in proposing surface and spatial disruption as a Transformative Site is to draw attention to my artworks' surface changes over time in relation to the space they occupied. The elemental materials, objects and situations include for example, surplus self-adhesive vinyl for signage, party balloons and the Florence Mine scrapyards. Beyond the more direct parallels with Schwitters' own repurposing of materials, these elements' everyday characteristics correspond with his inclination towards his epoch's everyday banalities. I made and observed my artworks as they inclined away from their original contexts of materials, objects and situations towards becoming artworks.

I sought to make malleable the seemingly intransigent or 'single purpose' vinyl to create mutable and material 'depth-spaces' (Ettinger, 2019: 2) within reconfigured surfaces and forms. I transformed various surfaces with layered cuts of vinyl, for instance on iron scrap, porous balloons and non-porous clingfilm, into exhibits and performance elements. My additional layering of colour, texture and new contexts altered the original elements by setting surface change in motion at various paces. The redundant vinyl's material presence in different situations and its properties alongside other materials, became reanimated by rerouting their respective functions. I asserted materiality as an active agent aligning transformatively with the artwork's co-constitutional conditions. I intended for surface and spatial changes to occur from my artworks' interior and to radiate in multiple directions.

### 4.1.3 Temporality as Transformative Site

My timely interest in Schwitters coincided with University of Cumbria's funded scholarship call-out in 2015. I first learnt of the forthcoming scholarship from my future supervisor, Professor Mark Wilson, speaking in a plenary break-out session at Housing Merz conference at Tate Britain in 2014. Celebratory Dada and Merz centenaries followed from 2016, facilitating my Schwitters investigation (see page 9). As a legatee of Schwitters and his avant-garde peers, the timeliness of my research findings resounds with their collaborative, collective and resourceful practices, as discussed in Chapter 3 (see page 96). My research timeline, reflected in the chronological order of *Plates*, is populated by collaborative and collective exhibitions, residencies and events negotiated with the artists involved and the site hosts. I tailored timely opportunities to be a good fit with the progression of my inquiry.

My conscious decision not to rely on a particular site or heavy equipment transformed my methodology of making-on-the-move, lending itself to temporary sites and situations. My principal tools for creating material surface and spatial disruption were scissors, hole punches, elastic, camera and notebook, mobilising my 'fleet of foot' responsiveness to time-based events. In weeklong residencies, such as *Artists Camp Residency* at Sidney Nolan Trust, I compressed time into intensive working conditions, factoring in a capacity for site responsiveness. The Hatton Gallery, Manchester School of Art, Sidney Nolan Trust and Florence Art Centre were all venues I returned to. I strategised the time lapse between visits to 'pick up where I left off' as a pivotal and transformative site-responsive method. My international research visits to Switzerland, Italy, and Germany were responsive, 'hitting the ground running' and thereby exposing my practice wilfully to an expanded field of chance. The planning and preparation for international visits were invariably longer than the event, followed by post-event reflection. I prepared abrupt interventions in performative forms of material surface and spatial disruption. My preparatory steps of artistic research included elements selected from Schwitters to mingle with and inflect the action.

### 4.1.4 Artistic Research as Transformative Site

The following analysis reframes selected aspects of material, space and time in my artistic research as distinct but intra-connected research adventures. I discuss *Decommissioned*, a

foundational and energetic artwork which helped to set my inquiry in motion, followed by *Total Archive*, a durational artwork with an emphasis on change over time. *Secreted* reveals motifs migrating in Schwitters' works, by recognising migrating motifs in my own artwork, while *\_Airholders\_* demonstrates the unfolding effects of temporality in contrast to *Fireworkskins'* abrupt transformations. *Decken* explores the mutability of deconstructed text and texture at an intersection of Schwitters' and my artwork, while *Artist Book 2017* notes a corresponding survival theme in our respective artistic practices, albeit in diverse contexts. *Grotto for Mina Loy* investigates Mina Loy's artistic and literary work in a parallel study of Schwitters through my artistic intervention. 'Muschelplastik' reflects upon Schwitters' contemporary internationality through my encounter with his small sculptures.

#### **4.2 *Decommissioned* (2016)**

*Decommissioned* was a residency installation featuring adhesive vinyl placed at intervals throughout the post-industrial iron ore scrapyard at Florence Mine in West Cumbria (Fig. 41). I kept Schwitters' cutting and layering methods and Barad's agential cut in mind throughout the residency (see page 23). I retrospectively assigned the generative dynamism of the multiple installation elements as a Transformative Site, co-constituted by the transformations within each intervention. Correspondences between multiple 'dumped' scrapyard objects which had been highlighted through applied vinyl, drew attention to their accentuated shape, weight and texture, creating a new and immersive composition.

Changes to the scrapyard objects' colour and textured surfaces proposed visual and spatial reconfigurations through the interaction between the former iron ore mining equipment and the left-over vinyl. The scrapped objects and vinyl were revived and reconfigured from the iron ore extraction industry and commercial graphics signage industry respectively, through my expanded collage interventions. The newly collaged scrap metal forms' vividly contrasting colours and textures oscillated in tension with the whole site's spatial form, approximately the size of two tennis courts. The tension signalled active transformation at the interface between the viewer's encounters with objects distributed throughout the scrapyard. Exploring the scrapyard without the aid of a site map, one viewer commented that the uncertainty of where the work began or ended meant having to actively seek out my interventions. Happening upon artworks in this way encouraged the viewer's agency in activating the installation's narratives.



Figure 41. *Decommissioned* (2016) installation. Florence Mine Art Centre, Egremont, Cumbria.

Resonances of revival and reconfiguration set in motion by *Decommissioned* in the early stages of my inquiry, continued and accumulated in the successive artworks. Alongside my intensifying Schwitters investigation, different iterations of surface and spatial disruption eventually created the conditions and methods for *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy*.

#### **4.3 Total Archive (2018)**

*Total Archive* was a durational outdoor installation of surface transformation through the phases of botanical chlorosis (Schuster, 2008) (Figs. 42 & 43).



Figure 42. *Total Archive (Classified Leftovers) (2018)*. Catalogued scraps positioned for botanical chlorosis, outside the Vallum Gallery, Carlisle.



Figure 43. *Total Archive (Botanical Chlorosis)* (2018). Catalogued scraps removed to reveal the effects of botanical chlorosis, outside the Vallum Gallery, Carlisle.

The components of the work laid out in the grass were visible from the Vallum Gallery, initially as an exhibit for *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*, an exhibition in March 2018, co-presented with fellow Schwitters arts-based researcher, Heather Ross. Due to the time of year, botanical chlorosis occurred so slowly that revealing the effects of the wooden parts placed in the grass carried over to the next programmed group exhibition in April. Fortuitously and appropriately the exhibition was entitled *Wanderers and Other Nomads*. The first stage of the installation (Fig. 42) initially appears to be based on a cataloguing principle of order whose irregularities are exposed on the viewer's close inspection of the vinyl numbers and letters on the wooden pieces. After a two-month period of botanical chlorosis, I revealed the reconfigured terrain in the performance, *Classified Leftovers* (Fig. 43).

The first move of *Total Archive* was to research an archive of Schwitters-related material to see and handle *all* of the archival items, in their totality. The infinite possibilities of an archive when it is activated by the handler's subjectivity formed my rationale for *Total Archive's* contradictory title. I aimed to experience the full materiality of a complete and discrete source of Schwitters' legacy, with minimal mediation by the host beyond listings and procedures. I hoped to find my own way within the archive informed by my response to the knowledge held in the materials, without oversteering in any particular direction. *Total Archive* demonstrated how changes to material form occupy space differently through surface disruption over time.

My spatial, temporal and relational considerations for *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* exhibition clarified my understanding of Schwitters' change in emphasis away from his initial framed, contained and relatively autonomous practice. Initially seduced by the idea of 'the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, (total artwork) which had sought to equalise all sensory experience' (Luke, 2014: 189), Schwitters developed what Luke terms his 'radiating space' (2014: 87), recognising that 'he could not simply bracket the social basis for his free creation.' (2014: 24). Schwitters' attitude towards the social signalled for me a timeliness and relatability for my contemporary reappraisal.

1923 was a particularly prolific and developmental year for Schwitters, including the publication of *Augusta Bolte* and the 'Dada Tour of Holland' with Theo van Doesburg (see page 104). Both *Augusta Bolte* and Schwitters' association with Van Doesburg became focal points of my inquiry tracing back to the perceptible transformations of *Total Archive*. Schwitters developed his 'radiating space' at a time 'when he challenged his initial assumption that a frame could ever fix the identity of a given work of art.' (2014: 23). Rather than radiating endlessly, I sought to ground my rereading of Schwitters' development using the grass as a site of degrowth to slow down and observe. In correspondence, I problematised the arbitrary and idiosyncratic nature of a catalogued archive to locate instances of change within Schwitters' legacy and provoke my artistic responses.

My attentiveness to change while handling artefacts in Tate Britain's Kurt Schwitters archive informed my artistic methods for *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* in line with my methodology of making-on-the-move, later made more specific by the term errantry. The analysis of my intentions for *Total Archive* to stretch beyond the bounds or 'totality' of the archive were helped retrospectively by Édouard Glissant's philosophy of errantry. Glissant states, 'The thinking of errantry conceives of totality but willingly renounces any claims to sum it up or to possess it' (1997: 21), echoing my desire to see everything with generative artistic practice in mind. The Kurt Schwitters holdings at Tate Britain are a clearly catalogued and boxed archive with an efficient operational system requiring minimal interpersonal mediation. Glissant's concept of errantry dispenses with the flawed impression of a fixed totality by neither valuing nor conserving fixity, which a cataloguing system can suggest. My receptiveness to change exposed the ever-evolving connections within the archive. By handling the materials, a state of flux appeared within the holdings' range of conclusive and inconclusive material narratives.

I framed and named *Total Archive* as a paradox from the outset to contest a potentially limited reading of a given body of artefacts rooted to Schwitters' legacy. I intuited that regarding the archival material and the wooden artefacts subsequently forming the installation as fixed materially in time, would restrict their potential to radiate and connect with my subjectivity as the handler. The collation of the boxed archive is inherently mediated through procurement, accession and curation processes. By resisting further mediation as an imposed parameter, for example by a request to see just the photographs, new insights into the collection appeared through my specific criteria of handling *all* of the artefacts. I noted the boxed archive's wide-ranging narratives and their relational 'distance-in-proximity'



(Ettinger, 2019: 7) from a consecutive sitting over three days in the Tate Britain Reading Rooms. I handled original hand-written letters, official documents, photographs and printed ephemera, all idiosyncratically brought into proximity according to the logic of the Tate's archiving system.

From the material narratives that I partially pieced together, it became clear that a dispute had occurred in Schwitters' family (Dobrzynski, 2000). Artefacts reproduced, stripped of their idiosyncrasy and transformed into the photocopied uniform formality and streamlined volume of legal documents, told the same narrative in a different voice and perspective from boxed archive number 9510.3.2. My observation constituted a significant Transformative Site in the development of *Total Archive* and my subsequent exhibits for *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*. I expanded my observation to consider how material transformation can affect the reading of content over time, while considering Schwitters' preoccupation with what happens when materials are released from the containment of a frame. I deduced that the identity and meaning of the contained archival documents shifted and oscillated at the interface of our encounter, due to noting the artefacts' original purposes of interpersonal communication being transformed into the visual legal language of evidence. The instability of the artefacts' meaning prompted my search for a corresponding materiality in flux, once released from framed containment.

Near to my house in Manchester, I found a collapsed table dumped onto a grass verge. I moved the collapsed pieces of a formerly functioning table from their grass framing to reveal an 'urban sheep' shaped by botanical chlorosis (Fig. 44). The timeliness of this bricolage approach of finding value in what comes to hand suggested a suitable process for *Total Archive*.



Figure 44. 'Urban Sheep' Before and after, effects of botanical chlorosis (Schuster, 2008) Moss Side, Manchester, 2018.

I remobilised my twofold discoveries from the archive and the grass verge with a collection of wooden off-cuts and project left-overs that I found in the Sculpture Workshop dump bin at University of Cumbria. The scraps suggested the 'totality' of boxed archival material and the changed function of the dumped table. I laid out the collection in its totality on the floor, affording each piece equal value to the rest, in terms of space. The effect recalled a commercial model kit, where the parts need to fit precisely into the packaging (Fig. 45), expressing the pivotal point of the dump bin collection's change of purpose.



Figure 45. *Total Archive* (2018) Collection of scrapped wooden off-cuts laid out to be classified and catalogued. University of Cumbria Fine Art studios, Carlisle.

I held the tipping point of the change of purpose in flux by my idiosyncratic classification and cataloguing process of vinyl numbers and letters of various fonts and sizes from my stock of leftovers. I used existing letters and numbers in alphabetical and numerical order, rather than sourcing new ones to fill in the gaps. *Decommissioned* set a precedent for leaving gaps in text in a scrapyards artwork intervention using existing letters only (see *Plate 1*). I contrived a distinctive and functioning incremental uniformity, echoing the functionality of the Tate's archival system. The transit of the objects' material culture between their former and intended use, demonstrated change over time as a consequence of my deductions at the Tate.

I viewed my use of the Fine Art studio, workshop and gallery at University of Cumbria as an explicit stopping off point, rather than a deviation from my making-on-the-move principle. I traced Rosi Braidotti's theory of nomadic assemblage (2011: 6), which preceded my Special Collection of Feminist Strategies, to Gilles Deleuze's influence. In the Deleuzian (1988: 380) sense of nomadic 'assembly points', the work assembled in the studio, workshop and gallery

are the significant consequences that I arrived at along paths determined by my artistic research. Enacting my methodology of errantry required the distinction of my assembly points from my pathways, to expose my *Total Archive* research adventure as a Transformative Site.



Figure 46. *Total Archive* (2018) Viewed from audio exhibit *Fracas: Capturing the Rupture* (2018). Vallum Gallery, Carlisle.

*Total Archive* was visible while seated and listening on headphones to the audio exhibit *Fracas: Capturing the Rupture* (Fig. 46), a conversation between Heather Ross and myself. We discussed negotiating the textured terrain of our respective artistic research. The audio exhibit and *Total Archive* radiated out from the viewer's eyeline along Hadrian's Wall from the Vallum Gallery, in the direction of Newcastle's other historical wall and Heather's doctoral subject, Schwitters' *Merz Barn* wall in the Hatton Gallery. Our conversation was textured by recordings of the smashing and popping sounds from our processes for *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* exhibits.

I reflected on botanical chlorosis as a slow, photographic process due to the effects of light, time and consequent material and surface change. Collaborative artists, Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey (2019) have a longstanding practice of using growing grass as a biological photographic medium. *Total Archive* corresponds with their time-based process

and the performative dissemination of their works, such as the patterned grass coat worn to lead the 'Culture Declares Emergency' procession. They foreground the ecological activism of their work, whereas *Total Archive*'s emphasis was to observe the process of surface disruption performing its time-based transformation.



Figure 47. Top left: *Archivist Apron* (2018), with classifications arranged to be read by wearer. Top right: video still from iPhone placed in *Archivist Apron* (2018) pocket during *Classified Leftovers* (2018) performance for *Wanderers & Other Nomads* exhibition (2018). Above: *Archivist Apron* (2018) in group exhibition on the right. Vallum Gallery, Carlisle.

At *Wanderers & Other Nomads* exhibition, I finally revealed *Total Archive*'s transformation from *Classified Leftovers* into *Botanical Chlorosis*, in a performance recalling the activation of Ackroyd and Harvey's grass artworks. For my performance I wore the exhibit, *Archivist Apron* (Fig. 47) with quantities of each classification forming a text-based artwork which I wore and used as a checklist. The audience looked out onto the grass from inside the gallery, reiterating the inside/outside positioning of *Fracas* and *Total Archive*, and the radiating depth of field navigated in my Schwitters research. I purposefully picked up each of the ninety-eight pieces of *Total Archive* from the grass and placed them back in a dump bin, in correspondence with placing accessioned and itemised archival items back in their boxes. I wheeled the bin back to the studio, signalling the end of the performance, with the intention of eventually returning the pieces to the sculpture workshop.<sup>30</sup>

In summary, the idiosyncratic jumble of wooden forms co-constituted the Transformative Site to enact surface and spatial change, processed through a disparate confluence of contemporary urban waste and historical archival research. I read *Total Archive*'s effects through my mediation of the matter over time. The temporary material transformation from green to yellow grass due to botanical chlorosis affected the reading and framing of the artwork's absent contents, echoing the transformative oscillation at play between the personalised and the formalized within the Tate's Schwitters archive. I extended the cultural life of the wooden pieces after their hiatus in the workshop, reanimating them through their re-classification and grass-based reintroduction in a collective format.

#### **4.4 *Secreted* (2017)**

A wall mounted phone booth created an internal environment and intersection with Schwitters' onomatopoeic poem, *Die Wut des Niesens* (The Fury of Sneezing) (1936/37) (Webster 1997: 285). My artwork, *POE II* (Post Occupancy Evaluation) (2017) for *Legacy*, an alumni exhibition at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) was an opportunity to explore the legacy aspect of my Schwitters research by making new artwork. I resumed my contemporary art-based interpretation of the architectural practice of Post Occupancy Evaluation, assessing a new building's reception from a user's perspective. *POE I* (2014) was an element of my MA Textiles final show, critiquing the space and ideology of the newly

<sup>30</sup> I still have the pieces.

opened art school, the Benzie Building. *POE II* occurred approximately two years later, in timely correspondence with the proposed timescale of Post Occupancy Evaluation in architectural practice (RIBA, 2019).

I recorded an audio narrative of *POE II* entitled *Secreted* for the *Legacy* exhibition (Fig. 48). The audio could be heard through headphones inside the audio booth while viewing a stencilled citation of Schwitters' 'Sneeze' poem attached to the interior, a 'paint splat' shaped vinyl sticker, referring to my initial art school intervention and a new, layered 'emoji' representing the findings of *POE II*.



Figure 48. *Secreted* (2017) Left: Interior showing stencilled poem, splat and concluding 'emoji' artwork: *Red Herring Guffing Through a Smoke Screen* (2017). Right: Audio booth exterior. *Legacy* exhibition, The Vertical Gallery, MMU.

The layering of audio and visuals created an expanded, spatial collage which was visible from inside and outside through the transparent booth, set against the building interior under scrutiny in my Post Occupancy Evaluation.

I recorded the *Secreted* audio while under the weather with a cold. The intersection between my work and Schwitters' 'Sneeze poem' arose unexpectedly due to my sneezing, followed by my intermittent laughter as I persevered, nevertheless, with my five-minute audio

recording. The sneeze and laughter produced a site of transformation, firstly due to my annoyance at yet another ‘ruined’ recording, although I selected this recording because the sneeze instantly recalled the fury and unstoppable, transformative force enacted by Schwitters’ onomatopoeic poem. The realisation of this then caused me to laugh again, triggering a transformative unlocking of the previously disparate elements of the wry but serious *POE II* installation’s institutional critique, bringing their timely reconfiguration with Schwitters into view.

Schwitters’ use of the everyday sneeze as a discarded object is endorsed by artist Alec Finley (2013: n.p.), who states that to ‘sneeze is rubbish and that’s what Schwitters is associated with.’ John Elderfield (1985: 207) writes more circumspectly about Schwitters’ poem, noting that ‘To write like this, however, is to transform phonetic poetry from an abstract into a descriptive art; one inevitably misses the more daring use of language that characterised the earlier work.’ Schwitters’ enduring interest in the migrating motif of the sneeze as a transformative force is evident as early as 1919 in his dadaistic drawings, whose titles translate from German as *This Is The Beast That Sometimes Sneezes* (CR 543) and *The Pig Gives a Heartrending Sneeze* (CR 556), (Schmalenbach 1970: 79, Elger, 2004: 60). In the former, a funnel enters the top of a reclining human head and a sneeze radiates from the nose of the profiled figure. The gravitational and temporal flow of the components of Schwitters’ dadaistic drawings recall the consequentiality of *Die Raddadistenmaschine*, his prose poem from the same year (see page 97). The timeliness of the *POE I* and *POE II* sequence correspond with the accretions and secretions both in Schwitters’ *The Fury of Sneezing* and *Secreted*, proposing the propulsion of the sneeze as a transformative force.

#### **4.5 *Airholders* (2018)**

In two exhibitions, *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* in Carlisle, relocated three months later to *Being Nomad* (2018) in Manchester, I combined familiar materials, notably, self-adhesive vinyl, balloons, concrete and clingfilm. By creating the conditions for transformative reconfigurations of form, the materials shifted from their ordinary use. I presented *\_Airholders\_*, my poetic name for a balloon, in an abundance of forms, colours and circumstances. Through the artwork, I proposed that the viewer look into the surface of the forms to recognise changes in the space they occupied over time (Fig. 49), with wall panel information exposing the collaged medium’s former purpose as balloons. These methods



later helped me to recognise how the reader is drawn into the points of entry of Schwitters' *Augusta Bolte* and consequently, into the textual pace and temporal depths of Vischer's *Second through Brain* (see page 93). The *\_Airholders\_* below are coincidentally egg-shaped, recalling the textures of both Schwitters (see page 74) and Vischer's egg motifs (Vichnar & König, 2015: 98).



Figure 49. *\_Airholders* (2018) Exhibiting rates of deflation with corresponding surface texture. *Trip Hazard* (2018) tape gap indicating potential for the artwork to radiate outwards. Vallum Gallery, Carlisle.

The underscore in *\_Airholders* denotes the intake of air prior to the inflation of a balloon. Both the form and the name hold the air until it gradually escapes from the balloon. I indicate the Transformative Site with the underscore's transformative movement to the end of word *Airholder\_* as it deflates. While inflated, I collaged *\_Airholders* with hand-cut pieces of vinyl to accentuate the surface change of the slowly deflating, collaged balloon. *\_Airholders* are porous containers, even with cuts of vinyl applied, due to gaps between cuts. The deflation occurred at different rates throughout the *Merzwomen & Daughters of Dada* exhibition, demonstrating the unfolding dynamism and differences of the slowly performing forms. The

deflated exhibits were shown in a second iteration in *Being Nomad* (2018) exhibition, three months later. (Fig. 50).



Figure 50. *\_Airholders* (left) become *Airholders\_* (right) (2018) Exhibited in amongst the plants in *Being Nomad*. Righton Building, MMU.

The term *\_Airholder* inverts the balloon's spatial function. Rather than taking up space, I regard the balloon as a container for holding displaced air, having been either expelled from human lungs or through a mechanical air pump. The balloon's capability of holding the air in a space is also explored in Martin Creed's artwork, *Work No. 268 Half the air in a given space* (2012). Multiple air-filled balloons fill Creed's installation space with fully inflated balloons occupying half the air in the space, converting the normally unseen measurement of air into perceptible form. Creed's spatial emphasis differs from my configuration in that *\_Airholders* do not explicitly calculate the relative total volume of its environment. It is similar, however, in that both iterations point to the reconfigured spatial function of the singular unit of an air-filled balloon. *\_Airholders* changed in texture as air escaped through the microscopic holes in the latex, and the self-adhesive vinyl began to pull away from the balloon and stick to itself, creating a characterful variety of temporal and dynamic forms (Fig. 51).



Figure 51. *\_Airholders\_* (2018) Unpredictable and variable rates of deflation, dependent on the vinyl's stickiness and collage arrangement. Vallum Gallery, Carlisle.

I developed *\_Airholders\_* to be activated in performance, accelerating the deflation process by popping inflated balloons, collaged with cuts of vinyl. I collaged small round balloons with the letters C, P and Q standing for 'Chicken, P's and Q's', popped as 'food' from Heather's unfired ceramic plates, consumed in the collaborative and transformative *Merzwomen & Daughters of Dada's Dinner for Three* performance with Heather Ross (Fig. 52). Serving 'food' pulled strands from our exhibits into our performance and subsequent installation.



Figure 52. *Dinner for Three* (2018) Performance installation for *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* exhibition. The ‘meal’ of ‘Chicken, P’s and Q’s’ were popped with pins attached to forks and remained as deflated exhibits. Vallum Gallery, Carlisle.

The serendipitous connection between the ‘P’s and Q’s’ and Schwitters’ typographical focus on the letters p and q are discussed further as a Transformative Site in *Decken*.<sup>31</sup>

The adhesive characteristic of vinyl cuts was also exploited by artist Sally Morfill (2018: 45) in her doctoral investigation into the relationship between the drawn line and language, with expansive and exploratory use of vinyl:

I had consciously brought the translator’s inflection to bear on the work.  
Following the mechanical process of cutting, I had intervened with the adhesive vinyl line by peeling segments of it from the wall to give it a three-dimensional

<sup>31</sup> I also discuss *Dinner for Three* in my essay published in the Kurt Schwitters Journal (Haynes, 2020).

quality, or by adding gestural paint marks... these mechanically produced images would instead contrive the appearance of a hand rendered drawing.

Morfill redeploys the vinyl's stickiness to achieve spatiality, extending this effect with additional painted gestures on the otherwise intractable surface of the wall. This effect encourages viewing the wall as a base from which the vinyl form protrudes, whereas I seek to draw attention to the changing surface of the balloon, expressed through the vinyl. Morfill expressly uses the mechanical cutter to achieve her desired effect of a 'hand rendered drawing.' The use of stationary machinery anchored the cutting element of her process to place, whereas I use scissors, often without a stable cutting surface, to perform the 'fleet of foot' errantry and spatial 'free-hand' characteristics of my methods.

#### **4.6 Fireworkskins (2018)**

The compound name, *Fireworkskins*, refers to the build-up of anticipation to the transformational moment when colourful collaged balloons are spectacularly 'set off' by bursting them with a pin or scissors (Fig. 53). The popping action results in a crackling sound and the snake-like shedding of its collaged 'skin'.





Figure 53. *Fireworkskins* (2018) Before: Collaged and deflated. After: Cut open, stabilised with clingfilm and exhibited at *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* over a gallery light fitting.

#### 4.6.1 *Die Feuerwerkshäute/ Fireworkskins* at 'Merzgebirge' (2018)

*Fireworkskins* translates into German as *Die Feuerwerkshäute*. Their first live public exposition was at the 'Merzgebirge' program of performances, screenings and exhibits in the German town of Annaberg-Buchholz. I screened the *Dinner for Three* performance and co-exhibited with artists and performers Catherine Ricoul, St. Pauli and Stefano Benini. Merzgebirge was a Dada and Merz-related festival, co-organised by St. Pauli and host Jörg Seifert of Kunst Keller Annaberg. Annaberg-Buchholz lies in the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains) to which St. Pauli added an 'M', to reinforce the connection between Schwitters, Merz and Dada.

My performance script, *Time, Manners, Place* (2018) alludes to German grammar's time, manner and place word order, and the mannerisms and gestures used when conviviality persists between host and guest, despite the awkwardness of lacking a common language. My intention was to chicane intuitively through this awkwardness and navigate towards the

co-production of *Fireworkskins* exhibits, through materials, gestures and faltering language skills (Fig. 54).



Figure 54. *Fireworkskins* (2018) Building up anticipation with help from fellow performer, Catherine Ricoul and costume prop pin. The camera angle obscures the audience facing the performance. *Merzgebirge*, Kunstkeller Annaberg, Germany.

### **Time, Manners, Place**

Danke schön für die Einladung von Jörg, und danke schön St. Pauli für diese wunderbare Merzgebirge. Happy zwanzigsten Geburtstag zu Kunstkeller Annaberg und Happy zehnten Geburtstag zu Dadamt Zürich. Ich bin eine Freundin von St. Pauli. Vor zwei Jahren habe ich ihn kennengelernt. Wir haben eine Aufführung zusammen mit unseren englischen Freunden Alice und James sin Zürich gemacht. Das war in zweitausendsechszehn für den hundertsten Geburtstag von Dada auch im Manchester und Dadamilano.

Soll ich meine Arbeit vorstellen? [POP BALLON!!]

Hier haben wir die Feuerwerkshäuter. [POP BALLON!!]

Ich habe den Vinyl am Ballon angeklebt. [POP BALLON!!]

Und dann habe ich den Ballon sofort geplatzt. [POP BALLON!!]

Ich habe auch dieses Vinylkleid für mw in März gemacht. [POP BALLON!!]

Meine Kinder haben mich in Klarsichtfilm gewickelt und dann haben wir den Vinyl um das Klarsichtfilm angeklebt, um das Kleid fertig zu machen. [POP BALLON!!]

Thank you. I wanted a speech in German to make, but because my German not so good yet is, decided my German teacher Sarah and I, a speech in English with German word order, to write. I am very happy, and it pleases me, here with you to be.

I am very lucky, until March 2019 [sic] Kurt Schwitters at University of Cumbria Institute of the Arts, to be studying. I am studying Schwitters now since two years. I make art and show it, read and write about it and am even paid for it, which at the moment very unusual in Conservative Britain is.

Recently have I the Glossary of German and English words from the Kurt Schwitters Catalogue Raisonné studied, which by The Sprengel Museum in Hannover produced was. From the three volumes of his visual art works, have I compiled the following poem which an impression of Schwitters from the A-Z of key words gives:

**KS: A – Z**

Abbildung abgerissen,

abgesägt abklatsch

Abrieb von Durchschlagpapier,

Absetzsohle abstrakte

Skulptur Achteckbild

Adresse Algen

Alufolie-Angebotsliste,

angesetzt-Annahme anonym.



Ansicht Aquarell Architekturmodell  
Archiv Archivkarte Assemblage, auf  
Aufkleber unter obigem  
Aufkleber auf dem Kopf

Stehend auf der Seite liegend,  
Aufbewahrung aufgeklebt  
aufgrund und Aufkleber  
Auflagenhöhe Auflage

aufmontiert Aufschrift  
ausgefüllt, Ausgestellt  
Auskunft ausradiert Ausschnitt Außerhalb  
Ausstellungsliste Ausstellungsrezension Außer Katalog

Zahl Zeichnung zeitgenössisch  
Zement zerstört Zigarette  
zirka zum Teil zur Zustand Zweig zweite  
Zeile auf dem kopf stehend zwischen.

Please do feel free to correct me where I'm wrong.  
Danke.

### **Translation**

Thank you very much for the invitation from Jörg and thank you Pauli for this wonderful Merzgebirge. Happy twentieth birthday to the Kunstkeller Annaberg and happy tenth birthday to Dadamt Zürich. I am a friend of Pauli's. I have known him for two years. We did a performance together in Zurich with our English friends, Alice and James. It was in 2016 for the Dada centenary.

Shall I show you my work? [Pop balloon!!]

Here we have the *Fireworkskins*. [Pop balloon!!]  
I have stuck the vinyl to the balloon. [Pop balloon!!]  
Then I pop the balloon. [Pop balloon!!]  
I also made this dress from vinyl for *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* in  
March. [Pop balloon]  
My children wrapped me in clingfilm and then we stuck the vinyl to the clingfilm to  
get the dress ready. [Pop balloon!!]

The script which I read aloud in German was based on an English version composed with my German teacher Sarah Wright, pitched to reflect my limited vocabulary and grasp of the German language.

Heightening the build-up of anticipation, I invited the audience to pop the balloons through convivial hand gestures made during the script reading, offering the pin and indicating towards the balloon. With each balloon's pop, the form buckled and squirmed on the table and some dramatically dropped to the floor. The pieces captured the convivial awkwardness in the mannerisms' performed exchange, echoed materially in the squirming motions of the *Fireworkskins* and their remaining casts. I placed the casts in the group exhibition (Fig. 55), showcasing their intrinsic, collaborative connections to the event, audience and place.



Figure 55. *Das Feuerwerkshäute/ Fireworkskins* (2018) in foreground. Back left: *Das Kleid* (The Dress) (2018) and *Merzgebirge Merz Pie* (2018). Group exhibition with artwork by Catherine Ricoul, St. Pauli and Stefano Benini.

In a comparable convivial gesture, artist Laure Prouvost (2014) enacted a participatory intervention at her RCA Visual Cultures Lecture, in the wake of her 2013 Turner Prize winning and Schwitters-related film, *Wantee*. In the film, Prouvost plays out *Wantee's* fictional narrative as if real, with implausible anecdotes such as the long hosepipe swallowed and pulled back out of a cat, rendering her 'Grand Dad' [sic] as Schwitters' fellow-artist friend more plausible by comparison. Her Grand Dad had disappeared down a tunnel that he was digging to Africa from the hillside overlooking Lake Coniston in the English Lake District, notionally situating her Grand Dad as Schwitters' neighbour in Ambleside, Schwitters' adopted home since 1945. At the close of her lecture, Prouvost credits the audience's attendance to her Grand Dad, rather than to her. She films the audience with her mobile

phone, encouraging them to 'act for him' and shout 'Grand Dad, where are you? Come back, we love you!', perhaps recording material for future installations. The Transformative Site of *Fireworkskins* similarly progresses from performance to installation, resonating with Schwitters' transmedial motifs such as the sneeze, the funnel and The Devout Helene (see pages 129-130, 100 & 93 respectively). The migration of motifs between artworks is evident in Prouvost's installation, *The long waited, weighted gathering* at Manchester Jewish Museum (2021). At a table set with tea and biscuits, one actor asks 'Wantee?' as she lifts up her cup, a gesture connecting Prouvost's works across her practice's trajectory.

#### **4.6.2 *Fireworkskins* at Bright Club Manchester (2018)**

*Fireworkskins* featured in a stand-up comedy set that I performed for Bright Club Manchester, echoing Schwitters' 'highly original mixture of seriousness and jest' (Schmalenbach, 1970: 14). Bright Club's premise involves presenting doctoral research through a ten-minute stand-up comedy routine for a paying audience in a public venue.<sup>32</sup> The training session of comedy basics warned against assuming the audience's research-specific knowledge, known as threshold concepts and applicable also to writing a thesis. My research's contexts, aims and outcomes benefitted from this useful testing ground. The audience and speaker dynamic recalled a conference's Q & A session, with audience feedback and interaction in the alternative form of laughter. Provoking laughter meant clarifying subject matter for myself before I could reform it into comedy material.

I supported my monologue with *Fireworkskins* (Fig. 56), not as props propping up the monologue or in the theatrical sense of ownership, but as characteristic and functioning artworks, with properties as intrinsic to the comedy set as to my artistic research.

<sup>32</sup> Haynes, J. (2018) *Bright Club Manchester*. BCM35. The King's Arms, Salford. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxKMGoAKm8o> [Accessed: 18 June 2022].



Figure 56. *Fireworkskins* (2018) Left: preparation on site. Right: spent *Fireworkskins* on stage. Bright Club Manchester.

The novel comedy format became a Transformative Site of unexpected research mechanisms, testing my articulation through performance, art objects and storytelling. I placed two bags I made for my PhD interview on stage as a prompting device for my memorised script. I introduced Schwitters' practice of recycling materials alongside *Monkey Business* (2016), a collaborative collage made with St. Pauli in Zurich. In the collage, I mistakenly pasted my return bus ticket to the airport and instead presented a photo of the collage to the bus driver to scan. I further evoked the absurdist spirit of Dada, relating my invention of *Cheesehole Photography* (2016). *Cheesehole Photography* is a wordplay with Pinhole Photography generated in the Camera Obscura, meaning 'dark room' in Italian. I propose that *Cheesehole Photography*, generated in the 'camera chiara' (Italian for light room), meaning the outdoors, can reconfigure everyday clarity by looking out towards the light of a world viewed through the banal, or 'cheesy' medium of a hole in a popular cheese (Fig. 57). I described the productive tensions of my relation to Schwitters' legacy, including a personal reflection on Schwitters' resemblance to my deceased Uncle Derek, recalling Prouvost's familial allusion to her Grand Dad (see page 141).



Figure 57. *Cheesehole Photography. Zurich Through the Cheesehole* (2016) Slideshow for *Dada Deadpanel*, UK—Z. Cabaret Voltaire, Switzerland.

I used the comedy set to problematise two knotty research problems that I was grappling with at the time. Finding a succinct way to articulate Tran, collage and my research through storytelling, transformed my recognition of the layering common to both Schwitters' literary and visual forms, as they became visible when I was forced to articulate them in light of each other. I also challenged a potential 'threshold concept' pitfall by explaining how *Fireworkskins* are a 'nomadic entity' and made on the move. Having to enunciate what I meant by 'nomadic entity' helped develop my initial theoretical basis of Braidotti's nomadic thinking (see page 32) from a theoretical 'entity' into my methodology of errantry's embodied and emplaced artistic research adventure. Taking every opportunity to present artwork as a general rule alongside written or spoken words, I reinforced my artwork narratives by setting off the *Fireworkskins* as the set's grand finale. The audience's countdown from five provided a build-up which I amplified by holding the microphone to the popping and crackling artwork.

As my first attempt at stand-up comedy, it struck me that its transformative mechanisms were well suited to testing and disseminating artistic research, due to the need to clarify the inherent knowledge in the artwork first. The clarity gave the comedic storytelling room to

manoeuvre performatively alongside the artworks' materiality and the audience's reactions. The challenges of provoking the audience's laughter unexpectedly brought to light embedded thoughts, materials and consequences. I gleaned from conversations after the set that it was the earnestness with which I pursued the research and delivered artistic anecdotes that provoked laughter. Absurdity emerged by off-setting storytelling against the audience's possible preconceptions of my serious and committed research. I led the audience in the direction of a plausible research narrative and upended it with an unanticipated consequence, recalling Bonset's revolutionary aphorism of upending of the house with many floors (see page 105).

#### **4.7 *Decken* (2018)**

*Decken* is a development of the mutability of deconstructed text and the malleability of texture at an intersection of Schwitters' and my artwork. Flat collages and popped and cut open *Fireworkskins* stabilised by clingfilm into draped forms, transformed from the otherwise intransigent vinyl. I lined vinyl collage with a transparent and flexible clingfilm backing or worked directly onto the clingfilm. The vinyl's newfound malleability expressed movement through mutable and expanded collage forms, creating a Transformative Site accentuated by cut-up lettering and considered alongside one of Schwitters' *i*-poems.

*Die Decken* is the plural form of a versatile German word that I chose to spatially think with, for *Decken* artworks in *Merzwomen & Daughters of Dada*, re-contextualised for *Being Nomad* (Fig. 58). Like bedecked, *Die Decken* generally refers to wide and flat coverage of one thing over another, with a spatially high and low range from ceilings to draped textiles such as blankets and tablecloths. The layered surfaces and cut-up lettering formed transformative spaces between the cover and the covered. I attached *Decken* forms to the fabric of the buildings by an orange tube to implicate the interior as further covering.



Figure 58. Left: *Decken* (2018) *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* (2018) Vallum Gallery, Carlisle. Right: *Decken*, re-contextualised for *Being Nomad* (2018) Righton Building, MMU.

#### 4.7.1 *Decken* and Text

*Decken* collages were made with faulty lettering rejected from commercial vinyl graphic jobs which I sourced at no cost from nearby signage workshops.<sup>33</sup>



<sup>33</sup> With thanks to Cubby's Signs, Carlisle and Stretford Studios, Manchester.





Figure 59. *Decken* (2018) Above: Collage cut up into tiles (below).

I deconstructed the collaged letters into cut-out tiles, punched holes for additional layers and attached the tiles to clingfilm (Fig. 59). I further disrupted the text's former commercial communication function by draping the new form on an angle between the gallery ceiling and floor (Fig. 60). I differentiate the discrepancy between the digitally cut letters for advertising and their new cultural life as artwork, with the irregular edges of my hand-made, agential Baradian cuts (see page 23).

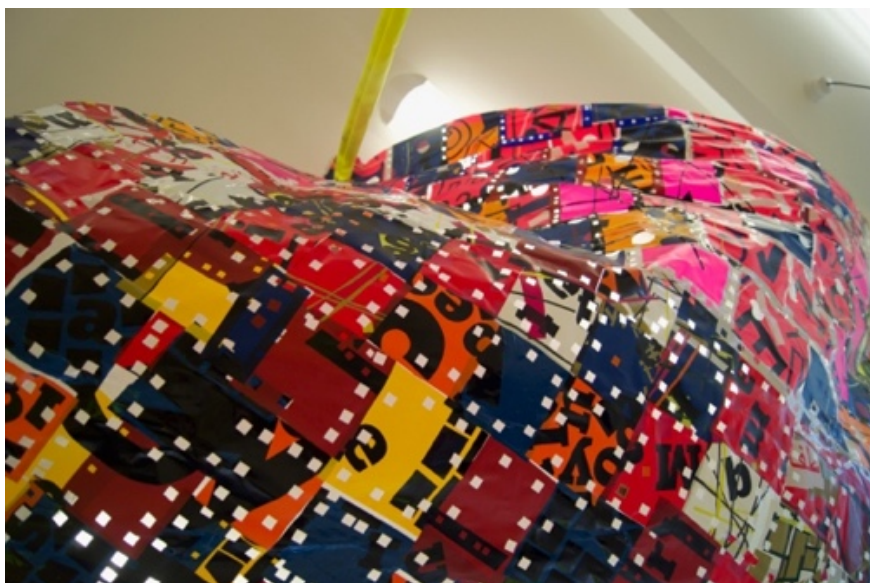


Figure 60. *Decken* (2018) Collages cut into tiles and arranged into a drape, viewed from below. *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* (2018) Vallum Gallery, Carlisle.

The re-contextualised digitally cut text illuminated a correspondence with Schwitters' textual cuts occurring notably in his '*i*-poems'. Schwitters made new poems from a single downwards cut through an existing poem.<sup>34</sup> In Schwitters' 1923 poem, headed 'ppppppppp' in his journal, *Merz 2. Nummer i*, he vertically divided the poem's words and emphasised their new centre-justification with a thick black line, with the letters remaining intact. He breaks off mid-poem to 'Merzplain'<sup>35</sup> his intervention, 'The line indicates where I cut this harmless poem from a children's picture book in half lengthwise. Goat thus becomes Go.' (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 148-149). It is unclear to what extent Schwitters' vertical, agential cut through the original poem was an approximate line around the letters which he then centre-justified in the new layout. Schwitters dispenses with half of the poem's words and consequently their clarity and meaning. He ironically proposes that the poem now lacks the decency to make sense, insinuating that the children's innocent poem about a goat has become harmful. Schwitters' explanatory disruption is a horizontal cut forming a visual correspondence to the vertical cut through the text, recalling the horizontal and vertical axes of *Augusta Bolte*, published in the same year as this *i*-poem.

The preceding page in the journal overleaf from 'ppppppppp' disrupts the journal's alphabetical sequence with 'qqqqqqq' (Luke, 2014: 27). Luke draws attention to this '*q/p* flip' which forms a palindrome, Schwitters' 'favourite device to highlight the non-identity between a spoken word and that same word as it appears on the page as writing' (2014: 26 & 28), underlining the discrepancy between sound and sign. Luke points out the '*q/p* flip's turn of the page, implying 'a rotation in space' of 180° (2014: 26). Taking Schwitters' inclination towards the palindrome a step further, I propose that the 180° *q/p* flip could also be read vertically as a *d/b* flip, recalling the vertical and horizontal cuts of the aforementioned *i*-poem.

<sup>34</sup> William S. Burroughs' and Brion Gysin's 1959 vertical 'Fold-in' method recalls Schwitters' method, perhaps more so than fellow Dadaist Tristan Tzara's method, who used and rearranging whole words. See also Schwitters *et al.* (2002: xx).

<sup>35</sup> 'Merzplain' is a contemporary neologism I made to conflate Merz with Schwitters' written analysis of Merz.

Further resonances include the vertical inversion in Schwitters' *Anna Blume* (1919) poem, 'You wear your hat on your feet and wander by on your hands' (Cardinal and Webster, 2011: 116) and Bonset's inverted house aphorism (see page 105). A d/b flip transforming Schwitters' initial overleaf *q/p* gesture to a complete 360° rotation, converts the flat plane of the letter *q* into a spatial configuration radiating in all directions. My extension of Schwitters' gesture recall's my proposal that I. K. Bonset's inverted house does not settle but continues to rotate as a metaphor in the analysis of Transformative Sites (see page 100). I. K. Bonset's inverted house, Schwitters' *i*-poem and Luke's '*q/p* flip' (2014: 26) all evoke the vertical and horizontal axes, helpfully implicating the angular by association for *Angles for Augusta Part I* and II.

#### 4.7.2 *Decken* Clothing and Casts

My discovery of stabilising *Fireworkskins* (2018) with clingfilm created the possibility of casting objects and making clothing. *Decken*'s draping properties gave form to the voluminous 'Doctoral Gown' collage which I wore for *Nonsense Unico* (2019), alluding to Augusta's frantic doctoral research (Fig. 20, page 67). *Das Kleid* (The Dress), made from hand-cut vinyl, was collaged directly onto clingfilm wrapped around my arms and body, as described in *Time, Manners, Place* (2018) (see pages 137-140). I initially wore the dress for the *Dinner for Three* performance opening of *Merzwomen & Daughters of Dada* then displayed it in the post-performance installation, as with *Time, Manners, Place*. Each time I wore *The Dress*, I re-collaged the vertical centre front seam shut and cut it open again to take it off, recalling Schwitters' vertical cuts in the garment-related *Indecent i-poem*, situated below his typographical 'qqqqqqq' (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 146).

*Das Kleid* (The Dress) is a wearable collage which triangulates between the cutting together-apart aspect of Barad's agential realism theory (see page 23), and Ettinger's borderlinking theory (see page 22), bringing further depth into *Das Kleid*'s effects as a performing object when worn during performance, and exhibited afterwards. Insights gained from this junction show how the worn collage operates as a dynamic unit, even though its unity is disrupted by being cut open and re-collaged shut each time it is worn. Given my costume background, the fluency of cutting open and resealing through collage contrasted with sewing machine-based costume construction. New mobilised methods became illuminated by theory, contributing to the emergent seriality of *Casts*' narrative forms. Ettinger's borderlinking became an effective way of thinking through collage, due to the order in which elements are

attached in layers across a threshold. In *Das Kleid*, the borderlinked cut edges created a concentrated area of narrative build up around the cut. This activity formed a correspondence with Barad's cutting together-apart, whereby the dress remains a unit and the relationship of the cut edges is still active due to the collage process.

Vinyl artworks recall the outsized and often singular vinyl works of post-war pop artist, Claes Oldenburg. While parallels exist with Oldenburg in the subject matter of the everyday, my emphasis is on the surface change of smaller, easily portable objects. Similar to the process for making *The Dress*, I wrapped clingfilm and then collaged vinyl around everyday objects, cut the cast away from the object and resealed the cut making a portable, narrative analogue of the original object. In a correspondence with Schwitters' *i*-poems (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 24), the gap between identifying the original object and casting its likeness is minimised by the directness of the process, recalling the single gesture of Barad's agential cut (see page 23).



Figure 61. *Das Kleid* (The Dress) (2018) in *Dinner for Three* installation, *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* (2018) Vallum Gallery, Carlisle.

I explored the clingfilm and vinyl casting method of recording objects as site-responsive and site-specific artworks in *Stone & Ring (Ringboy)* (2018) (Sidney Nolan Trust residency), *UpHolzstery & Schtick* (2019) (Sidney Nolan Trust residency), *Can* (2018) (*Being Nomad* exhibition) and *Knee* and *Subject* (2019) (*Grotto for Mina Loy*).

*Stone & Ring (Ringboy)* alludes to Sidney Nolan's painting, *Boy and the Moon*, c.1940, also known as 'Moonboy' (Fig. 62). The cast while on the stone gave a transformative reading of its apparent muteness, creating a visual dialogue when paired with the seemingly intransigent vinyl. Six months later at the 'Post-Residency Event' I exhibited *Ringboy*, marking the cast's separation from the stone and its visual narrative of movement from the original site.



Figure 62. Left: *Stone & Ring (Ringboy)* (2018) Sidney Nolan Trust Artists Camp, Powys. Right: *Ringboy* (2018) Post-residency Event. No. 70, MMU.

The agential cut enacting the separation from the stone relays an expanded collage narrative through the added surface depth and texture, in a parallel with the narrative of *Airholders* (see pages 114-117). The linkage of these artworks further illuminates the effects of the cut and altered narrative of Schwitters' aforementioned *i*-poem.

In a durational iteration of the casting method, I made *UpHolzstery & Schtick* in proximity to an off-road crossing on the Sidney Nolan Trust's Rodd Farm, as a place to sit and ponder the Trust's public consultation regarding its future (Fig. 63). *Die Holz* is the German word for wood, and I cast the 'upholstery' directly onto an existing tree stump, cut into the shape of a seat. Like the *Decommissioned* scrapyard interventions (see page 118-119), *UpHolzstery & Schtick* remained in place after the residency event.



Figure 63. Left: *UpHolzstery & Schtick* (2019) Sidney Nolan Trust Artists Camp, Powys. Right: *UpHolzstery & Schtick* (2019). Three months later. Photo credit: Lin Charlston (2019).

*Can* for *Being Nomad* exhibition forged a narrative connection between my multiple interventions in amongst the 100+ plants which were watered using the original can. (Fig. 64). I placed *Can* (next to the original object amongst the plants and other exhibits to reassert its provenance, connection to site and central purpose through its recognisable form.



Figure 64. *Can* (2018) Next to original can. *Being Nomad* (2018) Righton Building, MMU.

The reflection of the light green leaf in the foreground reflecting in both cans shows the interactive visual dialogue between surface texture, form and placement of exhibits amongst the plants.

#### **4.8 Artist Book 2017**

*Artist Book 2017* is an experiential anthology featuring my first year of artistic research adventures rolled into a sleeve of twelve unbound 'Chapters'. The images and accompanying text boxes are digitally printed onto fabric which I constructed into specific forms.

A live shared reading of *Artist Book 2017* formed the basis of my Merz North #4 Conference presentation at University of York. *Artist Book 2017* was also the subject of a 'blind crit' session for Creative Provocations seminar group at MMU. The shared experience of reading the book formed a Transformative Site through the dispersed material qualities of the Chapters, differing from the transformative experience of reading a bound or digital book.

My errant 'out of studio' methodology enacted in various libraries, reading rooms and reading groups is reflected in the bookishness of the following Chapters (Figs. 65–67).



Figure 65. *Chapter: Unfixed Assets* (2017). 'Goody Bags' contents: reading matter, word game and balloons assembled and distributed by me and Heather Ross. NAFAE 2016 conference coach excursion from Lancaster to Ambleside.





Figure 66. Chapter: *Flat and Round for Nothing* (2017). Reactivated project, meshing elements of Schwitters' *The Flat and the Round Painter* (1941) with Samuel Beckett's *Texts for Nothing* (1950-1952). *Nothing Abandoned* group exhibition, Paradise Works, Salford (2017).



Figure 67. Chapter: *Something in Reverse* (2017). Reciting poems by John Cooper Clarke, translated from *Ten Years in an Open-necked Shirt* (2012) into Italian in Biblioteca Sormani reading room, in preparation for my performance for *Dadabend 30* in Milan (2016).

*Artist Book 2017* was influenced by Manchester Metropolitan's Special Collections artist books and exhibition space, which often displays works from its collection. Exhibitions of particular interest were *Tricking the Impossible: word and type: Penny Rimbaud and Bracketpress* (2017) and *Curious Things: A glimpse into the International Mail Art Archive of Michael Leigh and Hazel Jones* (2019). Both exhibitions explored aspects of the visual grammar and material forms associated with Dada and Schwitters. My use of the term Artist Book borrows and adapts Clive Phillpot's definition (2013: 41-42) whereby:

Artists' books are understood to be books or booklets produced by the artist using mass-production methods, and in (theoretically) unlimited numbers, in which the artist documents or realizes art ideas or artworks.

The digital fabric, text and images of *Artist Book* were printed by a commercial process and are therefore repeatable. The construction of unbound Chapters allows for the contents of *Artist Book* to be unlimited in principle, with the possibility of making new editions with additional Chapters.

#### **4.8.1 *Artist Book 2017* at Merz North #4 Conference**

My presentation and performance, *Sch!!!!!!!* at Merz North #4 Conference featured *Artist Book 2017* and disrupted the familiar format of delivering an academic paper. I announced my departure into the artistic research realm of Schwitters with my initial artworks and the forthcoming *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* exhibition, which took place a year later. Proposing the conference room as a Departure Lounge, I invited delegates to traverse the University campus to see *Artist Book 2017* installed between shelved books in the library (Fig. 68). I staggered the invitation, continuing the motif with an airport departure lounge's priority boarding queue. I first invited anyone considering themselves to be female artists, then anyone who considered themselves marginalised in any way, followed by anyone who felt or was left marginalised by this process, so that ultimately, everyone was invited. I actively emphasised and asserted my research intention of finding new paths through the existing UK Schwitters research terrain in the collective exhibition title, *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*.

I exercised the process of dispersal and reassemblage with *Artist Book 2017* Chapters to notionally rotate and aerate the field of Schwitters research in the run up to *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada*. Moving the session between the conference room and library

enacted my methodology of errantry. The performance's title *Sch!!!!!!!* refers to Schwitters' surname, with exclamation marks standing in for the remaining letters.<sup>36</sup> I introduced the performance procedure for *Sch!!!!!!!* to delegates in the library foyer.



Figure 68. *Artist Book 2017*. Chapters installed between shelved books in the library for *Sch!!!!!!!* (2017) University of York.

I chose the library's silent zone with sufficient room for delegates to congregate, more so than the relevance of neighbouring books. Delegates picked and read the Chapters from the shelves and reconstructed *Artist Book 2017* by reassembling the Chapters back into their tubular book sleeve. The fabric, proposed by manufacturers as umbrella fabric, made rustling noises due to its closely woven structure, causing the Chapters to comedically fall

<sup>36</sup> See also 'We Will Not Be Shushed': <https://wagingnonviolence.org/2010/06/they-will-not-be-shushed/>.

through the open-ended sleeve. A transformative tension from stifled giggles grew while delegates tried to remain quiet in the silent zone. Heather Ross helped me to 'shush' muffled conversations spreading amongst the delegates. In the foyer, with *Artist Book 2017* back in its sleeve, I attempted to scan it out with a 'stolen' library book secreted in the sleeve, intending to set off the library security alarm to end the performance, although the book failed to trigger the alarm. The five-minute walk back to the conference room provided a reflective conversational interlude amongst delegates, with the experience generating questions on our return. The Chapters and tubular sleeve offered a circular route through my artistic research, reflected in the circular route around the campus.

Delegates readjusted to the conference room environment, noticeably oxygenated by the collective and conversational movement across campus and perhaps from the sense of urgency from the suppressed library conversations. The energised Q & A session raised my consideration of *Artist Book 2017*'s development beyond a one-off edition. I had presented *Sch!!!!!!!* as specific but open-ended with the potential for a new edition, to be realised as a thesis exhibition. The book-like attributes were discussed, and how each Chapter referred to one project whose form related to the text boxes (Figs. 69-71).



Figure 69. Chapter: *Unfolding with Holes* (2017) Handle detail and documentation of my presentation from inside *Hugo the Ball* (2014). *Dada Deadpanel UK—Z* (2016). Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich.

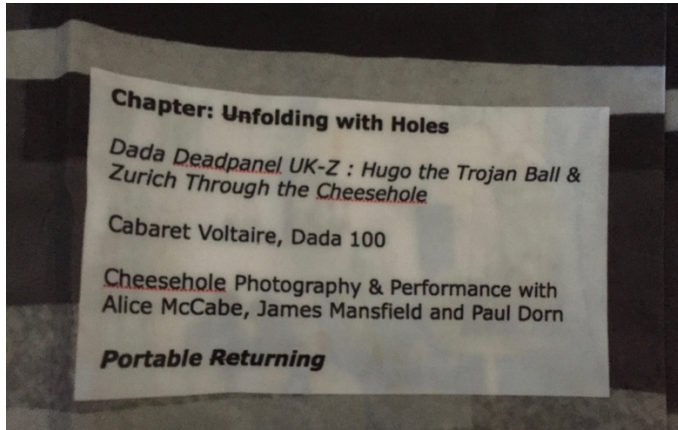


Figure 70. *Unfolding with Holes* (2017) Chapter content formatted as a text box.

Chapter: Title for reference  
(Name of constructed textile process)

Work|  
(What was it? Name of activity in the image)

Context  
(The place name, organisation or event name)

Detail  
(The place name, organisation or event name)

Resonance (in bold)  
(An observation which connects to the Chapter title, to offer an expansion as a clue to accessing the Chapter and can sound like an aphorism)

Figure 71. Text box criteria for *Artist Book 2017* Chapters.

Depicted in the *Unfolding with Holes* Chapter, *Hugo the Ball* is a fabric, football-like construction expanding to a three-metre diameter when filled with 300 inflated latex

balloons.<sup>37</sup> I packed *Hugo the Ball* (Fig. 72), uninflated balloons, electric pump, camera and personal effects for the four-day stay in Zurich into hand-luggage for my flight to Zurich, evoking Schwitters' travels on public transport around Europe with materials packed into suitcases (Steinitz, 1975: 204-205).



Figure 72. *Dada Deadpanel UK—Z* (2016). Dada Centenary collaborative performance at Cabaret Voltaire, Zurich. L-R: *Hugo the Ball* (2014), Jackie Haynes, Alice McCabe, James Mansfield.

#### 4.8.2 Artist Book 2017 at Creative Provocations

Creative Provocations were discursive sessions videoed for reflective research purposes. My session resulted in a focus on connections between the artworks in the Chapters through

<sup>37</sup> As a measure of how my practice has changed since the *Dada Deadpanel UK—Z* (2016) performance, cutting into new, purpose-bought fabric and filling it with new, purpose-bought non-biodegradable balloons now feels counter-intuitive to my increasingly low carbon art practice.

a material handling of the dispersed book form.<sup>38</sup> *Artist Book 2017* was set up in my absence, as I was away at the time. The provocation relied on the agency of form, documented artworks and text boxes, to generate perceptions from those present without me being there to animate it. Without the preamble, context, emphasis of *Sch!!!!!!!* or proposal of the dispersed objects as Chapters, the half-hour session was an opportunity to explore the effects of *Artist Book 2017* through different forms of questioning in its relatively autonomous state.

Analysing the session involved tracing the overlaying conversations for insights from the video documentation, showing the group gathered around *Artist Book 2017*. The Chapters were displayed by emptying them out onto the table from their initial position within the sleeve, differing from the first iteration, with the Chapters already dispersed amongst the library's bookshelves. The library setting indicated an immediate bookishness whereas emptied onto a table, *Artist Book 2017* relied more on the titled sleeve to announce itself as a book. The materiality and discussion of *Artist Book 2017* formed a Transformative Site mediated by the video, with the shared experience of reading the book through the dispersed material qualities of the Chapters. By proposing that *Artist Book 2017* spoke for itself, I framed it as a performer and the session as an interactive performance (Fig. 73). Selected comments from the group are in red italics and unnamed, as who spoke was not always clear.

<sup>38</sup> Creative Provocations was initiated for artistic researchers by doctoral researcher Gemma Meek at MMU.



Figure 73. *Artist Book 2017*, dispersed at Creative Provocations, MMU (video image).

The group handled the pliable textile Chapters which tended to fold in on themselves. To hold the Chapters straight to read them in a book-like manner required additional navigation, whereas on the library shelves they were presented with spines facing outwards. *'You really want to get inside but can't. There's no way into this...'*

*(Unzipping Chapter) 'Oh I didn't know this one had a zip! I've found a way into this one!'* The group debated the Chapters' handling and navigation, seeking a basis to discuss the work as a form of documentation.

The dispersed Chapters seemed to distract from sustained consideration of the documented content. Without the continuity offered by the familiar book form, perhaps exacerbated by the fabric's slipperiness, recognising the indeterminate connections between the content was disrupted. *'Chapters of a dispersed thing. It's one thing, but they're separate things. They address one another, but they're separate things. A dispersed book.'* Noting the separate but dispersed dynamic, it nevertheless seemed difficult for the group to gain the purchase on the Chapters that a fixed sequence might support. The connection between the works as a time-contingent series of events remained unquestioned, with 2017 being the only date offered, on the sleeve.



*'It has a formalism to it; fairly consistent use of material, pattern, layout, obviously with variation built in. Each piece is individual but broadly formalist.'* Group members began to recognise the relational build-up between my depicted artworks, indicating that correspondence between my artworks was reinforced by their proximity. Their unfolding processes, materials and themes functioned in relation to each other, and their transformative effects rippled beyond the connections I conceived of in relation to my research question. Distinctiveness in any aspect of my artwork can be traced through my methodology of errantry to all other artworks, through process strands, materials and themes and my research subject matter.

*'Like rolling the absurdity forward in new waves but borrowing that language, literally labelling.'* Absurdity and mischief's disruptive mechanisms connecting my work to Schwitters and Dada were noted with a useful and appropriate rolling waves metaphor. The fluidity, leakage, overlaps and intersections I intend in my practice are made explicit in *Artist Book 2017's* construction and dissemination. The generative possibilities created by the elasticity of proximities between artworks were noted by a group member: *'With Jackie's work there's always a sense that everything that she does builds on a previous series of events that's she's referring back to. She's constantly building and building on the sense of what she's already done. You don't need to know exactly what it was, in a way.'* It was rightly pointed out that some group members knew my work already, and assumptions could be based on my doctoral research and Creative Provocations context. Reading *Artist Book 2017* as *'a Dada thing'* with sufficient bookish qualities was possibly triggered by half the Chapters' references to Dada and *a priori* knowledge of Schwitters' affiliation. Communicating bookishness needed sufficient book references to warrant its consideration as a book, but not too much, foreclosing its discursive functions.

One particular comment inadvertently constituted a transformative moment, fulfilling an ambition for my artworks to provoke expansive thinking. *'As a survivalist thing, how do you keep the work going? The work's got to use its own resources. It must last, it must survive. There's quite an interesting aspect to that, how do you make something sustain itself?'*

My art practice's survival in my own lifetime is a preoccupation lying beneath the surface of my decision-making processes. Like an elastic Möbius strip, I am simultaneously pulled along by my intention for my artwork to intensify as I enact the pulling. Elastic connectivity

between elements of my artworks maintains a malleable coherence for re-deployment in subsequent artworks (see page 166). Resourcefulness is key to my artwork's agency, with the artwork itself as a resource and site of implied knowledge.

As observed by the group, paper books' vulnerability to water are indeed distant from the survivalist, umbrella fabric properties of the Chapters. *Artist Book 2017*'s open form ambiguously implies detachment, although coherence is maintained by the Chapters' form and sleeve, despite the sleeve, erroneously referred to as a bag, also being open-ended with the potential for the Chapters to slide out, as they did in *Sch!!!!!!!* (see page 158).

*'So much more tent, again, packing it up into a bag.'* The survival metaphor persisted with the portable bag evoking my methodology of errantry, of packing up and moving along the Deleuzian path of stopping-off points and relays, where places are arrived at in order to leave once more (see page 39).

*'What difference does it make that Jackie isn't here? Are we speaking more freely about it? I'm kind of wanting her to be here so she can tell me. If she was here, we'd be asking all those questions, instead of trying to decide – we're asking each other. She'll be listening to the video.'* My absence caused the discussion to shift focus to the group's own responses to my provocation. The group's generosity in responding thoughtfully and effectively to *Artist Book 2017* is a functioning example of the social nature of artistic research and knowledge. Effective, peer-led research gatherings depended on the group's interests and motivations, in this instance providing rich and transformative material for analysis that would be difficult to solicit elsewhere.

#### **4.9 Grotto for Mina Loy (2019)**

*Grotto for Mina Loy* was an artwork investigating Mina Loy's literary and artistic work in parallel to my study of Schwitters. The oscillating proximities I found between their artistic and literary work formed a Transformative Site which illuminated my inquiry by considering aspects of their contemporaneous oeuvres alongside each other.

*Grotto for Mina Loy* was an installation for *Blindspots* group exhibition in the temporary, purpose-built *Gathering* (2019) structure at the Hatton Gallery in Newcastle, which houses

Schwitters' *Merz Barn* wall. In a neighbouring room, Heather Ross's *The Loud and the Soft Speakers* exhibition (2019) interrogated Schwitters' 'Silence' poem, while her contribution to *Blindspots* focussed on Schwitters' friend, the printmaker Gwyneth Alban Davis. This richly cross-referencing environment was also entangled with *Exploding Collage*, the Hatton Gallery's exhibition showing contemporary and twentieth century women artists, credited for expanding the field of collage. Architects Julia Heslop & Ed Wainwright described *Gathering* (2019) as:

an architectural installation and exhibition space... of... 'grottoes' or 'pods', each hosting the work of artists responding creatively to a historically significant, but canonically ignored, female collage artist... *Gathering* referenced the Hannover Merzbau... [and] amalgamated found and repurposed materials and experimented with collage as an expanded practice through installation.

*Grotto for Mina Loy* created a spatially artistic vacuum for research materials and artwork relating to Mina Loy. Exploring Loy's literature and artwork in tandem with Schwitters revealed transformative insights into both legacies through my artistic consideration of their proximity within the same historical and cultural tidal wave of the avant-garde.

The architects' re-use of materials referencing Schwitters' Hannover *Merzbau* corresponded with my re-purposed materials and artwork elements' layered meaning, accumulating through repeated forms of use (see *Artist Book 2017* page 157). Schwitters' Hannover *Merzbau* grottos have received much critical attention and evade a neat summary. The *Gathering* grottos referenced Schwitters' Hannover *Merzbau* principle in that 'Each part of the interior serves as an intermediary element to its neighbouring part' (Webster, 2007: 56). The concave and convex open fronted spaces had a path running through them to the adjoining galleries. My space was convex with two shelves in the front section and a less visible back section accessible (to me) by crawling through a floor-level gap (Fig. 74).



Figure 74. *Grotto for Mina Loy* (2019). *Grotto* viewed from the back, Hatton Gallery, Newcastle.

I maximised the space, using the less accessible area to create depth, spatially citing the concealed parts of Schwitters' Hannover *Merzbau*. I aimed to find and triangulate resonance between Schwitters and Loy's legacies and the effects of my intervention. By re-deploying the *Elasticated Lines of Enquiry* (2018) used in *Planning Performance* (2018) (Fig. 75) and *Performed* (2018) at *Artists Camp Residency* at Sidney Nolan Trust, followed by *Collider II* in the *Post-residency Event* (2018) at No. 70 (MMU) (Fig. 26), I actively disrupted my artworks' linearity, stretching the re-purposed elastic's trajectory to form a material dialogue between my artworks.

In *Planning Performance*, I marked taking note and note-making materially, with vinyl 'notes' wrapped at intervals along the elastic 'cat's cradle' construction I adapted the cat's cradle

motif in response to Ellen Jeffrey's *Star Figures* (2018) performance as research<sup>39</sup> prior to the Sidney Nolan Trust residency, which Ellen could not go to thus creating a space for me. The cat's cradle, enacted by Ellen as a tool for altering traces from one place to another, resonated with the conditions through which the residency opportunity came about for me. My elasticated version of the cat's cradle motif in *Planning Performance* was an ephemeral construction, anchored to fenceposts and other existing features in the paddock to mark out selected thesis keywords. The performance involved shouting out the keywords with a brief explanation across the paddock to the audience and cutting the elastic, which sprang forward towards them. 'Emplacement' in particular (Pink, 2009: 25) endured as a transformative reference (see page 32) to my artistic elements' spatial emphasis of site, in this instance with *Elasticated Lines of Enquiry* later to be relocated from *Artists Camp Residency* to *Grotto for Mina Loy* (2018).



Figure 75. Above: *Planning Performance* (2018). Below detail of *Elasticated Lines of Enquiry* (2018) Sidney Nolan Trust, *Artist Camp* residency.

<sup>39</sup> Artful Research: Symposium Two, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2018.

<https://www.mmu.ac.uk/artshumanities/rah/events/detail/index.php?id=8181>



Figure 76. Left: *Planned* (2018), showing thesis keywords. Sidney Nolan Trust, *Artist Camp* residency. Right: *Collider I* (2018), showing *Elasticated Lines of Enquiry*. Post-residency Event at No. 70, MMU.

I emplaced artworks and artefacts in *Grotto for Mina Loy* alongside texts discussing Loy's canonically ignored works, mindful of the contextual presence of Schwitters. The redeployed *Elasticated Lines of Enquiry* resonated with recurring motifs in Schwitters' works, migrating across different versions of drawings and poems such as characters including Augusta

Bolte, reappearing unexpectedly in Schwitters' *Horizontale Geschichte* (Horizontal Story) (Disanto, 2018: 205) and in *Er (He)* (Schwitters, 1923). Of particular significance to my inquiry in *Grotto for Mina Loy*, are Loy's *Compensations of Poverty* poems from 1942-1949 (Conover, 1996: 109-146), which relate narratives with parallels in her collages.



Figure 77. *Gathering* (2019) Neighbouring concave and convex grottoes with *Grotto for Mina Loy* (2019) showing scrolls of reading material and *Elasticated Lines of Enquiry* (2018 and 2019). Hatton Gallery, Newcastle.

The *Elasticated Lines of Enquiry* crisscrossed at angles through the *Grotto* space from wooden beams which simultaneously supported and constituted the structure. I suspended casts from the lines in reference to Loy's collage, *Christ on a Clothesline* (c.1955-59) (Fig. 77). The spatial correlation between lines of casts and lines of text were emphasised by reading matter that I attached to the beams. A stool and pens attached to elastics encouraged visitors to inhabit the *Grotto* and make notes directly onto the texts, recalling the eye-level observations and note-making of *Planning Performance*. The elastic's artistic and

textual purpose reverberated with the spatial exploration and thesis keywords of *Planning Performance, Performed and Collider*.



Figure 78. *Christ on a Clothesline* (ca. 1955-59), Mina Loy. Collage and mixed media in deep glass covered box. 24 x 41 ½ x 4 ¼ inches. Image credit: available at: <http://www.francisnaumann.com/daughters%20of%20dada/loy.html> [Accessed: 18 June 2022].

Difference and correspondence were unlocked by considering my re-use of *Elasticated Lines of Enquiry* to suspend casts in relation to Loy's clothesline and Schwitters' son Ernst's accounts of Schwitters' Hannover *Merzbau*. Ernst relates how Schwitters 'literally connected its elements with string, and later wire and wood, to emphasize their interaction.' (Webster, 2007: 9). Loy's *Christ on a Clothesline* draws attention to her preoccupation with religion and her dadaistic will for 'thought to begin again' (Burke, 1996: 396). The elastic lines in *Grotto for Mina Loy* accentuated the interaction between *Gathering's* interconnected *Grotto* constructions (Fig. 78). Schwitters' Hannover *Merzbau*, Loy's *Christ on a Clothesline* and



*Grotto for Mina Loy* demonstrate a diversity of artistic will to place disparate elements into proximity through physical, connecting lines.

#### 4.9.1 *Blindspots* (2019)



Figure 79. Workshop artefacts in *Grotto for Mina Loy* (2019) attached to *Elasticated Lines of Enquiry* (2018 and 2019). Hatton Gallery, Newcastle.

*Blindspots* featured a drop-in workshop, programmed by the Hatton Gallery alongside *Gathering*. The casts attached to the lines in *Grotto for Mina Loy* were made in the workshop using the clingfilm and adhesive vinyl technique developed for *Merzwomen & the Daughters of Dada* (Fig. 53). I introduced two of Loy's figurative collages, *Christ on a Clothesline* and *Communal Cot* (Fig. 78 & 80) as the basis for my workshop. Loy's collages from her *Bowery Compositions* oeuvre were exhibited in the Bodley Gallery, New York, in 1959. (Churchill et

al., 2018b). Loy's friend, Marcel Duchamp, helped organise the exhibition, although Loy did not attend. In the exhibition catalogue, Duchamp reflects on Loy's diminished personal circumstances, wryly referring to the spatial depth of Loy's series as the "high-reliefs and lower depths" (Burke, 1996: 421). In the workshop, casts modelled onto body parts such as feet, arms, hands, knees and heads were cut away carefully then placed within the *Grotto* (Fig. 79).



Figure 80. *Communal Cot* (1949) Mina Loy. Papier maché and rags, 69.2 x 118.1cm. Image credit: available at: <http://www.francisnaumann.com/daughters%20of%20dada/loy.html> [Accessed: 18 June 2022].



Figure 81. *Blindspots* (2019) Workshop for *Grotto for Mina Loy* (2019), Hatton Gallery Education Room, Newcastle.

My embodied casting collage process echoed Loy's figurative, collaged depictions of the spaces and places she lived and moved through. Loy had reciprocal friendships with the homeless figures she depicts from her neighbourhood, who are *Communal Cot's* subjects. Loy's acquaintance modelled for *Christ on a Clothesline*, whose body she spatially foregrounds on the clothesline to articulate her dadaistic 'outrage at the world's injustices' (1996: 421). The convivial friendship and solidarity of Loy's collages recalls Schwitters' performance-like tours of the Hannover *Merzbau* in his home. The varied nature of Schwitters' tours appeared tailored to friends and acquaintances visiting the Hannover *Merzbau* (Webster, 2007: 220). Hannah Hoch's account described how the columns when opened released 'rivers of rubbish' and Schwitters invited Hoch to 'make yourself a grotto out of this' (Webster, 2021: n.p.). The verbal and material exchanges between Loy's and Schwitters' friends and acquaintances make a contemporary triangulation with the convivially shared materials and casting techniques at the *Blindspots* workshop, without looking to conflate Schwitters and Loy's narratives, but rather examine the epoch's complexity and their artistic approaches.

#### **4.9.2 The Occasional Dadaists, Mina Loy and Kurt Schwitters**

Mina Loy scholar Amy Morris attributes Loy's lack of recognition within the Dada canon to personal difficulties, in addition to not seeking to make connections through editorial, critical or academic roles. Morris (2013: 82) states 'Mina Loy failed to 'institutionalise' her work at a crucial moment, and became instead a marginal figure.' Schwitters, 'a keen self-publicist' (Cardinal & Webster, 2011: 70) on the other hand, had successful institutional affiliations, for instance with the Bauhaus, whose 'staff and pupils looked to Merz for ideas, in a productive relationship that lasted almost as long as the Bauhaus itself.' (Webster, 1997: 143). Schwitters' trajectory faltered, nevertheless, despite being recognised by fellow internees as 'the great Dadaist Kurt Schwitters' in Hutchinson Camp on the Isle of Man (Webster, 1997: 310). If, like Loy, who 'celebrated her naturalisation as an American in 1946' (Burke, 1996: 400), Schwitters had succeeded in relocating to New York, their paths would have surely crossed. Schwitters would have surely been on course for recognition and support from

Loy's long-standing friend, Marcel Duchamp, Katherine Dreier and others from New York's active avant-garde. Burke's account of Loy's bereavement and struggle with the loss of her husband, the Dadaist pugilist-poet, Arthur Craven, gives the reader the impression that its effects were as devastating to Loy as exile was for Schwitters (1996: 415).<sup>40</sup>

I learnt from the *Feminism and Contemporary Art Summer School* (2016) how the practice of canonisation amplifies artworks' potential transmission into cultural consciousness. In navigating and challenging the fixity of Schwitters' canonised artwork and literature through my artistic practice, I have grappled with overbearing advocacy and processes which exclude potentially illuminating artists such as Loy by finding alternative routes to my agency of discovery. I discovered the transformative *en dehors garde* theory 'in 'Mina Loy: Navigating the Avant-Garde', introduced in Chapter 2's Interface with Feminism and Contemporary Art.

During my six-year inquiry exploring Schwitters, I have steered away from the centralised Schwitters canon in an *en dehors garde* motion. Comparative readings of Loy and Schwitters revealed intersecting parallels and divergences with potential for further artistic, post-doctoral inquiry. *Grotto for Mina Loy* was a generative alternative to a narrow canonical reading of Schwitters, reframed with his lesser known contemporary. I broadened my research of the specifics and resonance between the dadaistic elements of Loy and Schwitters' practices to locate lesser-heard commentaries. I identified new perspectives expressed through my artwork, and examined the perspectives and my artwork in light of each other.

#### **4.9.3 Casting Collage**

*Exploding Collage* exhibition at the Hatton Gallery, accompanied by *Blindspots* and *Gathering*, was an exploratory expansion of artistic collage practice by women artists through which I found correspondence with the expanded collage practice of my artistic exploration of Schwitters. The exhibition featured Linder Sterling's costumed video artwork, *The Ultimate Form* (2013).

<sup>40</sup> Both Loy and Schwitters completed *The Little Review's* questionnaire in the last edition of the publication in May 1929, the only evidence I have found so far of their paths crossing.

Responding to Barbara Hepworth's request for her audiences to react physically to her works, *The Ultimate Form* is a celebration of that wish, and the dancers presented their composition beside a gallery attributed to Hepworth's work. Sterling has long been working with collage, and many of her pieces are built on the layering of photographs and images, and this work continued that theme of layering and collaboration. (Aesthetica, 2013: n.p.).

Mina Loy was Schwitters' and Hepworth's lesser known contemporary. My collage-based exploration of Loy resonated with Sterling's celebration of Hepworth as a historical female artist through physicality and layering. *Blindspots* offered a budget to produce artwork to further expand contemporary collage practices in addition to the workshop. As a consequence, I made three interconnected collage works which expanded my practice and inquiry, extending from the convivial aesthetic of the *Blindspots* workshop.



Figure 82. *Knee* (2019) Research photograph of knee cast, on *Merz Barn* wall visitor's bench. Hatton Gallery, Newcastle.

While documenting the workshop casts, including a cast of my knee, a cabinet displaying artefacts including Schwitters' 1940 painting of fellow Isle of Man internee, Fred Uhlman, (CR 2651) was by chance in the background of the photograph. It occurred to me to photograph *Knee* (2019) in the neighbouring room, with the Hatton Gallery's recently recontextualised *Merz Barn* wall in the background (Fig. 82). *Knee* and the *Merz Barn* wall's proximity created an exploratory and transformative situation, proposing a visual dialogue between the wall and the cast. The discarded materials of my vinyl collaged-over knee and

the materiality of Schwitters' *Merz Barn* wall both formed biomorphic artworks made directly with the hands.

I expanded upon my *Blindspot's* workshop concept for at home, making *Subject*, a full-length body cast of my eldest daughter with my youngest daughter's help. In preparation for *Subject*, I made and photographed a large collage for a digitally manipulated textile print using the *Blindspots* budget. I continued the visual dialogue initiated by *Knee*, photographing the textile print in proximity to the *Merz Barn* wall (Fig. 83), subsequently named *In Conversation* (2019).



Figure 83. *In Conversation* (2019) Digital fabric design from photograph of collage, photographed in proximity to Schwitters' *Merz Barn* wall.

*In Conversation* created a startling Transformative Site. By laying down the digital fabric print adjacent to the *Merz Barn* wall and partially under the security wire, the photograph echoed Schwitters' *Merz Barn* wall's overall shape. In a correspondence envisaged by my initial metaphor of walking alongside Schwitters' practice with mine (see page 13), the fabric print inclined towards the *Merz Barn* wall, as if in conversation.

*Subject* was cast from gold vinyl collaged over a layer of clingfilm, with hand-cut strips of the original collage made for the digital image of *In Conversation*. Cast from a standing position, the dynamic posture of *Subject* (2019) (Fig. 84) conveyed a useful metaphor for my turning away in a generative *en dehors garde* motion from a well-trodden path to Schwitters and embarking on my new research path. The shiny and reflective unsealed side of *Subject* emphasised the liveness of the human form, contrasting to the curled-up figures in Loy's *Communal Cot* (Fig. 80).



Figure 84. *Subject* (2019) At home. Moss Side, Manchester.

The cast gives the impression that the subject might have cut themselves free and walked away although ironically, *Subject* did not travel well by train between Manchester and Newcastle due to its size and fragile form. The lengthwise opening down one side of the cast embodies Ettinger's borderlinking theory (see page 22), as a means of thinking through the present-day dissolution of temporal and subject boundaries between the historical adjacency of Loy and Schwitters, to reveal the differences and commonalities of their respective legacies.

#### 4.10 'Muschelplastik'

A transformative artistic research encounter with Schwitters' small sculptures occurred in my second visit to the Sprengel's Kurt Schwitters Archive in Hannover. *Ohne Title (Muschelplastik)* 1947 (Untitled, shell sculpture) (CR 3667) is an original small sculpture from Schwitters' exile in Ambleside. Compared to other more widely exhibited small sculptures in the Sprengel's collection, 'Muschelplastik' has only four references assigned in its biography, the most recent being an article I wrote for the Kurt Schwitters Society Newsletter in 2020. The 'Muschelplastik' sculpture is amongst those considered by the Sprengel's conservators to be too fragile to travel and are therefore geographically limited in their public exposure. My encounter with the sculptures was a rare opportunity to experience first-hand a group of Schwitters' original works placed together, although three were casts. The encounter was made transformative by the photographs which I took for research purposes, with the sculptures reframed by the handheld spotlight I was given to view them. In addition to my 'Muschelplastik' article, the information held in the photographs has potential beyond the scope of my inquiry, for connections to be made across Schwitters' legacy.

The limitations on the movement of Schwitters' otherwise portable small sculptures created a productive tension with my 'fleet of foot' methodology. I navigated my research towards Schwitters' archived sculptures, to eventually disseminate the photographs in my thesis as unresolved research findings. During my visit, the nine small sculptures laid out on a small table formed a temporary exhibition-like archival experience to walk around and observe. In the room, darkened for conservation purposes, I navigated this micro-site with a hand-held torch with a strong spotlight. A conversation struck up around 'Muschelplastik', with Isabel Schulz, and restorer, Dana Jonitz. I recognised a red segment, thought possibly to be from a boot toecap, as a cricket ball fragment, due to my familiarity with the game, which is less well-known in Germany. The broken section of a cricket ball might have seemed of little consequence had I found it around Ambleside Cricket Club, its possible provenance. In the context of the encounter, the segment's familiarity felt less stable and caught my attention, and 'Muschelplastik's' archive description has since been updated.

Schwitters scholar John Elderfield (Artforum, 1973, n.p.) stated that Schwitters 'never developed an assemblage style for free standing sculpture which used the same kind of evocative materials that appear elsewhere in his art.' Luke (2014: 170) affirmatively



assessed the effect of Schwitters' reduced working conditions, which illuminates the undisclosed narrative found in my encounter with 'Muschelplastik'.

With the annihilation of the Hannover *Merzbau* and its inscription into history, Schwitters used his small sculptures instead to further his research into spatial perception... with sculpture that was colourful, miniature, and of unstable orientation, he came to understand that space no longer intervenes between bodies... Beholder and object do not occupy the same uniform medium of space but instead delimit and constitute the space of the other.

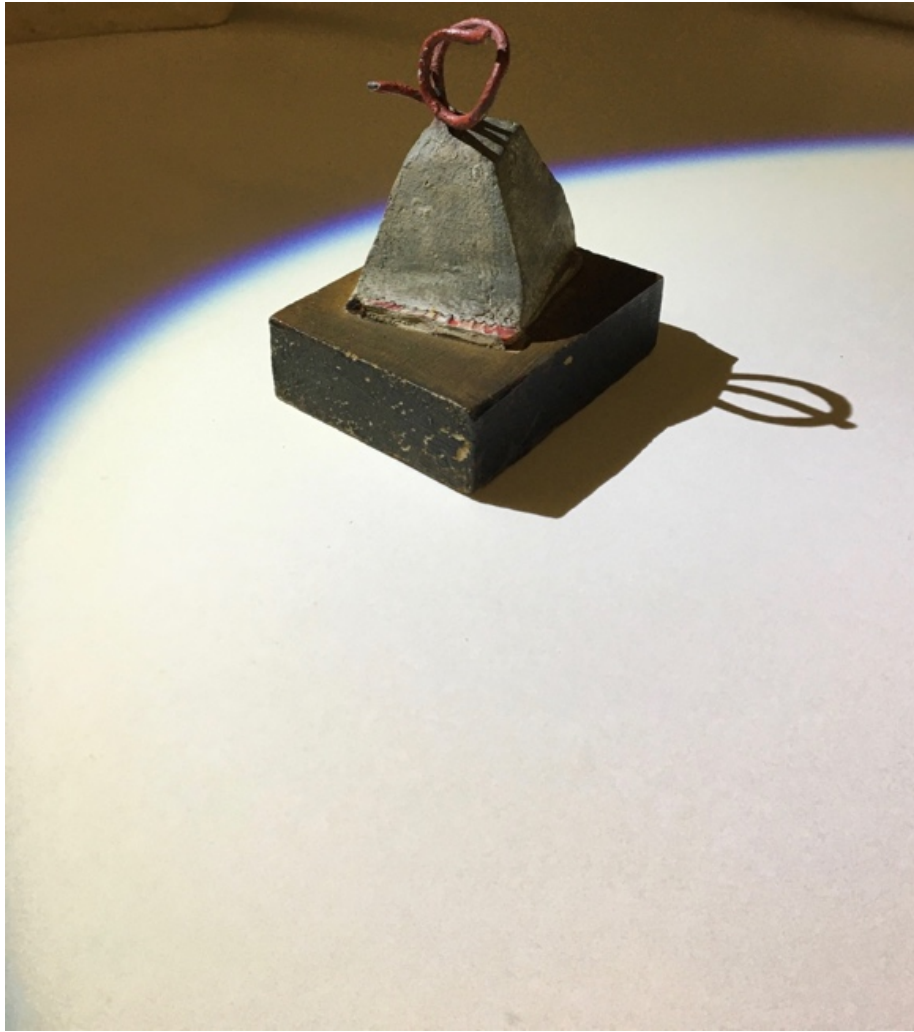
Mapping Luke's assessment onto my encounter, the space of my inquiry was constituted in this instance by the times and distances inherent in the 'Muschelplastik' sculpture, and my perception of it. I reassessed a small detail of Schwitters' spatial, sculptural research through my inquiry's criteria of identifying contemporary resonance. My cricket ball segment query formed an international Anglo/German micro-connection via Schwitters, radiating into the celebratory field of cultural commonalities and contradiction. My assertion of the merit of this international micro-connection opposes the impoverishment of international relations advocated for and delivered by 'Brexit'. Similarly, Anglo/German cultural connectivity reasserted in *Dinner for Three* (see page 133) was intentional, based on the British TV sketch *Dinner for One* (1963), with Schwitters introduced into the performance as the absent guest. *Dinner for One* remains popular on mainland Europe, but is largely unheard of in the UK. British artist Phyllida Barlow won the prestigious German 2022 Kurt Schwitters Prize which is another pertinent example acknowledging international relationality through art.<sup>41</sup>

The following collection of spot-lit images which I took during my research visit is a narrative of research material paused before a future expanded exploration. The collection shows six original Schwitters sculptures of the nine which I viewed, made towards the end of his life. The sculptures are freestanding and made from visibly evocative materials. Some are shown with archival packaging, indicating their fragility. The final image (Fig. 85) shows the six original sculptures with three casts.

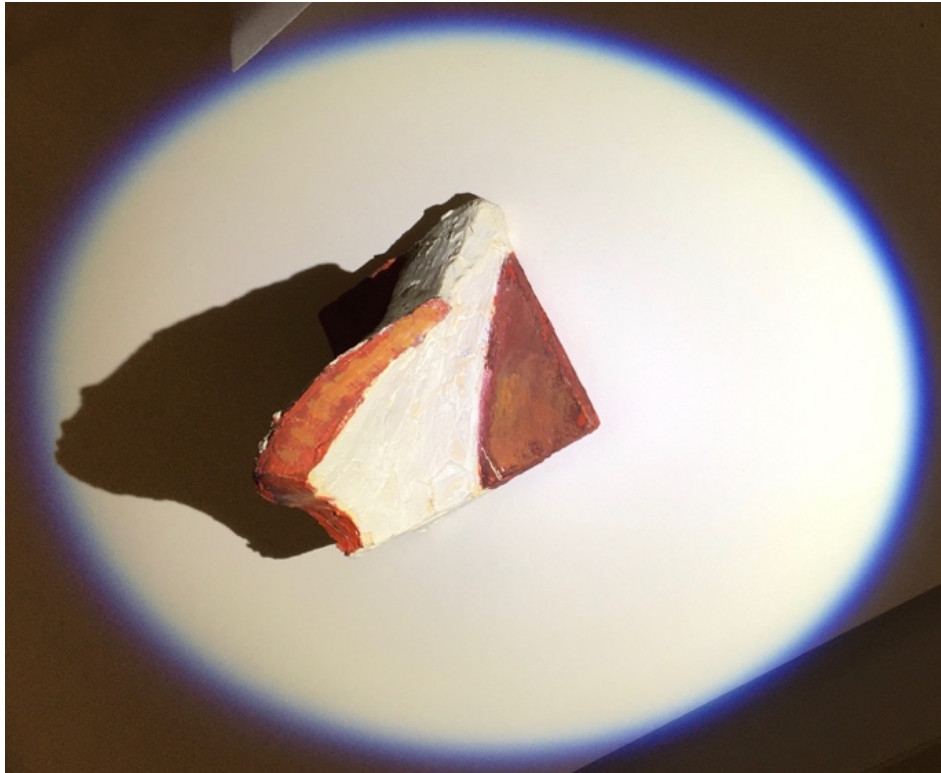
<sup>41</sup> Press Release, available at: <https://www.nsk.de/nsks/presse/pressemitteilungen/2021/21-07-20-kurt-schwitters-preis-eng> [Accessed: 18 June 2022].



*Ohne Titel (Muschelplastik)* 1947. Untitled (Shell Sculpture) with red cricket ball segment to the left. (CR 3667). Photo: Jackie Haynes



*Ohne Titel (Pyramide Mit Rotem Draht)* 1942/1945. Untitled (Pyramid with Red Wire) (CR 2985). Photo: Jackie Haynes



*Ohne Titel ("Schmelzende" Plastik)* 1945/1947. *Untitled ("Melting" Sculpture)* (CR 3256).  
Photo: Jackie Haynes



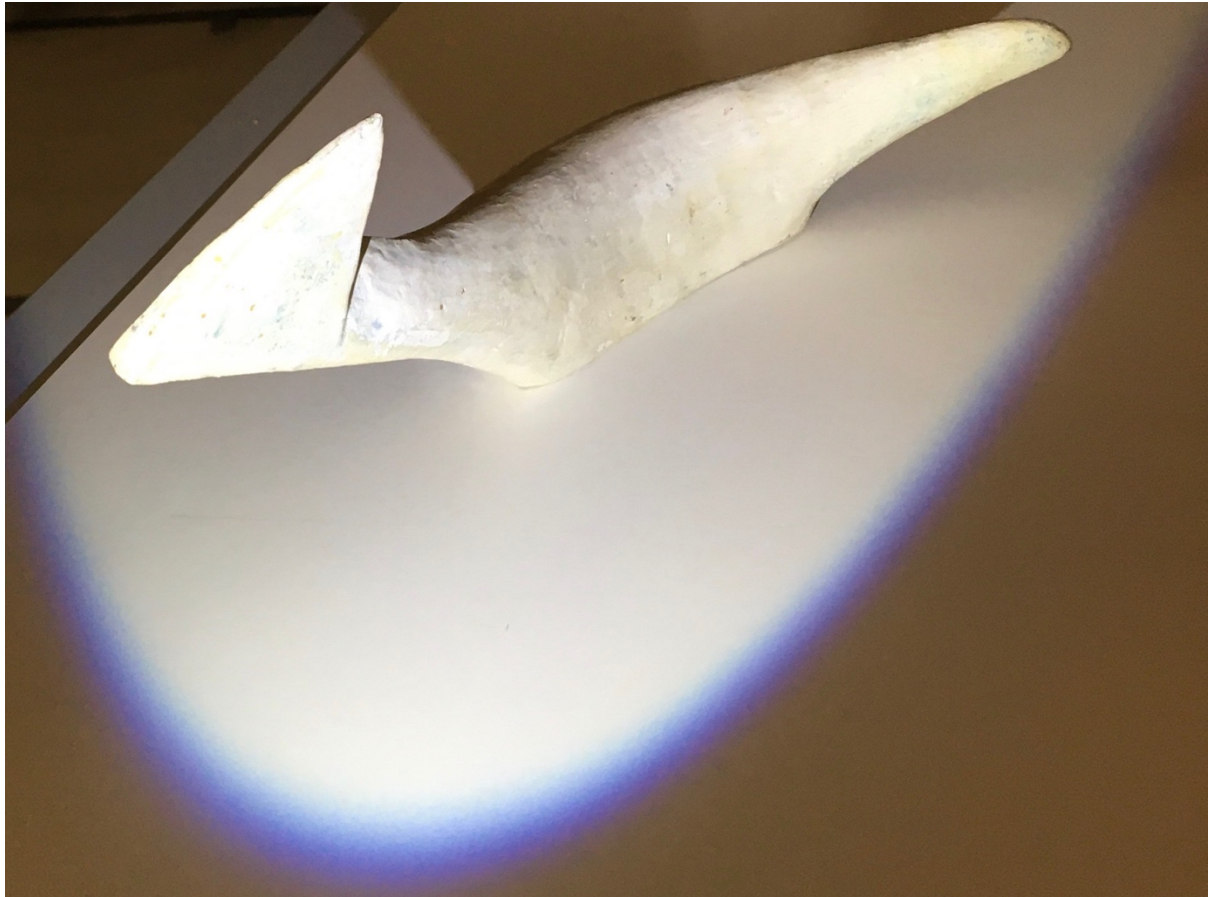
*'For Ernst on 16.11.43 from Dada Daddy'*. 1943 (CR 3048).<sup>42</sup> Photo: Jackie Haynes

<sup>42</sup> In Laure Prouvost's film, *Wantee*, (see page 141) her version of 'For Ernst' appeared attached to Grand Dad's studio door (Prouvost, 2013).



*Ohne Titel (Kleine Eisenblume)* 1945/1947. Untitled (Small Iron Flower) (CR 3254).

Photo: Jackie Haynes



*Ohne Titel (Kleiner Wal)* 1942/1945. Untitled (Little Whale) (CR 2980). Photo: Jackie Haynes

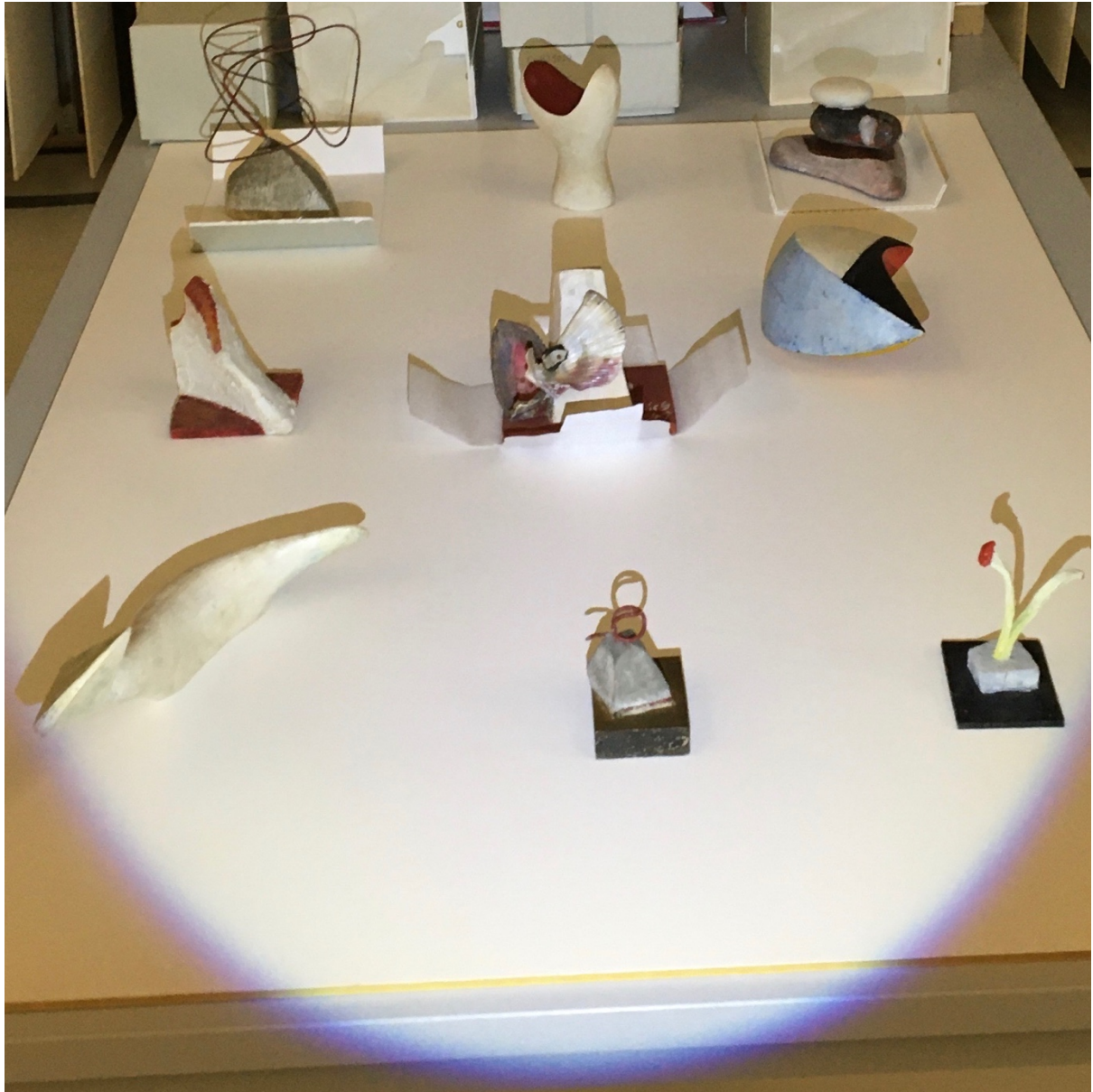


Figure 85. Nine of Schwitters' small sculptures arranged, and spot lit for viewing. Photo: Jackie Haynes

Clockwise from top left:

*Ohne Titel (Muschelplastik)* 1947. Untitled (Shell Sculpture) in the middle:  
*'For Ernst on 16.11.43 from Dada Daddy'*. 1943 (CR 3667).

*Ohne Titel (sich Öffnende Blüte, Nachguss)*, 1942/1945 (1956). Untitled (Opening Blossom, Cast) (CR 2982).

*Ohne Titel (Kieselsteinplastic, Nachguss)*, 1945/1947 (1956). Untitled (Pebble Sculpture, Cast) (CR 3257).

*Ohne Titel (Farbiger Halbmond, Nachguss)*, 1937/1940 (1956). Untitled (Coloured Half-Moon, Cast) (CR 2325).

*Ohne Titel (Kleine Eisenblume)* 1945/1947. Untitled (Small Iron Flower) (CR 3254).

*Ohne Titel (Pyramide Mit Rotem Draht)* 1942/1945. Untitled (Pyramid with Red Wire) (CR 2985).

*Ohne Titel (Kleiner Wal)* 1942/1945. Untitled (Little Whale) (CR 2980).

*Ohne Titel ("Schmelzende" Plastik)* 1945/1947. Untitled ("Melting" Sculpture) (CR 3256).

#### **4.11 Transformative Sites Summary Statement**

The Transformative Sites revealed and discussed in this chapter highlight a selection of moments whose combined and inter-related effects mobilised and created the content of my inquiry. While not an exhaustive exploration of all transformations at play within the works, those selected demonstrate overlapping effects of texture and temporality in the spatial depths of my artworks' materiality. The following keywords indicate the knowledge implicated in my artwork arising from Transformative Sites: energetic, durational, temporal, migrating motifs, mutability, malleability, survival of art practice, parallel study and internationality. Transformative Sites is the analysis of artworks selected from my artistic research, alongside artworks depicted in *Plates*, the Introduction and *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy*. The Conclusion that follows reflects my intentions stated in the Introduction through the prism of my thesis argument and in relation to my research question, seeking contemporary resonance in selected artwork and literature of Kurt Schwitters.



## Chapter 5. Conclusion

Schwitters' legacy is an unfolding resource to which I affirmatively attach my inquiry. Examining his oeuvre has given structure to my thinking, methods and responsiveness to situations while serving my research purposes. The social nature of my contemporary art practice recalls in turn the legacy of Schwitters and his peers' adaptation in relation to each other's practices. I have demonstrated how Schwitters' oeuvre is relatable to contemporary artists as a generative force, affirmatively running counter to the Nazi slur of degeneracy. I have situated what I have learnt about Schwitters' art and literature for a general reader without the reader's need for prior knowledge of the subject matter. My claims to new knowledge are substantiated with reference to the new body of artwork in *Plates* and the exegesis. My claim to have contributed and expanded possibilities in the field of artistic research is implicit throughout. My membership as a founder of Proximity Collective, ARG (Art Research Group, Cumbria) reinforces my active commitment to collective artistic research. I synthesised a further manifestation by introducing and intersecting both collectives in the online 'Hospitality' residency in 2021 during the Covid-19 pandemic.

My bespoke artistic methods have asserted differences between art practice-based research and art historical research of Schwitters, Dada and De Stijl. I have demonstrated the particular value of artistic research alongside artists who I co-presented and collaborated with at *Dadameno* (2019) in Italy and *Viva Dada* (2020) in Germany. With reciprocal peer support from artist and fellow Schwitters researcher, Heather Ross, I have witnessed contemporary art historical discourse and where possible contributed my art practitioner perspective. I have played an active role in opening up a space for art practice-based perspectives in dialogue with art historians and theorists in my consistent contributions to the Kurt Schwitters Society Newsletters (2019, 2020), Journal (2020) and associated events, including the series of events on Zoom during the Covid-19 pandemic (2021). I have enriched my contributions to knowledge with two research trips to the Kurt Schwitters Archive at the Sprengel Museum in Schwitters' hometown of Hannover. By situating my inquiry within interdisciplinary interchanges, I have made a distinctive contribution to the enduring life force of Schwitters' legacy which remains abundantly full of potential for contemporary artistic nourishment.

With a new Schwitters-inflected body of work and exegesis, I join the roster of artists whose work also draws from and contributes to Schwitters' unfolding legacy. My membership of this

open group is the contemporary context in which I offer my inquiry as an accessible site with relatable points of reference. I have demonstrated correspondences with Laure Prouvost's durational and repeated return to Schwitters' legacy, and a specific correspondence with András Böröcz's reference to *Augusta Bolte* in his filmed performance, *Telehor* (2015). Our Schwitters-inflected practices overlap in the field of contemporary art. My doctoral context actively overlaps also with my visibly ongoing, collective engagement in the international and increasingly interdisciplinary Kurt Schwitters research community.

In instrumentalising art for the functional purposes of research, I have arguably done exactly what Schwitters would have disdained. He stated that 'art is far too precious to me to be abused as a tool.' (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 414). Despite or because of Schwitters' attitude, my transgression manifests itself paradoxically in relation to Schwitters. The desired effect of my dissonance was to create a notional conversation with Schwitters, introduced in Chapter One. Examples of my imagined confabulation with Schwitters include *Knee* (2019) and *In Conversation* (2019) which directly faced Schwitters' *Merz Barn* wall and spoke visually to each other in terms of materiality, temporality and site. The artworks' interaction exemplified the inter-practice dialogue which contributed to my reconfigurations of Schwitters' artistic and literary reception. By instrumentalising art, I took Schwitters to task on his principle of inversion, paradoxically deviating from it and also taking him at his word, his word being 'that everything he tells us is exactly the case — as well as exactly the reverse.' (Cardinal, 2007: n.p. see page 106). As a meta-intervention oscillating between citing and contradicting Schwitters, I have acknowledged, illuminated and reconsidered his views on instrumentalising art through my contemporary assimilation of his tendency towards paradox.

From the outset, my deadpan variant of absurdity proved commensurate to the task of reassessing the contemporary relevance of Schwitters, ultimately giving rise to my contributions to knowledge in the knowledge gaps outlined in the Introduction. I used absurdity to off-set and throw into relief Schwitters' historically canonised context and cultivated an idiosyncratic and sensitised artistic research function to subvert subject matter through material humour. My practice of subversion through humour pre-dates the inquiry in my long-standing design, production, wearing and broad dissemination of clothing and costume as an agitating force. I struck a balance between citation and dissonance of Schwitters by subverting his artistic principle of inversion, proceeding as if not cognisant of the absurdity of the methods propelling my genuinely serious examination. The combination

of subversion and inversion caused the inquiry to spin, exemplified by Luke's observation Schwitters' horizontal 'q/p flip' (2014: 26), which I extended with a vertical d/b flip of the same letter shape, and the horizontal and vertical motifs of *The Augusta Bolte Trilogy* (2020 —). I was indeed cognisant of my absurd and 'extreme mixed methods' (Haynes, 2020) which is a reasonable expectation of doctoral research integrity.

While it is not possible to overstate Merz as Schwitters' 'brand leader', he differentiated his *i*-form from Merz as 'a special form' (Luke and Grundy, 2021: 122). Luke also draws attention to Schwitters' Tran texts as 'a discrete genre within his critical writing'. (2021: xxi). In the gap which I identified in current knowledge, I made further space for clarity of these three dimensions of Schwitters' work and brought differentiation to the reception of his oeuvre through two performances. I demonstrated the contemporary value of Schwitters' Tran and *i*-poems in relation to Merz and Dada through J.A.B.'s collaborative performance at *Viva Dada. Nonsense Unico* (2018) located and enacted a paused moment in Schwitters' Tran text, *Augusta Bolte*, which functioned as a portal to accessing and revealing connections between Schwitters' artworks and his writing. Whilst written in English for a contemporary anglophone audience, there is scope for this thesis to be translated into other languages and to reach other audiences. Addressing a further gap in knowledge, I exposed Schwitters' contemporary relevance in the reciprocal support and influence of his peers. The Dadaists' collective and collaborative practices, exemplified by Schwitters, prefigure the current social nature of collectivity and collaboration which characterises my practice. My methods of making-on-the-move conversed with Schwitters as an artist whose practice was by necessity characterised by movement, flux and transformation. All of my inquiry's artworks have an element of transformative movement, from the quickly or slowly deflating balloons of *Fireworkskins* (2018) and *\_Airholders\_* (2018), to their wholesale movement as exhibits between *Merzwomen and the Daughters of Dada* (2018) and *Being Nomad* exhibition (2018).

Aiming at an anglophone audience, I made inroads into Schwitters Tran text, *Augusta Bolte* and reconceptualised his *i*-poem form, rebalancing the over-emphasis of Merz as Schwitters' only 'named brand'. My artistic research also unlocked insights into Schwitters' participation in the cultural tidal waves of Dada and De Stijl. My parallel study of Mina Loy and Schwitters exposes commonalities thrown into relief by their differences, whilst contributing to discourse on Loy, a canonically overlooked London-born female Dadaist. I illuminated Schwitters' oeuvre through *Augusta Bolte*, shedding light on the influence of lesser-commented upon texts by Melchior Vischer, László Moholy-Nagy and Theo Van Doesburg's two aliases, Aldo

Camini and I.K. Bonset. I transposed the *Augusta Bolte* text from its original paper form by repurposing the story's seemingly impenetrable absurdity as an imaginative spur for performance as research. The *Nonsense Unico* performance proved an effective tool for embarking upon the otherwise confounding task of trying to navigate a text composed of 100-year old cultural allusions lacking clear points of access. I consequently identified and filled gaps in anglophone knowledge and commentary on Schwitters' written oeuvre. My thesis demonstrates the value of Aldo Camini's *Caminoscopia* and an aphorism composed by I.K. Bonset, in unlocking Schwitters and Van Doesburg's peer-to-peer influence and modes of practice.

Grappling with Dutch text in the artistic bricolage manner of using what is available which comes to hand, revealed insights into Schwitters and Van Doesburg's interactions, despite my limited understanding of the Dutch language. My artistic contribution in respect of *Caminoscopia* arrives at the point of suggesting that an English translation would be a valuable addition for the anglophone reader interested in Schwitters, De Stijl and Dada. Through performance as research I have expanded upon Georg Jäger's scholarship, demonstrating how Melchior Vischer's *Second Through Brain* and *The Tea Master* are under-recognised texts with the capacity to access Schwitters' oeuvre via *Augusta Bolte* as a portal. In a chain of endorsements through artistic citation, my two performances and Böröcz's film (2015) being recent examples, Moholy-Nagy is endorsed as an exemplary artist of his times in the 1936 publication of *Telehor*, and he in turn endorses Schwitters by directly drawing influence from *Augusta Bolte*.

Schwitters' oeuvre has been sufficiently compelling for me to allow it to consistently inflect my artistic practice over the six-year period of the inquiry. I revealed aspects of Schwitters' humour as a fractal (Disanto, 2018) source of interconnected and migrating motifs and peer-group interactions. Using Schwitters' humour to activate my own humour and vice versa created a basis for the non-verbal repartee from which I drew contemporary meaning. Apparently disparate materials, ideas and sites resonated with the fragmented use of words and diverse forms of matter in Schwitters' inventory. I consistently emplaced disparate sites and methods, which are not ordinarily placed together, into proximity. This strategy opened up a malleable space for the unknown to arise through humour at the borderlinked (Ettinger, 2019: 2) intersection of success and failure.

My interpretation of Schwitters' resourcefulness adds value to the environmentally sensitive dimension of my recycled art materials, artworks and methods of dissemination. Through humour, the newly reconfigured knowledge implied in the body of this inquiry's artwork advocates for self-regenerating and sustainable art practice. My apposite use of humour has demonstrated the capability of raising productive tensions in response to disparate subject matter through bespoke art practice-based methods. My developed and deployed principles of environmental sustainability in art practice are intended as points of reference for wider contemporary critical discourse amongst artists, activists and anyone interested in developing increasingly low carbon practices in everyday life. I made a sustainable point of reusing elements from previous artworks such as the *Elasticated Lines of Enquiry* (2017), used to explore the inquiry's key themes in *Planning Performance* (2017), which reappeared playing a structural and multi-narrative role in *Grotto for Mina Loy* (2019). This strategy ensured that the artworks existed in relation to each other, forming a network interwoven with Schwitters' oeuvre.

Schwitters' legacy is underpinned by his 100-year-old version of sustainability through re-use of discarded materials, overlapping with modern-day concerns for the balance of environmental carbon budgets. Schwitters' practice of creating associative and compound meanings through disparate and disregarded fragments of objects and texts, resonates with the current drive towards repurposing in low carbon contemporary art practice, albeit for different reasons. I have introduced and contextualised over fifty new artworks and analysed selected aspects of them in relation to the research question. As a research resource, much more of the artworks' environmentally relatable usefulness remains beyond the scope of this inquiry. There are arguably more direct ways of demonstrating, for instance, that Camini's *Caminoscopie* needs translating into English, but the generative point is that I arrived at this juncture by developing my art practice, writing and capabilities as an art practice-based researcher along the way.

I have reconfigured reception of Schwitters' dadaistic collaborations through my artwork by the attachment of feminist theories, methodologies and conceptualisations in the Special Collection of Feminist Strategies. Through the configuration of the Collection, I proposed an ongoing capacity for accumulating feminist strategies as relatable touchstones of movement and mobilisation. I gathered theoretical touchstones throughout the transit of my inquiry to refer and return to as accomplices to my counter-canonical navigation of Schwitters' legacy. Although not all possible links between the items in the Special Collection of Feminist

Strategies are exhausted in this thesis, overlapping theoretical connections arose from the exegesis. The correspondences between theories by Barad's cutting together-apart and Ettinger's borderlinking propose an intersection in relation to the collaged cut, with the example given of *Das Kleid* (The Dress). Haraway's call on senses other than solely the visual echoes Ettinger's *fascinace* as both offer alternatives to privileging the scopic and a generative turning around of a habitual gaze. Pollock's 'unexpected turns' provides a unifying umbrella connection to all in the Special Collection through her elucidation of the 'intellectual revolution of feminism', evidenced through her feminist practice of citation which introduced me to Ettinger. An historical 'unpredictable swerve' reframed for New Materialism by Barbara Bolt corresponded within my research with Pollock's 'unexpected turns', evoking the *clinamen's* chicaning action and setting reciprocal practice and theory dialogue in motion. The making and re-treading of pathways of both thought and enacted practice whilst in dialogue with Schwitters, past and present artists, theorists and historians had the grounding touchstone of Ahmed's 'paradox of the footprint', a reminder to nurture connections with artistic research allies and accomplices throughout the inquiry. Further unexpected but relevant resonance from the turning motion of the *en dehors garde* theory of the digital Mina Loy project drew the historical avant garde up close to the Special Collection's contemporary sources.

The curation of the Special Collection of Feminist Strategies is my own feminist strategy and contribution to new knowledge, activated by my methodology of errantry. Errantry and making on-the-move developed in tandem with the Special Collection and my practice methods. A symbiotic triangulation emerged through the development of the practice under the umbrella concept of errantry, while I encountered feminist strategies by following my research interests. The Special Collection of Feminist Strategies' accumulation and criteria suitably and necessarily corresponded with my methodology of errantry, that is, of setting off in search of a research adventure. I learned from my methodology that artistic research needs to be at liberty to form in relation and response to the research question and practice, working together as an applied experience which adapted as my research unfolded. I propose the Methodology of Errantry as a transferrable contribution to knowledge, when apprehended as an adaptable, enlivened and enacted research adventure. Researchers might effectively draw upon my methodology in the development of their own as an example of the need to develop subject appropriate mechanisms. Those drawn to the challenge of using the parameters of the PhD as a productive tension might find resonance in my

approach to constructing and deploying my methodology, whilst paying attention to the past, present and projected future contexts within which research is situated.

Due to my interest in the mechanics of artistic responsiveness, I gravitated towards the ‘unpredictable swerve’ of the *clinamen* located in Barbara Bolt’s feminist scholarship (2013: 2), setting in motion the Special Collection of Feminist Strategies as evolving counter-canonical touchstones. Conceptual oscillation provoked the alertness and attunement necessary for effective outward-facing artistic research between conditional states and physical movement between sites whilst conducting art practice processes in various public places. Like the *clinamen*, the kind of oscillation characterising my inquiry avoided repetitive back and forth movements in favour of multiple angular movements of differing pace and duration, between sites, methods and elements of Schwitters’ and other artists’ and scholars’ works. I strengthened my practice whilst making artwork for analysis by agitating states of ‘not knowing’ as a sensitising mechanism to gain new perspectives and insights. In following my interests, I intuited correctly that the order in which I ingested canonical texts about Schwitters and Dada would over-steer my otherwise unfettered navigation of Schwitters’ legacy away from lesser commented upon artworks, and towards the unhelpful reception of Schwitters as a mythical solitary genius. Deliberately leaving out canonical texts to read later in the inquiry confirmed that my alternative art practice-based route had tangentially reassessed the contemporary relevance of Schwitters’ oeuvre. I have demonstrated and propose that re-prioritising the order in which texts are read allows for an idiosyncratic accretion of reconfigured knowledge, for an effective and refreshing interdisciplinary approach to reframing narratives. Through art practice-based research I have contributed to Schwitters research through public-facing artistic research processes, exhibited work and published written work. I have shown how my artistic research methods can work productively with historical subject matter as a contemporary alternative.

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*Ohne Titel (sich Öffnende Blüte, Nachguss), 1942/1945 (1956). Untitled (Opening Blossom, Cast).*

*Ohne Titel (Kieselsteinplastic, Nachguss), 1945/1947 (1956). Untitled (Pebble Sculpture, Cast).*

*Ohne Titel (Farbiger Halbmond, Nachguss), 1937/1940 (1956). Untitled (Coloured Half-Moon, Cast).*

*Ohne Titel (Kleine Eisenblume) 1945/1947. Untitled (Small Iron Flower).*

*Ohne Titel (Pyramide Mit Rotem Draht) 1942/1945. Untitled (Pyramid with Red Wire).*

*Ohne Titel (Kleiner Wal) 1942/1945. Untitled (Little Whale).*

*Ohne Titel ("Schmelzende" Plastik) 1945/1947. Untitled ("Melting" Sculpture).*



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## Appendix

### ***Artist Book of Plates* Thesis Exhibition**

The following images document the *Artist Book of Plates* Thesis Exhibition which took place on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2022 at Bookcase book shop in Carlisle, immediately prior to my Viva Voce examination at University of Cumbria's Brampton Road campus. The forty-one Chapters from *Artist Book of Plates* were held in place between books in the Humour section, and the folio case was placed on top of books on a nearby shelf. In my absence, the Viva Voce Chair invited the two examiners to retrieve and examine the Chapters from the shelves and stack the *Plates* together to be zipped back into their folio case.



Installation view: centre



Installation view: left



Installation view: right



Installation view: empty folio case



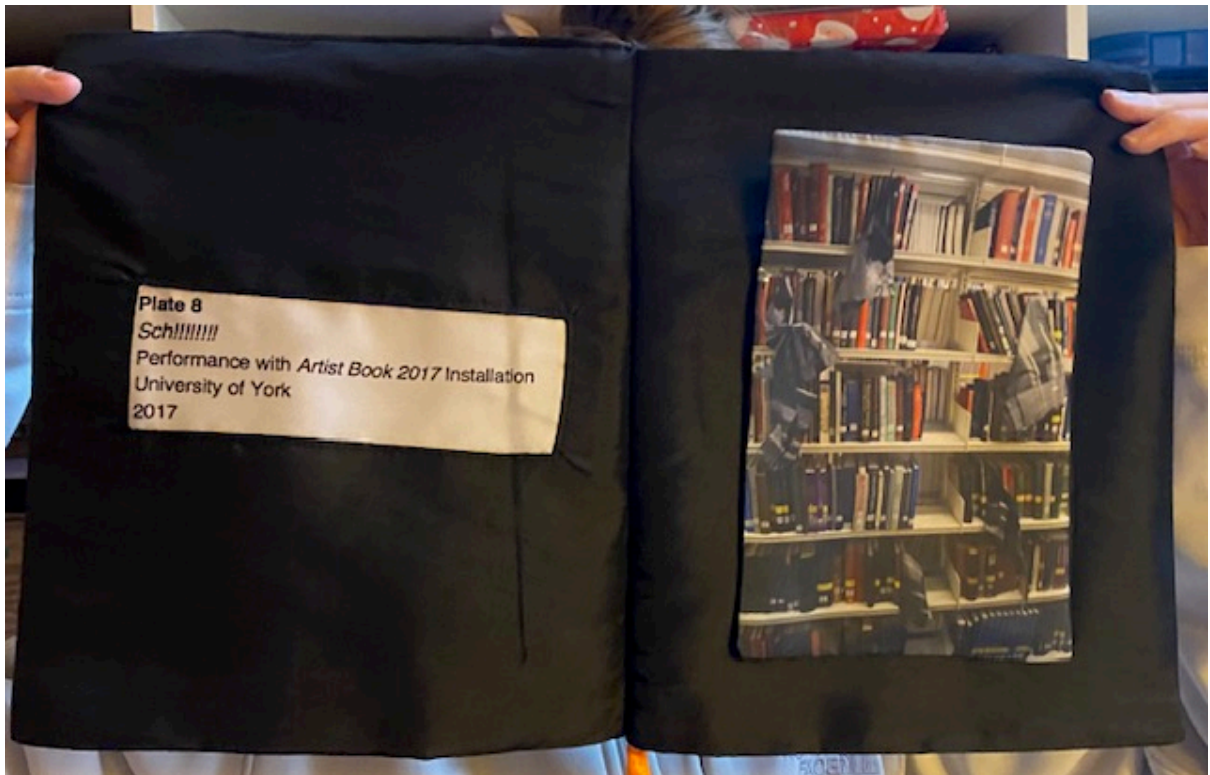
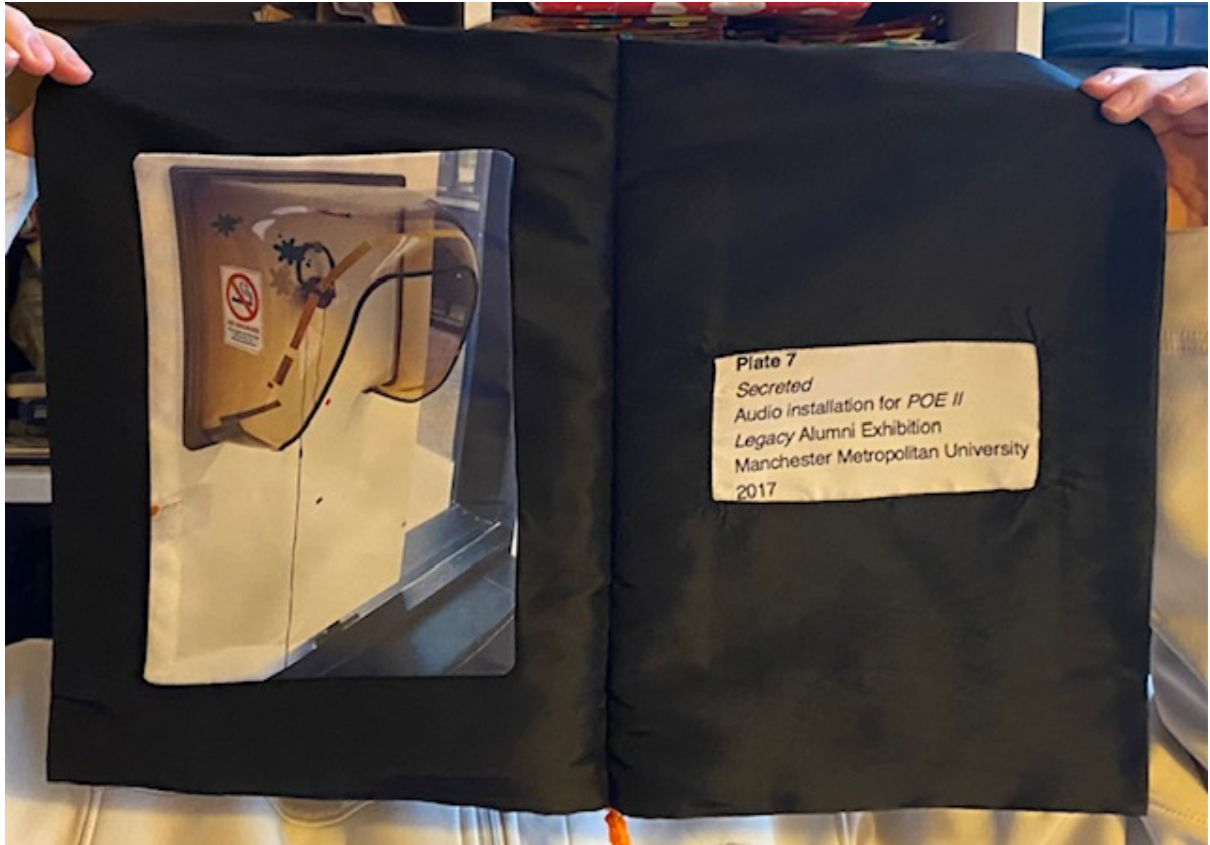
Installation view: full folio case

## Chapters



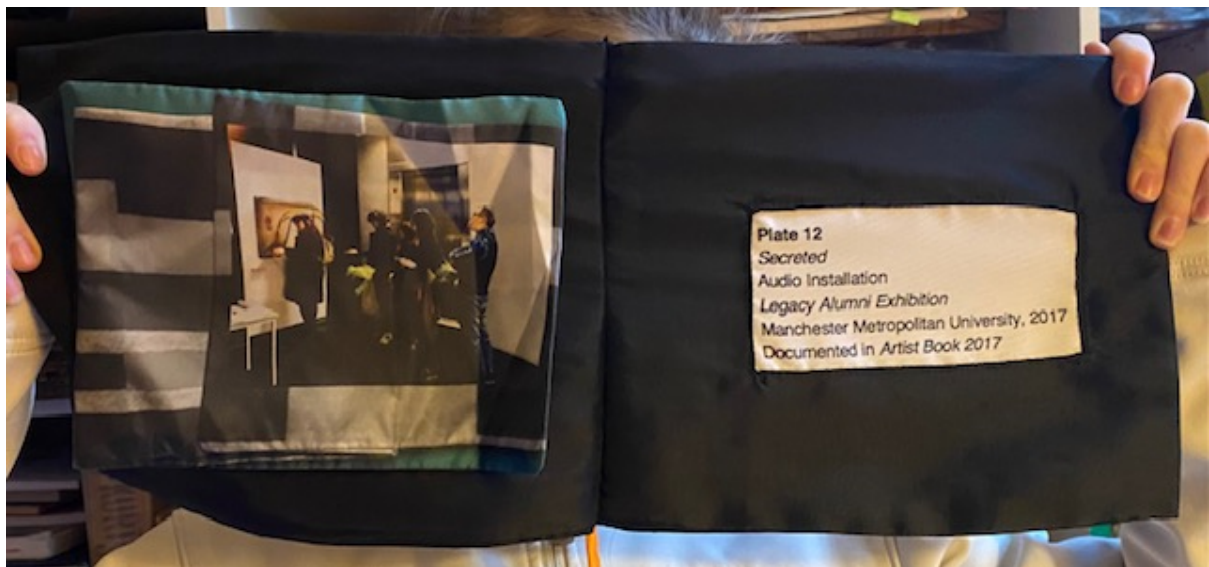






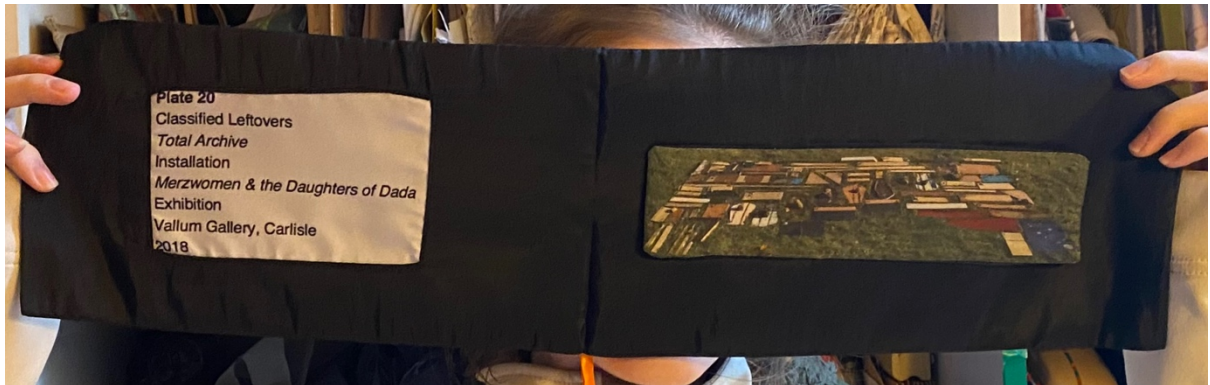
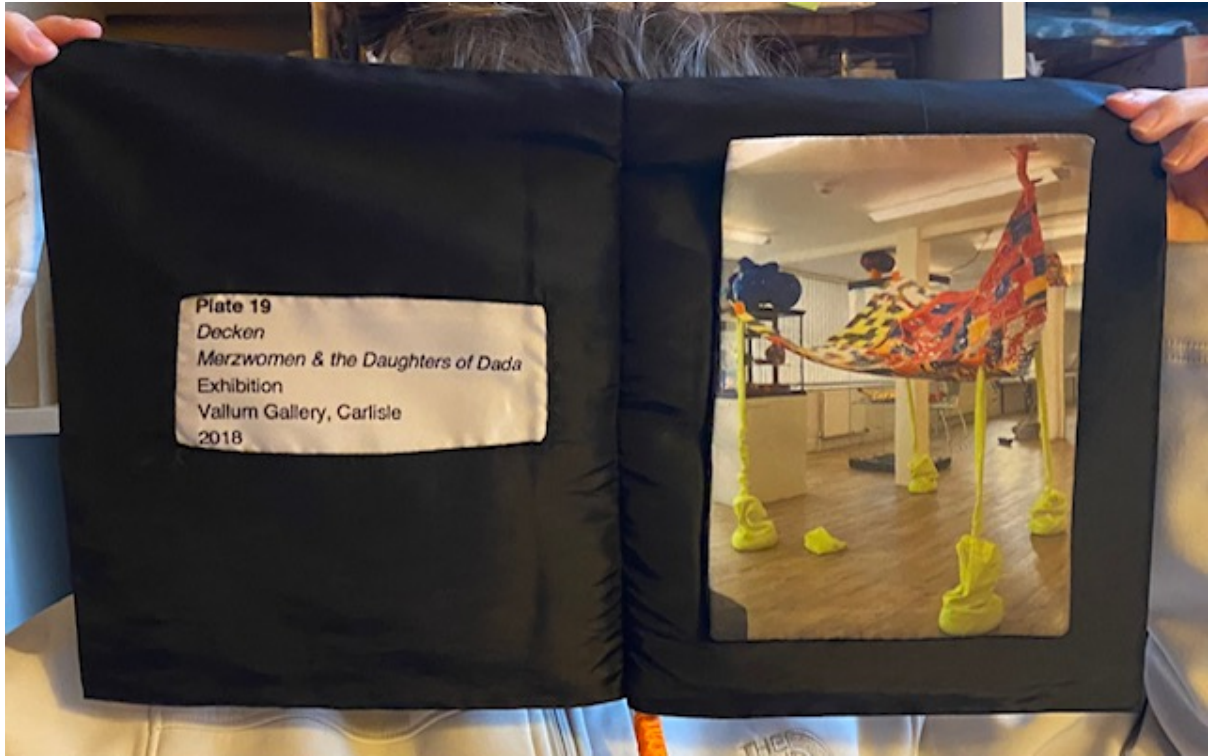


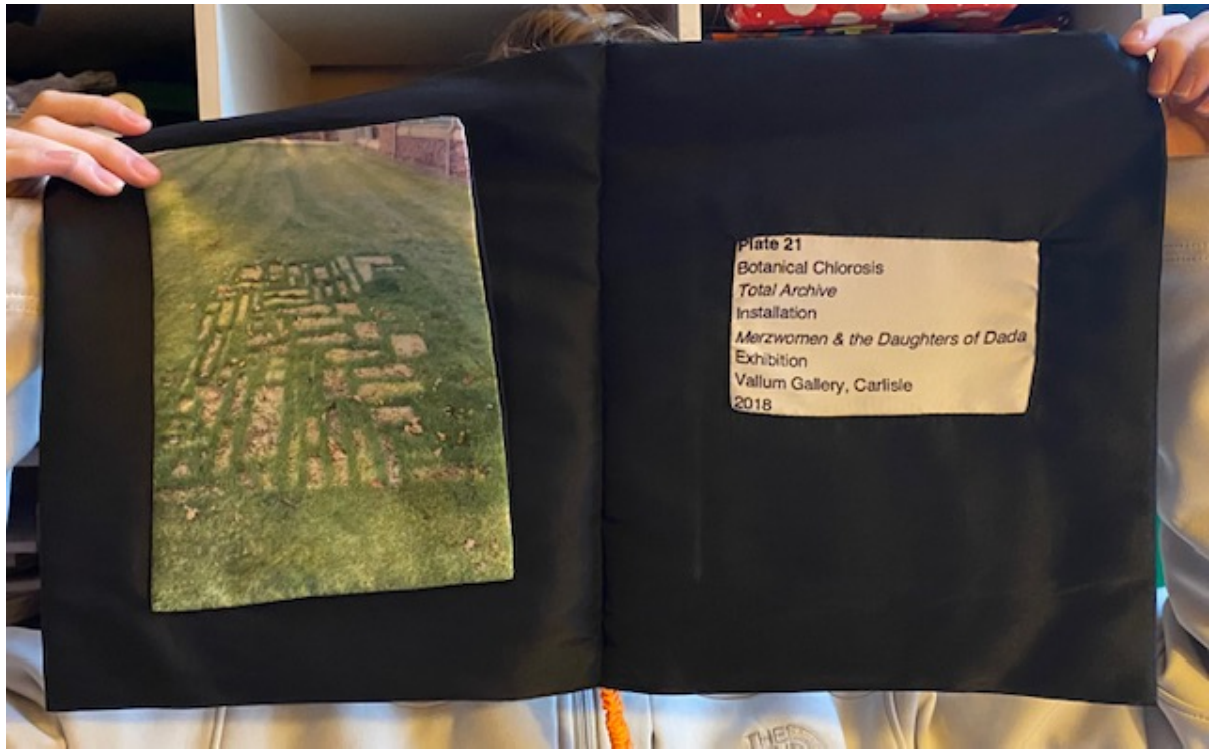




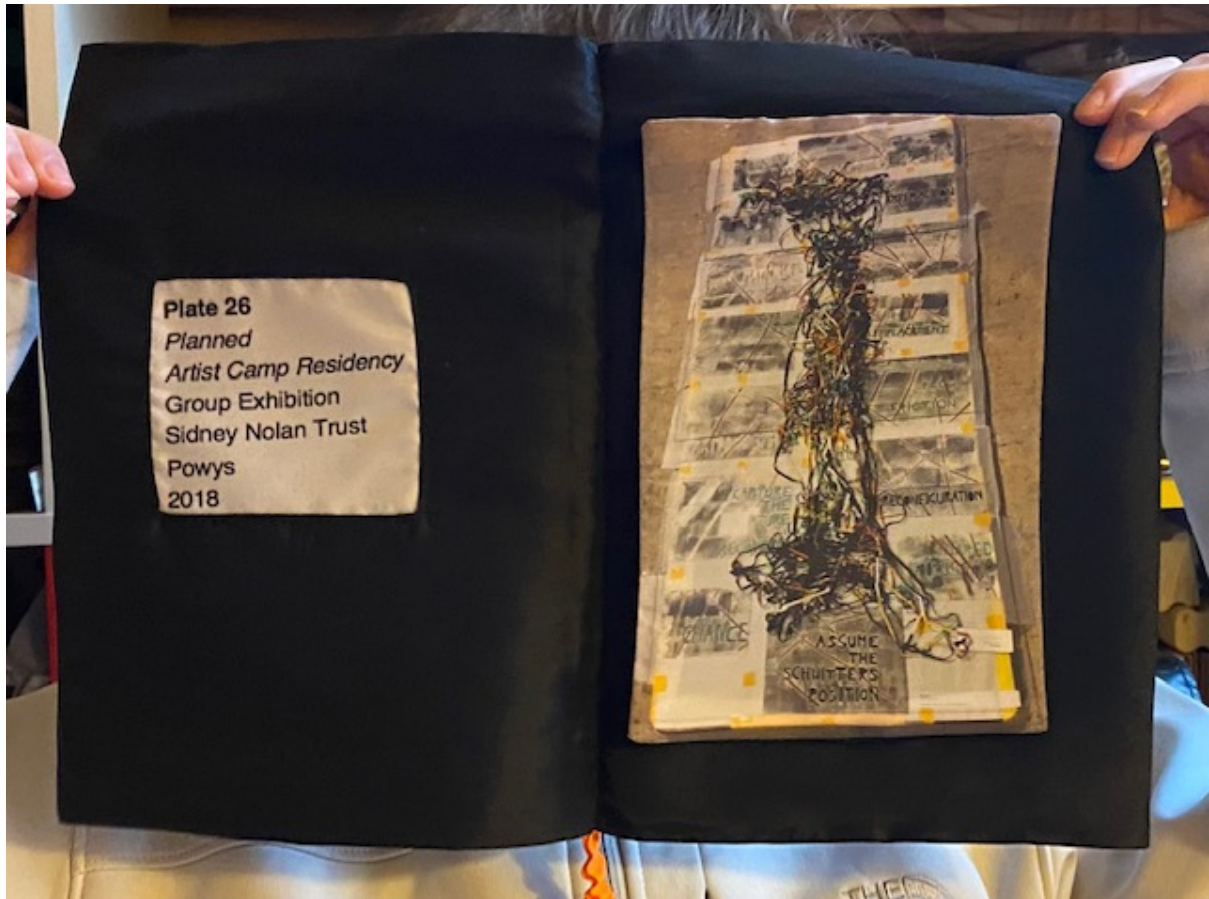












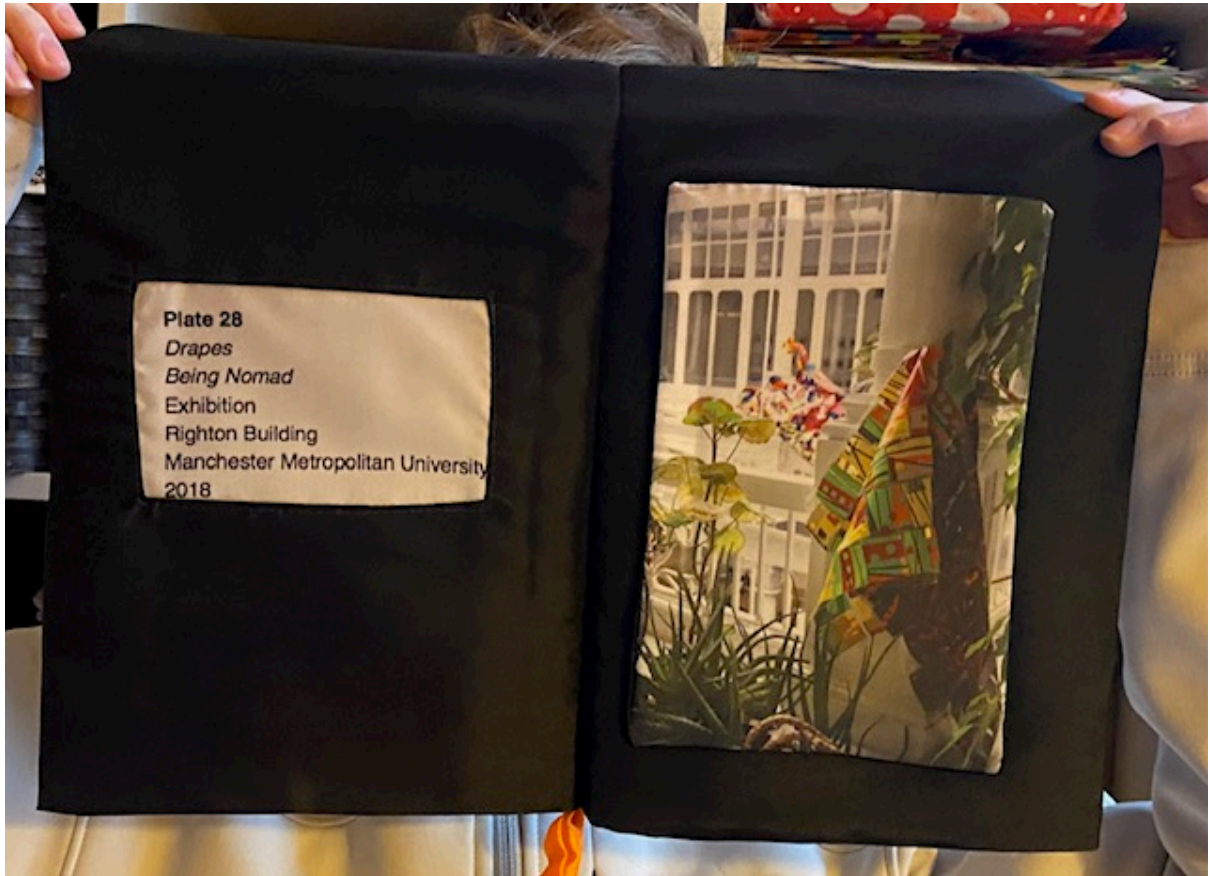






Plate 30  
*Collider II*  
Artist Camp Residency  
Group Exhibition  
Sidney Nolan Trust  
Powys  
2019

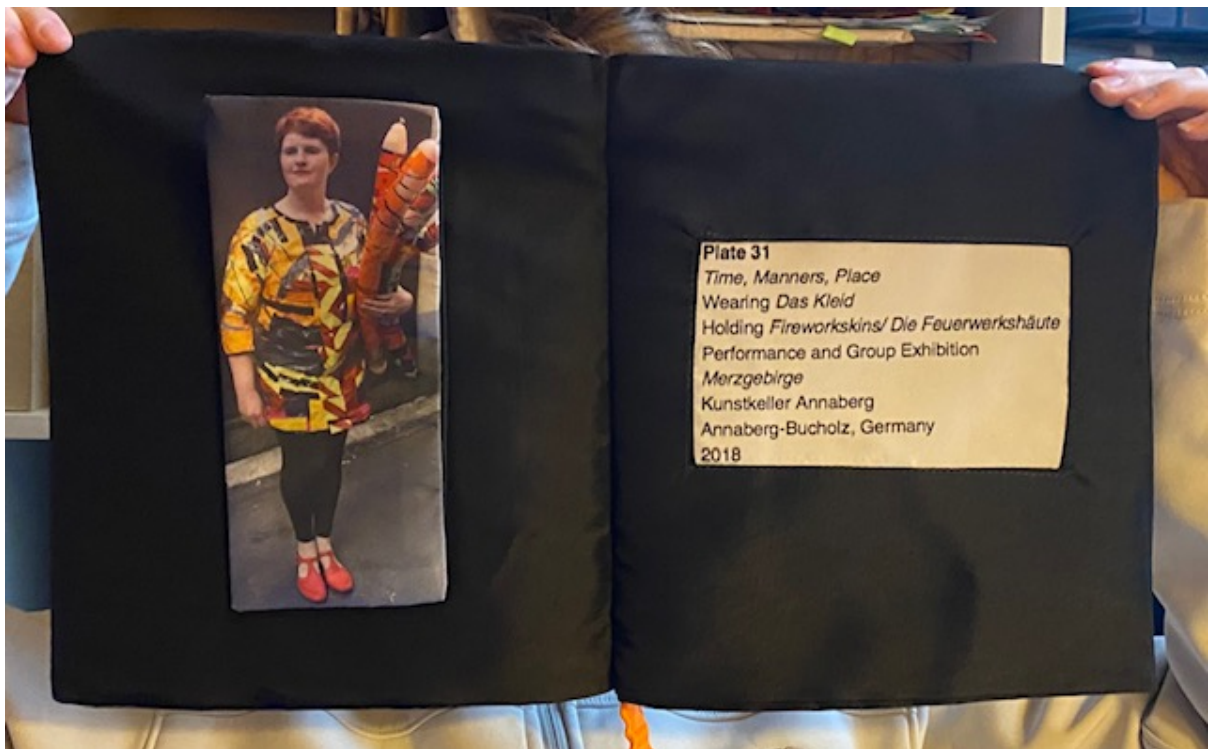
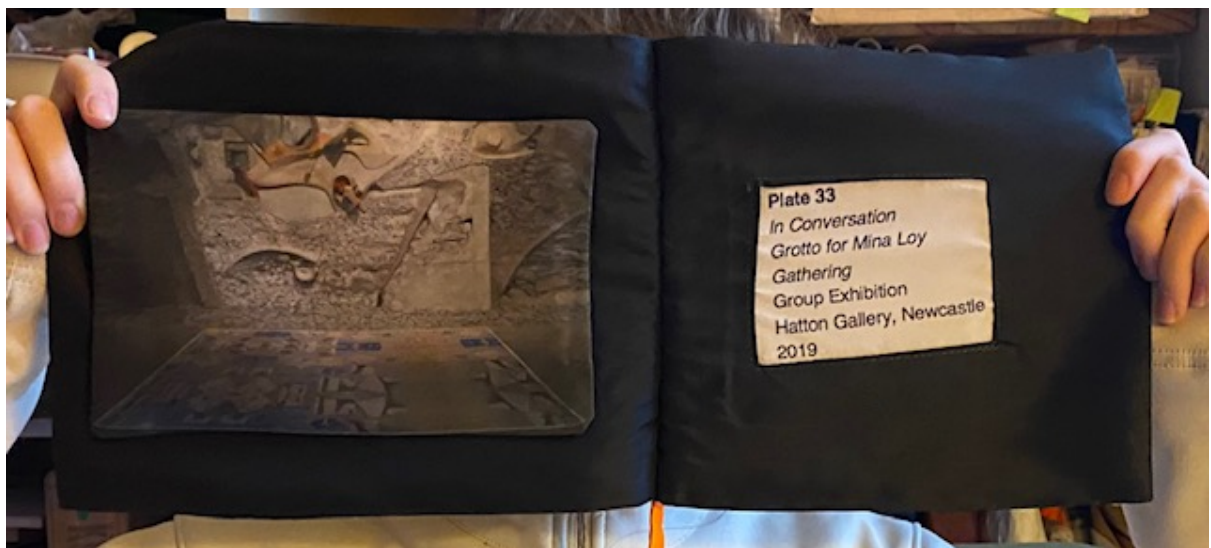
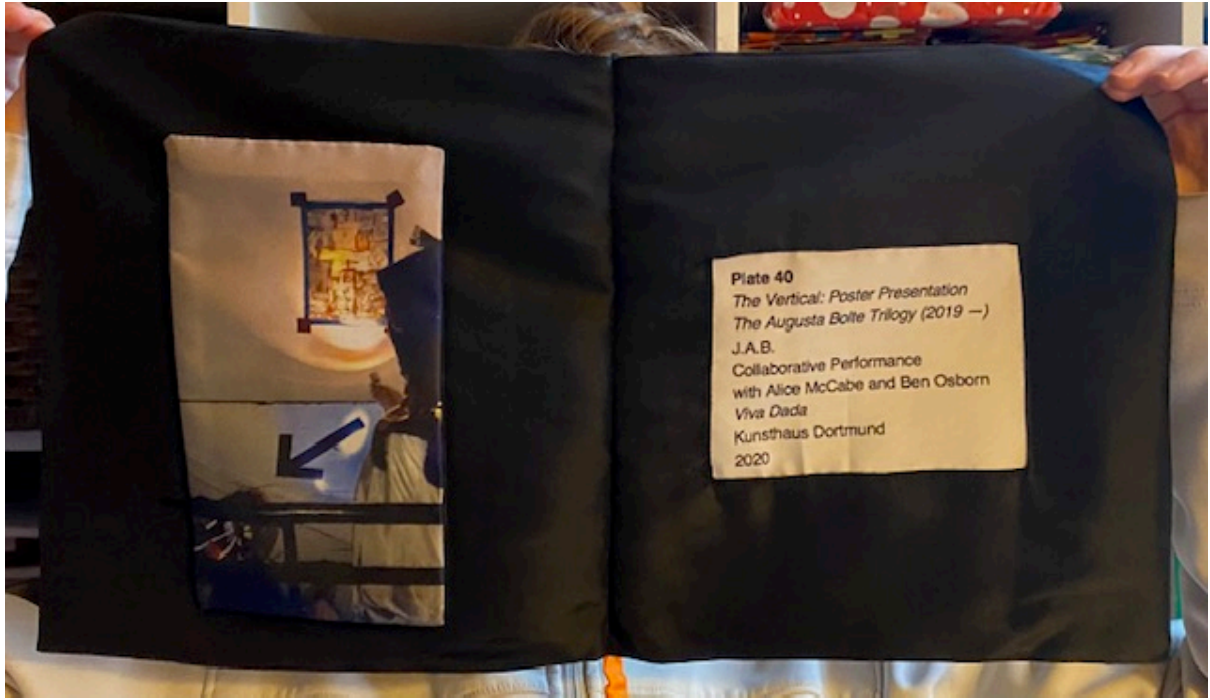


Plate 31  
*Time, Manners, Place*  
Wearing *Das Kleid*  
Holding *Fireworkskins/ Die Feuerwerkshäute*  
Performance and Group Exhibition  
*Merzgebirge*  
Kunst Keller Annaberg  
Annaberg-Bucholz, Germany  
2018









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Photo Credits: All photos are the artist's own, unless otherwise stated. SONA at *Dadameno* and Volker Kreiger at *Viva Dada* provided video footage from which stills were taken.

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*In memory of my parents, Moyra and John Haynes.*