



Mother as Curator: Performance, Family and Ethics.

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Abstract

This thesis attends to the mother-artist developing a performance-based practice with her family in the home. This is a practice-as-research exploration which integrates areas of maternal ethics and the mother-artist, family and narrative enquiry, the home and sited practices. It consists of a written dissertation, three full (larger) scale installations set within the family home, *Trace* (2013), *Reclaiming the Ritual* (2014), *31 Days Old* (2016), and a series of smaller works *Bed Bound* (2014) and *Children's Practice* (2014-17), plus digital documentation.

The main argument focuses on the role of the mother-artist who initiates an art making practice with her family and considers the personal, professional and ethical questions that can arise. Furthermore, weaving throughout the thesis is the development of what I call, '*Mother Ethics*' - emphasising a sensitive approach to art-making with children and family, and considering practices and implications of exploring the home as a site for the dissemination of an art practice.

The methodology is developed from the position of the mother and uses practice-as-research creative methodologies alongside narrative enquiry, and memory work. It employs sensitive approaches to documentation, and anecdotal writing modes. This thesis is situated and contextualised within theoretical fields of maternal studies, maternal ethics, narrative studies, and site-specific dance practices. The key arguments have been developed through engaging with Sara Ruddick, Lisa Baraitser, Iris Marion Young, Llangellier and Peterson, Jerome Bruner, and Mike Pearson. For the purpose of situating my own work and drawing upon the practices of others in the related worlds of maternal, family and home, I have drawn upon current practices and discourses in particular Mary Kelly, Lena Simic, Grace Surman, Lenka Clayon, Jo Spence, and The Institute for Art and Practice of Dissent at Home.

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Introduction

This study is guided by two core research questions: (1) *When a mother initiates and develops an art practice as a family project, with and for her family, what specific processes and characteristics emerge from that practice?* (2) *What are the personal, professional and ethical questions that arise from such practices?*

Throughout this thesis I position myself as the instigator, facilitator and curator of a practice that honours my own voice and the voices of family that contribute to a shared knowledge of family and art making. Working from such a position and with multifaceted voices, I argue for a kind of art making which will prioritize the experience of making performance work, and the reception of that work in my family home, over singularised or highly aesthetised outcomes. I embrace art making across a range of modes and from people with a range of artistic abilities, I will attend to facilitating and working with family and children in developing ‘personalized’ and collaborative art works with them. I define this work as a family art practice, and due to this status, it deliberately does not attempt to conform to ‘normative’ modes of live art or performance art; however, it might carry some characteristics of these practices. This approach will be evident in performance works that range from sited film installations and dance performance through to works by my children, alongside the documentation of everyday activities (as art practice). These commitments are informed by Nelson’s methodological frame for Practice-as-Research, alongside narrative, memory, documenting processes and researching with children. In particular, I argue for the connections between these methodologies and methods that, when pulled together, present a rigorous approach to developing performance.

Centrally this thesis speaks directly to the mother developing art with her family and the ethical implications which arise from this. The focus of this work is found in the title *Mother as Curator: Performance, Family and Ethics*, wherein a play on words encourages the mother to curate and take care of practice whilst at the same time establishing and working through the ethical implications. This is not a thesis about curation, but through this lens I pull together different domains of knowledge, disciplines and artistic works, to establish a

framework where dialogues can arise. Within this frame of care, I develop *Mother Ethics* a set of recurring principles which focus on designing and experiencing ethics rather than the application of ethical rules. Within these principles, I negotiate various ethical and moral questions that arise through the practice and relationships with participants.

I come to this work as a mother and as a site-specific / dance choreographer. I question the extent to which mother is my primary identity as I juggle the roles of mother/artist/researcher (see Chapter Two *Maternal Practice*). Upon reflection, I place mother first in these roles as it defines the lens through which I locate and guide the practice. The parameters of this research ultimately echo the complexity of these relationships (mothering/art making/researching), and therefore the structure of the thesis responds to, and is shaped by, arts research paradigms and (what I shall describe as) the messiness of daily life (see Chapter 2: *Maternal Experience* pages 58-61).

The performance work I have created throughout this thesis embodies a set of aesthetic principles and particular creative approaches, this results in a certain artistic signature which has evolved and changed as a result of the pathway of the research. As you will see – the mother-artist working with her family in her family home – has given rise to interdisciplinary, polyvocal and installation based performance works. The iterative and durational nature of the working processes I have developed has foreground certain kinds of aesthetic qualities such as; the layering of image and sound, ghostliness of visual imagery and a time-lapse effect as a way to manage and sculpt materials. My artistic tendencies are thereby seen through my shaping hand in the style of editing and layering of photographic and film materials and consequently in the presentation of the materials within my family home space. Whilst encompassing a wide range of work, the practice embodies the themes and core areas of the thesis, which are identified below.

This thesis investigates three core areas of research: Motherhood, Family and Home. I explore these independent, and *interdependent*, topics in the chapters entitled *Maternal Practice*, *Family Arts Making Practice* and *Home as Practice*. The three chapters have their own critical focus, informed and supported by key scholars in each of the recognised areas. This thesis draws upon a diversity of scholarly analysis to critique and articulate an emerging practice within an expanded frame of maternal studies. The thesis is also informed by the

works of artists (see below) clustered together around the core themes of this thesis, to clarify and support my own position, whilst illuminating the ways their work inform this research project. In other words, each chapter includes a thematically arranged field review, identifying key artists active in each of the areas of enquiry, which ultimately enables me to locate my own practice within an informed and coherent theoretical and practice-based framework.

Chapter 1 introduces Practice-as-Research as the strand of academic enquiry in which artistic practices and qualitative research methodologies are designed and implemented.

In Chapter 2, *Maternal Practice*, my identity, location and concerns as mother are positioned in relation to current debates in Maternal Studies.¹ The critical focus of this chapter defines my approach to both my ideological position as mother and the basis of my artistic work. Within this field, I refer to feminist scholar Sara Ruddick (1989) as well as feminist psychoanalyst Lisa Baraitser (2008). Within the area of maternal performance, I refer to artists Mary Kelly, Lena Simic and Grace Surman. I deploy understanding of mothering as a threefold task: (1) the preservation of the life of the child, (2) fostering the growth of the child, and (3) the nurture of a socially acceptable child (Ruddick, 1994). I thus understand mothering as a particular practice that gives rise to the ways I approach the daily tasks of mothering, my attitude to care giving and consequently art making. I draw upon Baraitser's approach to identifying and addressing pressing ethical relations involved in the mother and child dyad. She discusses (her own) maternal experience as a series of interruptions, and suggests that whilst this can reveal the mother as exposed, or feeling that she is falling short of the expectation of mother, also asks that we see vulnerability as a key characteristic of humankind (2009). I adopt the term 'interruption' to speak of a field of experience where I can explore my own perspective on mothering, and develop creative methods in my own practice. Examples of the ways I am exploring interruption throughout this thesis range from maternal experiences in day-to-day life and interactions between mother and child, to the interruptions within performance (see Chapter 2 *Maternal*

¹ I acknowledge the important contribution to maternal studies of Lacanian inspired theorists such as Julia Kristeva (1982), Hélène Cixous (1994) and Luce Irigaray (1985). I do not refer to these theorists in relation to this project as their work tended to consign the mother to a realm which is outside of culture, rendering her silent and powerless (Jeremiah, 2002).

Practice), and within Home as a sited context (see Chapter 4 *Home as Practice*). The artists who have informed this study, and in particular, Chapter 2, are significant contributors to the rapidly growing field of contemporary maternal performance. This review attempts to map some of this territory whilst linking into the thematics of this study. The main influences include seventies pioneer, artist Mary Kelly, and contemporary practitioners Lena Simic and Grace Surman.

In Chapter 3, *Family Art Making Practice*, I focus on the mother developing an artistic practice with family. This chapter defines how artistic and ethical approaches are employed when working with the family. I draw upon scholarly work which explores narrative modes/practices and memory studies. This approach locates the voices of family at the centre of the work and provides opportunities to explore family interrelations and dynamics. Kristin Langellier and Eric Peterson (2004) identify the need for, and practice of, narrative storytelling to maintain family identity and cohesion. Their work approaches narrative performatively and critically, providing a strategic model for family narration. Selected writing from Jerome Bruner (1986-2002) feeds into the wider notions of narrative and storytelling, and directly supports the work I develop with my children. A further scholarly line of enquiry is the active practice of Memory Work developed by Annette Kuhn (2002) which connects individual and cultural memory. I draw upon these scholars as a way of developing a rich palate of narrative studies and understanding of memory, which act as an informative source when approaching, and subsequently critiquing, my own arts practice. The field review presents artists who predominantly work within the territory of family and memory. Visual artists Jo Spence and Pat Holland's work spans a period from 1987-2000 and explores domestic photography in order to explore their own identities in relation to their family group. *Family Ties Network* (2012-present) is an all-female group of artists and scholars whose work explores photography, memory and place, and thus informs my own approach to practice.

In Chapter 4, *Home as Practice*, I critique the home as a site for art making. I draw upon Iris Marion Young's *House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme* in *On Female Body Experience* (2005) to situate the ways I approach the home theoretically. I also refer to theorist Mike Pearson's (2010) notion of archaeology and artist scholar Josephine Machon's (2013) writing on immersive theatres. In bringing insights from these scholars into dialogue

with my key research questions, I have developed a lens through which to investigate and explore sited sensibilities and practices in the home. Pulling together elements of their approaches in conjunction with my own work (and its themes of motherhood, family and home) redefines my knowledge and understanding of site, from purely a place to exhibit work, into a performance praxis, wherein I address the issues of exploring a lived-in family home as a performance space. In my field review I identify with Fran Cottell's *House Projects* (2011-2017) which bridges performance, museology and architecture. I also draw on the works of Mierle Laderman Ukeles's *Maintenance Art 1969!* (1969), Lois Weaver's *Domestic Terrorism: Hang Your Laundry in Public* (2011), and Lena Simic's *Medea/Mother's Clothes* (2004).

A significant feature of creating my own arts practice within the Maternal Studies sphere is the development, critique and articulation of ethical principles within practice. I define this as a set of principles I call *Mother Ethics*, which I explicitly address in what follows. These principles are indebted to the influence of Ruddick (1989) and Baraitser (2008), who also inform the positioning of the mother in Chapter 2 *Maternal Practice*. I not only explore *Mother Ethics* as a way to guide this practice theoretically and practically, but also as a form of care giving. The *Mother Ethics* principles are directly connected to my role as a mother who defines her art as a form of curation, hence the title of the thesis *Mother as Curator*.

As stated above *Mother as Curator* encourages an ethical practice during which I *take care* of family and art in the home. One of my main concerns is to bring forward the challenge of mothering and curating, practically and philosophically, whilst at the same time addressing the ethical issues that arise. The particular act of curation I describe guides, supports and activates the interdisciplinary performance work, sharing it with the attention of a mother who then makes it available to guests in the home – the place it was made. The *Mother as Curator* concept exists within a continuum which encompasses a model that circulates and changes within each process and in each circumstance. For example, it runs from artist (mother) – collaborator – facilitator – mother (artist).

On the Title of the Thesis - Mother as Curator: Performance, Family and Ethics

The word 'curator' derives from the Latin word 'cura', meaning care. I am developing a curatorial sense of caring and responsibility for my children, family and art practice in a relational and ethical way. I am exploring an ethical concept of caring within a curatorial practice, of which the overarching imperative is the delivery of the whole project. Curation within the context of this study adopts some qualities of act of curation for example: A curator usually brings together different domains of knowledge, disciplines and artistic works, setting up a framework where dialogues can arise – for example the dialogue between curating, ethics and performance. In this way, the term curator adopts some of the traditional elements of curatorial practice, as defined by curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, who writes: 'In curating there is a need for flexible strategies. Every show is a unique situation, and ideally it gets as close as possible to the artist' (2008: 17).

To best understand my application of 'curation' it might be useful to reflect briefly on the shifting nature of curation. For example, Paul O'Neil in *The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse* (2007), argues that the primary discourses surrounding the notion of the curator has changed. Curating has been taken out of the special relationship to the museum, and moved towards more conceptual frames. During the 1960s the role of the curator became part of the contemporary art discourse, with a strong connection to the social and political events happening at the time (Obrist 2008, O'Neil 2007, Rigg 2008). Further, curator Jonathon Watkins suggested the notion of the 'curator as artist' (1987) and Bruce Altshuler (1994) labelled the 'rise of the curator as creator'. Both terms still form part of ongoing debates within curatorial discourse, where some curators, for example curator Robert Storr, express their fear of calling curation a medium, and do not want to elevate the curator to the status of the critic (O'Neill, 2007). Yet, curator Mari Carmen Ramirez, acknowledges that 'the curator's job was behind-the-scenes-work now it is seen as a multiplicity of extra artistic roles and diversity of performance arenas that now define the work of the curator' (2001:26). One of the most indicative shifts, according to O'Neil 'is the changing perception of the curator to carer to curator, where in the curator has a more creative and active part in the production of the art' (2007: 18). The changing perception and role of the curator,

from carer to a curator who has a more creative and active involvement in the production of art itself, is implicit through the definition of the curator as developed in this study.

Curating, as developed through the concept of *Mother as Curator*, implies flexibility, as stated by Obrist, but it also relates directly to the Latin origins of the word as ‘taking care of’ (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). I engage with the conceptual methodology of curating as I negotiate the ethical implications and boundaries of working with personal materials and remain in control of the representation and installation of the work. When working with the personal and intimate materials of family and motherhood, I consider how this reveals and articulates certain experiences. This particular curatorial practice will engage with a critical context in which to view or engage with the work, and the site of viewing - my own home - is discussed later in this chapter.

Mother Ethics as Critical Practice

In this section I contextualize the development of *Mother Ethics*, a set of recurring principles which guide and activate a theoretical and practical approach to the ethical implications arising from my work. The characteristics of *Mother Ethics* are drawn from critical and ethical engagements again with Sara Ruddick’s *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* (1989),² and Lisa Baraitser’s *Maternal Encounters: The Ethics of Interruption* (2008). I am also directly influenced by feminist and maternal ethics writers Alison Jaggar (1994) and Iris Marion Young (2005).

Generally speaking, ‘ethics governs and protects the ways in which we live and our ways of operating within democratic societies and frameworks’ (Copp, 2006: 5). For example, the methodological concerns and employed methods of this research are supported by ethical clearance granted from Middlesex University. The university system endorses applied or traditional ethics which is concerned with particular moral issues in public and private life. This is largely practiced by institutions who have conceptualised ethical practice and

² It is worth noting here that Baraitser comes from a tradition of ‘psychoanalysis that articulates the maternal transformation as a working through of infantile issues prompted by the psychic crisis that motherhood represents’ (Baraitser, 2009: 217). I am not however attempting to address my psychic relations with my children through this practice. I also don’t extend the line of enquiry proposed by Sara Ruddick who, in the later section of *Maternal Thinking: Towards Politics of Peace* (1989), unites the themes of women’s peace work and mothering.

expressed it in codes of conduct which reflect the experience of the groups of people who work/represent these establishments³.

Ethicist Stephen Morris (2015) points out the shift from the embedded positions that underpin ethical systems in institutions to wider philosophical arguments extended to the ethical debates concerning women and associated spheres. In reaction to such mainstream approaches, feminist philosophers have developed ethical principles with the goal of understanding women's oppression, arguing that women's lived experience is not devalued (Brennan 1999, Jaggar 1994, Ruddick, 1989). Feminist ethics was initially seen as a critique of mainstream ethics and moral philosophy. It is now a mature and established sub-discipline of the field (Brennan, 1999), belonging to a strand of ethical theory which is "agent centered" and concerned with the overall ethical status of the individual (Morris, 2015). Feminist ethicists such as Jaggar (1994) foreground care and caring as a legitimate and primary ethical concern. Additionally, and important to the through line of this study, maternal approaches to ethics foreground the particularities of the relationship between mother and child, positioning this as the paradigm for moral interaction (Ruddick, 1989).

Feminist ethics, as noted, is a sub-discipline of the field (Brennan, 1999). It is not a recent development; my engagement with the field began with the seminal work of Carol Gilligan's notion of the *Ethics of Care* (1982). Gilligan inextricably links the terms mothering and care, words which are associated with 'feminine' qualities such as nurture, love, and dependence. This can unhelpfully over determine maternal work as ethical work, as there is an unvoiced onus on the caring mother to always conduct her interactions with children in a 'natural' ethical way. Catherine D. Ennis and Lynn Owens (2005) argue that even if women are better at care, it is not appropriate to ethically or politically couple women with the value of care.

³ There are landmark-established rules, which govern international research bodies such as universities, and have been developed following the Nuremberg Code (1946), and inline with Declaration of Helsinki (1964) and Belmont Report (1974).

The Nuremberg Trials (1946) gave birth to the Nuremberg Code, which states that voluntary informed consent is absolutely necessary (see Monreno, Schmidt, Joffe 2017). The Declaration of Helsinki considers the well being of the subject should take priority over the interests of science and society (see Hutchinson, 2014). Belmont report (1974) was developed by the US Government for the protection of Human subjects (see The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 2018).

To associate women with caring will then promote the view that women care by nature (Ennis and Owens, 2005), as in the fact that 'caring as experienced in the family has come to act as the metaphor and standard for all forms of caring' (Tarlow and Noddings cited in Arendell, 2000: 1199). In consideration of this, viewing the mother-child dyad as a model for caring can complicate issues concerning justice and social equality, as this metaphor for care can be seen as normative (Baraitser, 2008: 20).

Culturally formative examples of care, seen historically through images of the mother-child relationship such as the feminine mother selflessly and romantically attending to the demanding needs of the child, are not explored by the caring labour I describe and critique throughout this study. I seek, rather, to explore and exemplify a level of care through my curatorial practice which is not caught up in the language of dependence and feminine qualities associated with giving, loving, nurturing, but includes what might be considered more robust qualities of mothering. As such, *Mother Ethics* eschews the associations of the mother as selfless, interdependent and masochistic, instead opening up the exploration of the complex relations between the mother and child within which otherness is always working to structure and promote human subjectivity (Baraitser, 2008).

I situate myself between theoretical perspectives from Ruddick and Baraitser. Ruddick's approach to maternal practice and ethics written in the 1980s is an important contribution to maternal philosophy; she argues that 'the work of mothering demands that mothers think: out of this need for thoughtfulness, a distinctive discipline emerges' (Ruddick, 1989: 24). From Baraitser (2009) I adopt the understanding that the subjectivity of the mother is called into being in relation to the other – the child. Baraitser's (2009) interest lies with motherhood rather than just care; she wants to focus on the mother-child relationship itself to investigate a specifically maternal ethics. She views mothering as an ethical practice, in and of itself. Baraitser (2008) suggests - partly in response to Ruddick's work - that we should move the ethical debate away from the mother-child relationship of reliability, relatedness and respectability. The debate needs to progress towards understandings of motherhood that deliberately move beyond the focus on care alone. What appeals to me in Ruddick's work is the discipline of maternal thought and practice which determines a 'self-reflective activity, a source of critical and creative maternal thinking' (Ruddick, 1989: 23).

I aim to promote a practice that speaks of a maternal thinking practice (Ruddick, 1989) that not only explores the complex relations between a mother and child (Baraitser, 2008), but also considers the contexts in which art is produced and communicated. This supports applying critical attention to the philosophical and ethical implications of a performance-making practice where mothering is key.

Given the performance – making focus of my research, it is also useful to look to related debates in the fields of theatre and performance studies. Here we can see the ways ethics has been explored and discussed, for example politics and social issues (Dolan, 2009), theatre and everyday life (Read, 1993) ethics in relation to audience (Ethcells, 1999), historical perspectives and the ethics of theatre (Riodit, 2009), and aligning ethics and aesthetics to realize the importance of collaborative art practice (Bannon, 2018). These approaches highlight the multiple ways ethics is explored and discussed in performance practice studies.

What is significant to me in my own research and as a performance maker is my understanding that ethics is both a methodological concern and a key component to undertaking this research. I address ethics as a “way of being” within everyday life and within an artistic research practice. As such I define my particular approach to ethics as the ethics of mother and family.

In reference to feminist and maternal ethics, I take ethics outside of the institution with its rules and codes and bring it home, where there are less formal rules or codes of conduct. My research also recognises how, when working with family in the home, there is an obligation on the artist/researcher to ensure that the creative practice produced is ethical in every aspect. The development of *Mother Ethics* through the doing has thereby led to a certain kind of politics that allows for a particular way of creating, facilitating and speaking through the practice that I make with family and children. Therefore, ethics becomes a way of responding to my environment - the home - which unearths a deep connection between ethics and lived, everyday experience. I consider the ethical relationship between performance, performer and the guest (audience). As the home becomes the site of practice, the relational configuration between performance, performer and the guest extends the ethical framework where this work is located. As such I am aware of my ethical

responsibility to the guest (this argument is further developed in *Family Site and Guest* page 126). For that reason I am conscious of the content and ways in which I present work for my guests to watch, as Tim Etchells states,

‘to witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamentally ethical way, to feel the weight of things and one’s own place in them, even if that place is simple, for the moment, as an onlooker’.

(Etchells, 1999: 17)

In regard to these considerations it feels important to state, the success or attainment of an ethical position is less a matter of applying ethical rules to practice, and more a means of designing and experiencing, creative processes (Morris 2015). Therefore, my role as a mother/artist/researcher should not address and reason what is right or wrong based only on hypothetical insights, but must explicitly create a set of principles that includes and talks to practical and theoretical concerns. Morris concurs that ‘the success of a given ethical theory, much like that of the enterprise of ethics itself, should be determined only by the extent to which it sheds light on these subjects and not by whether people align their behaviours with what the theory recommends’ (Morris, 2015: 2).

Rather than a static list of guiding rules or codes, *Mother Ethics* is a set of recurring principles which inform the actions of mother-artist and family alike. Further, the decision to work within the home directly begins to address the complex dialogue between the public/private issues of opening the home as a place of performance (see Chapter Four *Home as Practice*). Ethics becomes a key factor in the approaches undertaken when working with the multiple voices of family and how they are then represented within the research project.

Introducing the Family

Family is at the heart of this study. It is important therefore that I introduce the family members who have contributed to this research project. I use their first names throughout the thesis, reflecting our intimacy and to take away the formality of their relation to me as the author. Andy is my partner and father to our two children Oliver (age 7) and Isabel (age

5).⁴ We live together as a hetero-normative family where mother and father live together with their children (see Chapter 3) in an inner-city suburb of Liverpool. My mother, Cordie, my auntie Barbara and Andy's father Lesley each have contributed to performance work in this thesis (see *Completed Performance Practices* page 20). My parents live in the south of England and Andy's family lives in the South West. We further extend our understanding of what constitutes family to the collection of people around us in Liverpool, and together we can be seen to function as family.

I have worked with my immediate family in a sustained way throughout this project. They have had their lives documented in various ways, performed in installation works and lived through this research project. When working in such a sustained way with the family, *Mother Ethics* as a recurring principle seeks to promote healthy and open dialogues which can negotiate questions of power and interrelations when working with children to address notions of care and consent.

As this study is centrally preoccupied with the role of mother, it is essential to state unambiguously that Andy's position as father is not limited to only granting consent for the children's involvement, but as father and artist, his views on the framing and experiences of the children form a vital part of the decision-making process, not least because of our dual parenting arrangements. Andy and I take equal responsibility for all the decisions that are made in relation to the ethical considerations of the project. I approach this work as a shared collaborative activity where we, Mother and Father, explore both of our ethical positions within the work. Not only am I incorporating our children into the art making, but I am also using our family home as the place of 'public' performance. The engagement of the father in relation to my own position as the principal artist/researcher echoes Iris Marion Young's observation on role/gender distinction that,

Moral respect between people entails reciprocity between them, in the sense that each acknowledges and takes account of the other. But their relation is asymmetrical in terms of the history each has and the social position they occupy.

⁴ This research was undertaken from 2013 to 2018, when Oliver was between 2-7 years old and Isabel was 0-5 years old.

(Young, 1997: 41)

Young's proposition of asymmetrical reciprocity (1997) encourages a communication practice between myself and Andy about the ethical implications of this practice from our own positions. In this way, our commitment to the chosen delivery of this project has made explicit that co-operation has been earnestly sought, and as such presents equality as an anticipated objective. The father's position in relation to this study is not directly documented; however, he is implicit in the work and has contributed crucially to the musical aspects and integrally to the implementation of the practice within the home.

A Note on Collaboration

The process of creating art with my family members and established professional artists within the context of this thesis entails developing collaborative approaches to art making⁵. Some of the issues relating to such practices in other performance contexts such as contemporary dance practices and interdisciplinary work are therefore implicitly part of this research, however collaboration per se is not a research focus in this work.

In this practice, I have created an environment for collaboration to exist in certain ways whether this be with professional colleagues or with my family and friends. For example, in reference to the methods I have been developing I choose to pick up the term collaboration in response to particular pieces of practice that connect to artistic process and the ethical debates running through the thesis. The modes of collaboration across the projects cover a range of approaches and complexities and vary according to issues such as age, experience and relationships between participants. Ultimately these factors affect the kinds of collaboration and involvements the participants have. Therefore, I acknowledge involvement is a fundamental element to this practice and I work to negotiate the involvement of the participant ethically.

⁵ See contemporary debates relating to collaboration in Noylae Colin and Stefanie Sachenmaier co-edited *Collaboration in Performance Practice* (2016) which focuses on collaborative practices in the arts. Colin and Sachenmaier highlight the recent emphasis placed on problematizing collaborative processes across a diverse range of performance disciplines (2015).

I collaborate with professional artists, whom are also friends, and I bring forward their skills as makers to develop certain areas of work for example filming or developing sound scores and soundscapes. I work with my family and friends where collaboration is seen in terms of form and content, from eliciting stories for performance making, too contributing to the practice by being filmed and creating short dance films, to working directly with my children where collaboration examines notions of play and critiques power relations.

This way of working has also highlighted certain concerns and complexities within certain issues such as who owns the story or narrative. This process links to the ethical principles running through the thesis, an example of this can be found in *Memory Work and the Making of Stories* (page 90) and *Intimacy and Ethics in 31 Days Old* (page 92). A description of the ways narrative methodology as an overarching approach is explored in the thesis can be found in *Narrative Enquiry* (page 27), which also expands upon the considerations of story ownership and care in approaching methods such as narrative interviews.

Completed Performance Practices

The findings of this PhD are based on the presentation and critical reflections of a series of three installation performance practices created by myself and my family in our home, plus a series of ongoing practices / smaller works. See appendix for details on artist/collaborators who were involved with and performed in each piece of practice.

The three-installation works are:

Trace (2013)

This is a full-scale installation performance in collaboration with Andy, Oliver (age 3) and Isabel (age 1). This installation primarily explores the development of a sited and social practice within the home. The installation was made of films, photographs, soundscapes and live performance in various rooms across the home. The digital documentation of this event has been developed and edited into an artefact called *Trace* (2013). This includes photographic documentation of the performance event, a record of *Stairs* (2013) the live performance, and photographic series called *Family Day* (2013) and *Trace Photographic Series* (2013) in collaboration with Wesley Storey.

Reclaiming the Ritual (2014/15)

This was made in collaboration with three families, the Black- Frizell family, Wilson family and Campbell family over Christmas 2014 in a farm house in Wales. *Reclaiming the Ritual* explored polyvocal and co-authored narratives as families spend time together over a Christmas period. The work culminated in a presentation in my family home, sharing the documentation of Christmas, in September 2015.

31 Days Old (2016)

This practice involved a full scale installation performance in the home, in collaboration with my mother (age 66) my auntie (age 54) and my daughter (age 3). This was a wide-ranging project highlighting domestic photography as a strategic trigger into personal and family narratives and memory work. The performance consisted of film, live performance and augmented reality (using the application *Layar*). This work also explored a detailed sited practice within the home. I worked with digital artists and film makers Lynne Harwood and Jane Farley

The following list of works are of a different scale and include ongoing pieces of practice which are to be included in the oeuvre of the practice. Although these can be less easily recognized and considered as performance works, they demonstrate the range and extent of the practice and forms of documentation.

Bed Bound (2014)

A short solo dance film that explores the transition of woman to mother.

Dust and Bone (2016)

Photographic study, exploring domestic labour.

Children's Practice (ongoing)

This is an ongoing practice in which I work with the children to develop their own artistic practice. In conversation with my children they have decided to contribute *Oliver's World* (2014) and *Isabel's Shoes* (2017).

Documenting as Mother (ongoing)

This is a short and poignant selection of material generated from 5 years of filming with, and, of family, capturing the everyday. The footage is raw, cut together in a linear way, sharing the intimate and prosaic.

These processes are all documented on the accompanying digital drive and the first three are also represented in visual essays that are inserted between the main chapters *Maternal Practice*, *Family Art Making Practice* and *Home as Practice*. There are images of other pieces of work inserted in the body of the thesis as they are discussed.

Chapter 1

Methodology

In the case of this thesis, Practice-as-Research (PaR) manifests in my role as a mother-artist who employs a range of methodological approaches to develop a performance practice. Firstly, I offer my rationale as to my engagement with Robin Nelson's PaR model as a key method of enquiry. I then move onto a detailed description of the chosen methodological approaches. I begin with narrative enquiry - this is a prominent feature of this practice. I explore narrative as a container concept which holds and explores various forms of narration, aural, filmic movement and installations practices. This research demonstrates how narrative formations interconnect and includes Memory Work (Kuhn, 2002); however, memory is also discussed in a separate section as I consider it an approach which is activated within certain pieces of practice research, becoming more explicit in, for example, *31 Days Old* (2016).

This research also considers that documentation as an art practice and as a feature of PaR is a continual process and is also here defined by the prominence of the mother position. In this thesis the documentation is not only explored as a way to record the research, but is performed in sensitive ways to protect my children's and family privacy. The research and art making I conduct with my children is a developmental approach within the thesis and is a product of caring maternal labour which is intricately related to the *Mother Ethics* strand. This strand helps me to articulate the role of ethics and ways I work with my children. I explore a form of anecdotal writing, which is an approach adopted from Baraitser (2009), and links my own personal journey through motherhood and academic study. The selection of entries balances the personal with scholarly rigour. The anecdotal form is driven by the immediacy of the family, and the writing locates the smaller daily occurrences, interruptions, and observations which otherwise would not find a voice. The cyclical nature of art production and academic critique continues to inform my evolving practice as an artist per se.

Practice as Research (PaR)

Practice [...] is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily actions activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.

(Reckwitz 2002: 249)

The following sections discuss the framework of this Practice-as-Research (PaR) enquiry and the specific methods I employ. Throughout this research project, I engage with Robin Nelson (2013) as he identifies the phenomena which constitute creative knowledge, and how this manifests within PaR. I position PaR as the key mode of enquiry, and the performance practice outcomes submitted are intended to constitute a substantial evidence of a research enquiry (Nelson, 2013).

Leading theatre academic Baz Kershaw (2010) suggests that PaR shares methodologies derived from action research and performative social sciences. Recognising the complexity of Practice-as-Research and the many strands of enquiry it draws from, Kershaw writes that PaR is 'characterized by post-binary commitment to activity (rather than structure), process (rather than fixity), action (rather than representation), collectiveness (rather than individualism), reflexivity (rather than self-consciousness) and more' (in Piccini, 2003: 193).

In the development of this research project, I call upon additional disciplines outside of performance-related areas in order to cultivate insights into my own research concerning mothering, family and home. Kershaw claims this approach is a defining feature of PaR, 'as it projects proliferate insights, understandings, knowledge that, over all, will be part of many disciplines', resulting in the research methods or 'tools' becoming transdisciplinary (Kershaw & Nicholson 2010 :5/6). In other words, according to Boyce-Tillman et al. (2012: 22), one has the freedom to invent and develop new but rigorous strategies for articulating processes that 'transcends and knits "body", "experience", "mind", "sensation", "analysis", "articulation" "memory" and "argument", often in idiosyncratically designed frameworks'. The phenomenon of PaR recognizes *exploration* through the 'doing' of research, and thus action is a methodological necessity.

Similar to Kershaw, scholar Annette Arlander claims that there is no single philosophical or methodological approach, or as she calls it 'container', for PaR (2008: 25). Arlander's view starts with the 'open subjectivity of the researcher and her admission that she is the central research tool of the research' (2013: 25). She admits locating oneself as the subject central to the research is seemingly egotistical, but this can drive individual results. Standpoint epistemologies encourage the researcher to consider their own position and ideology in relation to the cultural understanding of the research. This kind of self-reflexivity is key in Nelson's (2009: 53) model of positionality, which once established and recognised, offers the researcher the space to critically reflect on the process.

I embrace PaR as a chosen methodological position to carry out this enquiry and develop my own approaches to PaR as informed by my research into maternal studies. Although there has been a considerable amount of research into motherhood and mothering, the maternal has only recently emerged as a field of study. PaR is a way of working that produces knowledge that might not have been otherwise possible. In this case, PaR enables the research to interrogate both the position of the mother and the inclusion of the family in creative projects. I propose that in this thesis PaR enables a reconsideration of core concepts of the mother-artist role. Rather than exclude the mother from the academy, this thesis engages with and extends processes of empowering mothers, which has been a central and defining concern of maternal activism and scholarship over the last three decades (O'Reilly, 2010). PaR, I propose, can be part of a movement to address the maternal, including motherhood, mothering and the mother, and the social/political spheres within academic scholarship. The maternal is becoming more visible and viable within academia with the national, if not global, recognition of contemporary artists/scholars such as Elena Marchevshka, Emily Underwood Lee and Lena Simic (see *Mothers in Art Practice* page 52). PaR then provides a suitable academic context in which I explore my position as mother to understand experience, practice and tacit knowledge within the context of knowledge production within and through art making.

In light of this, exploring my role and position as mother is a central concern of the thesis. The title of the thesis, *Mother as Curator*, points to a heightened state where I am able to orchestrate a dialogical process of the interconnectedness/blurriness of life, personal and family, arts practice and research. I am very conscious of the ambiguous states I experience

as a result of the overlap between my positions as mother, and this affects how I position *Mother as Curator*.

I position performance-making strategies as research practices by means of which the ontology of family daily life and memory can be examined and understood. A part of this process is the acknowledgment that the research practice is an iterative process which is malleable enough to accommodate and adapt to the identifiable needs and demands of my family structure. PaR as a methodology enables and recognises the importance of efficacy and flexibility as an inherent feature of its modes of investigation. For example, when dealing with transient states, such as evident when working with family and children; the research methodology can acknowledge ongoing, growing and shifting relations.

Another reason for the employment of PaR as my chosen methodological position is that it offers me a platform to explore my own experiences, desires and questions as mother and dancer, through my own movement and a diary writing practice. The writing practice, similar to Barraitser's anecdotal writing in *Maternal Encounters* (2009), concentrates upon the small moments of the everyday. I insert the writing within the main body of the text, thus replicating the interruption a mother experiences moment by moment, day by day when with her child. I adopt this approach as a way of interrupting the flow of the writing through the chapters. The notion of 'interruption' is a reoccurring theme throughout the thesis and is explored as a creative encounter and research strategy (see *Mother Working with her Children* page 64). These written accounts have prompted me to develop a complementary movement practice which reflects my daily observations and thoughts. This is a quiet practice which enables an ongoing physical analysis to develop parallel to the unfolding of family interactions in the home (see *Maternal Practice* page 52). This approach ensures that I take explicit account of Tami Spry's (2001: 724) observation that 'when the body is erased in the process(ing) of scholarship, knowledge situated within the body is unavailable'. Therefore, this practice also recognises the value of the experienced body in the process of academic enquiry.

Accordingly, this research is not conducted from a distance, but from the intimate and immersive place of self and family. My way of working does not attempt to shy away from the emotional and affective relations which I believe form an integral part of the research process. This approach is evident in the research methods I have designed, which are

centred around, and speak from, my position of mother/artist/researcher, and thus testifies to the intimate nature, importance and value of self as researcher.

Narrative Enquiry

Narrative, 'gives shape to things in the real world and often bestows on them a title to reality' (Bruner, 2002: 8). Jerome Bruner offers this description of narrative, which hints towards the ways I explore personal and family narratives in this practice. I explore narrative as a mode of enquiry; it is one of the main sources of generating written critique and the making of the performance with family. I conceptualise narrative enquiry as a container concept to hold all forms of personal and family narratives, which are expressed in visual, embodied and spoken modes, contributing to the process of performance making and offering central sources of insight to the thesis. The significance of this approach presents ways to work directly with family members, especially for some family members who have never worked in performance before. The voices running through this practice are a form of polyvocality, which consists of the multiple and contrasting accounts of family life. The polyvocal is a mode of narrative enquiry which recognises the multiple narrators and different perspectives of the people running through this practice. Whilst polyvocality is not itself a method it is a term which focuses upon the listening to, honouring of and working with the many voices of family which make this kind of practice possible.

Michael Wilson (2006) states that narrative and storytelling are a broad church which are constantly being changed and reinvented. Within narrative enquiry, I draw upon a body of scholarship which foregrounds important questions and offers frames of reference for my own analysis. The gathering and collating of family narratives have been influenced directly by methods developed by Kristin Langleir and Eric Peterson – *Storytelling in Daily Life* (2004). I also refer to Robyn Fivush's (2011) writing on the developments between narrative and auto-biographical memory. Finally, the writing of Jerome Bruner in *Making Stories* (2002) foregrounds the insight that stories can extend an understanding of the world and propose new ways in which to think about narrative function in the world. These key thinkers on narrative form have influenced my approach to developing the creative practice for this project, enabling me to use narrative as a principal form of both investigation and

stimulation. This understanding and use of narrative as a tool of intellectual enquiry informs analysis of the practical work in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

In direct relation to the nature of this research project, the location for the performing of narrative has been central in capturing the value of everyday life stories; in this instance, it is the home that acts as the cradle of such narratives. Bruner believes that the content of the narrative is consumed with the situation of everyday life, which is the richest environment for narrative production. He proposes that 'In time, life comes not so much to imitate art as to join with it. It is ordinary people doing ordinary things in ordinary places for ordinary reasons' (Bruner, 2002: 89).

Langellier and Peterson (2004: 4) state we should 'understand the storytelling that surrounds us in daily life, and further, to participate critically in conversations about what stories, what meanings, and what bodies matter'. They develop this concept further by suggesting that performing narrative cannot solely be investigated by relying on any 'one system component – story text, story-teller, audience - but only within a multilevel model of strategies and tactics that examines the relations of power' (2004: 8). Langellier and Peterson identify that 'Storytelling cites and recites experience, performing narrative on stage iterates and reiterates that experience' (2004: 228). Following Langellier and Peterson (2004), I explore narrative for its potential to expose its cultural understandings and interpersonal exchanges, which act as a platform to tell and retell family stories which are fundamental to our daily and social life, building and creating meaning. Langellier and Peterson's most exciting proposition in relation to this research project is how they challenge more traditional formats of face-to-face narrative storytelling. Similarly, I draw attention to transformative narrative processes, wherein personal and family life are explored and exposed as performance generating materials that are presented in innovative ways. For example, in *31 Days Old*, where family narratives were the main source of material, we explored augmented reality as a method of engaging with narrative performance (see Chapter 3).

I have developed a range of narrative methods in support of my intellectual and creative explorations, whether this be under the banner of the *personal is political* (Hanisch, 1969), where I explicitly concentrate on women's narratives, or in the content of the everyday and

the banal euphoria of family mess. I am mindful in this process, as feminist narratologist Robyn Warhol states, that one should be self-conscious about methodology, demanding clarity on the questions we have about a text and then how to go about answering them (Warhol, 2015: 10). I am conscious that, by the very action of exploring narratives in art making, my observations are affected and impacted upon by my subjective position, and influenced by feminist critique, ethical considerations and understanding of family and mothering.

Addressing this subjective position, I present strategies to attend to situations where power relations are important, questioning, for example, who owns the narrative? Accordingly, I developed a collaborative narrative interview format, designed as a process in which interviewer and interviewee co-produce a narrative. In doing so, I draw upon Connelly & Clandinin's description of a narrative process that engages with personal conditions: 'we mean the feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions of both the interviewer and participant' (2006: 480). It's important to bear in mind that these interviews can be sensitive in nature; as Patricia Leavy explains, the 'participant is simultaneously telling and re-telling their stories as they are living them' (Leavy, 2008: 27). These interviews engaged family and friends and began as a starting point; the outcome of the narrations is then explored as material for performance making. (Some of the more detailed contextual and analytical information regarding the interviews may be found in Chapter 2 - *Family Art Making Practice* pages 82 - 103).

Whilst developing narrative enquiry within the thesis I acknowledge that some of the methods employed to study my family exist within an auto-ethnographic paradigm⁶. Whilst I do not fully employ auto-ethnography as a method, I recognise the influence and insights of this form of research which, according to Leavy (2009), presents innovative opportunities, which can draw upon the richness of narrative from multiple sources. As a researcher, I borrow tools from auto-ethnography, such as writing practices and interview techniques, but do not engage with the theoretical territory (See Ellis, 2010). I suggest that the tools I have adopted from auto-ethnography explore personal experience as a relational

⁶ Ellis, Adams, Bochner (2011) discuss auto-ethnography as approach to researching and writing which describes and analyses personal experiences in relation to cultural surroundings.

and reflective practice to observe and explore the narratives of family and family friends. Researching the family and our everyday events accommodates subjectivity and emotionality, therefore, similar to an auto-ethnographic approach, my position as mother/artist/researcher influences the research (Ellis, 2011).

The interview format fits well into the structure of family life and this research context. Depending on the nature of the content, it can be conducted in the privacy of a quiet room, around a dinner table, or within the hustle and bustle of life. This method has been one of the main ways of listening and recording family narratives – for example, I interview Oliver and Isabel in quieter moments within the day when I can sit and talk to them (see *Researching with Children* page 36).

The creative process is informed by how I gather and shape family narratives into performance materials, which then operate and function in particular ways in the family home. The methods of responding to family narratives, and, ultimately, their transformation into performance materials, are dependent upon the piece of practice and the particular research questions posed, to researcher, participants and ultimately invited guests. I have developed a performance vocabulary which approaches the narrative material as a generative resource, which can then be explored to develop large scale performances.

In summary, the fields of narrative studies I have described above have informed my approaches to art making in certain ways. Not only do I explore families telling their stories to preserve and form family identity, but I explore storytelling not only as something families do, but also as a particular way to *do* family. In this study, narratives weave through the family, stimulating and generating material in and of themselves.

Conceptualised as act, event and discourse, narrative formations are positioned as possible sites for understanding how family maintains difference and identity. As such, I approach narrative as a container concept, where I challenge mainstream understandings of narrative when contained within the boundaries of a literary frame, and reconfigure narrative into the embodied, filmic, installation practice which is then viewed in the family home. The range of narratives collated during the making of this research project enabled me as mother, dancer and curator to focus on not just the spoken or written word, but on how such narratives acted as a stimulus to create original physical work in response to their content.

Using narrative as a form of theoretical enquiry has enabled me to document and critique complex interactions relationships within personal issues, the home and the public moments of performance.

Memory Work

The notion of Memory Work in this research is implicitly a part of the narrative approaches addressed above but, as a recurring feature of family narrative, it is worth drawing out more explicitly as part of my methodology. Further, memory comes forward in certain aspects of the performance making, as personal memories are triggered and drawn upon in the making of works.

My approach to memory draws upon scholarship by Annette Kuhn, whose notion of Memory Work (2002-2010) is a recontextualisation of personal and cultural memory. Memory Work attempts to 'unravel the connections between memory, its traces, and the stories we tell about the past [...]' (2002: 4). I also address the characteristics of collective and shared memories through the writing of Maurice Halbwachs (1992). Halbwachs explores the family as a framework in which shared memories can operate in multiple ways and promote familial bonds. Plus, I pull together strands of narrative and (auto-biographical) memory through the works of Robyn Fivush (2003-2014). Fivush states that auto-biographical memory assimilates past memories into an overarching life narrative (2011). This combination of thinkers has provided an original way to approach memory within a family framework. This understanding and application of Memory Work animates the thesis, especially in Chapter 3, *Family Arts Making Practice* pages 82 - 103.

This research is not concerned with how memory is generated on an anatomical level; it is concerned with how memory is transmitted and transformed into creative processes which generate narrative materials and creative entry points into performance making. Memory has been central in developing research methods which acknowledge how memory and the self are constructed through specific forms of social interactions, which leads to the formation of auto-biographical narratives (Fivush, Haiden, 2003).

Early on in this study I adopted the term Memory Work (Kuhn, 2002), which refers to the theorized notion of memory developed by Kuhn. This describes an active practice of

remembering and connecting individual and cultural memory. In *Memory Work*, Kuhn makes it possible to explore the connections between

public historical events, structures of feeling, family drama's relations of class national identity and gender, and 'personal' memory....[P]ersonal and collective remembering emerge again and again as continuous with one another.

(Kuhn, 2002: 4-5)

This research does not extend to the wider context of cultural memory, but attends to memory within collective frames, such as family. The writing of Maurice Halbwachs' *On Collective Memory – The Collective Memory of the Family* (1992) establishes memory as 'social' both in terms of content and process. In this way memory may need others - in this case, it requires family to function.

This research project, especially *31 Days Old*, has drawn on domestic photographs that are mined for their associations, reflections and interpretations. As such this research addresses subjectivity and interpretation as key elements in *Memory Work*, which undercuts assumptions of the veracity or authenticity of what is being remembered; it is claimed not to be truth, but a kind of evidence (Kuhn, 2002). This becomes material for interpretation - which is interrogated for its possibilities and meanings - and a conscious staging of memory (Kuhn, 2002). Kuhn's memory questions (see *Visual Essay 3, 31 Days Old* pages 103-111) were used as a source to generate a series of questions appropriate to this research which engaged with activities of reflection and learning, developing a critical questioning of my families own life and those around us.

Whilst *Memory Work* is the main focus for exploring remembered experiences within the framework of this study, it also brings forth new ideas and questions concerning the wider questions of the thesis. The theme of memory concerns the *Mother as Curator* practice more widely, as memory is always present. I experience my own set of memories (see Chapter 2, *Maternal Practice*), my personal perspective, and experience of the social moment of creating the memory (Marglait, 2004). Therefore, there is a certain kind of fluidity between the making of memory and the making of meaning (Kuhn, 2002). Working

with memory in a tangible way leads into forms of documentation strategies by means of which I am not only documenting life, but building and creating memory. I address this within the section below.

Documenting Processes

Throughout this section, I discuss how I employ documentation strategies in this research, from the position of the mother/artist/researcher. Nelson states ‘documentation of a product serves as just one kind of evidence’ (2013: 6). Documentation in this research project is not a document which serves as one kind of evidence; rather, it is a methodological necessity to document from the position of the mother. This emphasis is determined by balancing the need to protect the privacy of children and family with the need to record and develop a strategy that records the subjects. I explore how documentation operates on both the meta level of the argument in the thesis and as part of the art making itself.

The forms of documentation reflect the wider principles of PaR and articulate knowledge production found through the *doing* of documentation, rather than acting as an account of process. Piccini and Rye recount approaches to documentation which afford a ‘telling otherwise’ and so make possible a sense of ‘what might be, rather than a fixity of what was’ (cited in Nelson, 63-64: 2013).

Elements of the documentation in this practice are pre-occupied with photographing children, the home and daily life. Gillian Rose (2014: 76) states that ‘capturing and interpreting children in their “natural” state becomes an authoritative, authentic mark of maternal subjectivity’. As such, I make the distinction between photographing my children and family life as a thing that mothers do, and the ways I document as a mother/artist/researcher. As a mother, I picture a certain range of subject matter, depicting everyday family life (Rose, 2014). As a mother/artist/researcher, there is a different intention, context and engagement, especially due to the exposure of the material to an outside viewing audience. In both accounts, I document my family as caring labour and with a mother’s judgement. I document with the understanding that the intimate moments recorded within the private confines of family and home are an ideological construction of

family and family life (Hirsch 1997). Indeed, in both accounts I construct a dominant view of the family through my eyes as mother. But as I document as a mother/artist/researcher, I am aware I am responsible for independent ethical decision-making and the representation of my family.

During the research process, I have developed experimental forms of documentation, which have been significant in the development of the central insights of the thesis. In *Trace* (2013), I worked with a photographer Wesley Storey, who I consider is part of our extended notion of family, to create a photographic series called *Family Day* (2013). This series invites the viewer into the familial gaze, and gently exposes and records the daily chores of a hetero-normative family. Wesley's photographic practice enables my storytelling, by using the lens to privilege the maternal point of view, foregrounding my mother perspective in care-giving, banal euphoria, and domestic responsibility. The maternal aesthetic developed through this series anticipates that of later projects, where the intimacy of the research and the subject draw the viewer into the experience of the family in their everyday setting.

This approach can be seen to be in keeping with the maternal aesthetic of the material feminists known as the group *Mother Artists* of the 1970s. Their work features domestic labour and the everyday, making visible the private domestic realm to a public audience. Arguably one of the most famous pieces of mother and child documentation is Mary Kelly's *Post Partum Document* (PPD) (1973 - 1979). This work has been influential on my mother-child art works, as she strategically detached *Post Partum Document* (PPD) (1973 - 1979) from any visually mimetic representation of motherhood (Liss, 2009). Kelly reconfigured family portraits by asserting 'that the women's body in evidence is not enough: her cultural traces and lived experience must also be legible' (Liss, 2009: 103). As in Kelly's *Post-Partum Document* (PPD) (1973 - 1979) and Lena Simic's *Friday Records* (2014-16) (see *Maternal Practice*, page 49), I treat various modes of documentation as artworks in their own right, sites where the parameters separating performance making and documentation may overlap, and are, sometimes, inseparable.

As a mother/artist/researcher, I have documented many incidents in life which have become part of installation materials or have been records to reflect upon. The majority of films presented here demonstrate the actions of care established in the intimate relations

between the maternal figure and the child. Within the frame of creative practice this contributes to knowledge production for the thesis (see *The Development of Bed Bound*, page 58), while also demonstrating the meaning making potential of documentation. The documentation aims to locate the mother not as a singular exemplar of motherhood, but as the mother who is not eternally self-sacrificing and self-giving, but is an artist mother who can explore the maternal acts of care giving whilst producing a performance practice. In the production of such images, I may generate a form of anxiety from my position as I open myself to a flurry of outside judgmental interpretation from the potential viewer (see *Ethics in Home Performance*, page 128).

One of the core tasks of *Mother Ethics* is responding to and maintaining the alterity of the other, whilst at the same time questioning my own position as mother/artist/researcher. Within the framework of this thesis, the ethical imperative concerning the documentation of children is primarily considered from the position of the mother, and what she deems appropriate. However, the issue of representation can be addressed by placing some ethical responsibility on the shoulders of the viewer. Kaja Silverman (1996), in her concept 'ethics in a field of vision', talks about ethical looking, problematising the relationship between the spectator and the image. She states that ethical looking should respect the other and that looking ethically should constitute a modest witness (1996). As I document my children, from the perspective of the mother, and take care of their representation, I expect the guest to 'see' this work in the way it is intended, which is through the caring, banal, critical eyes of the mother/artist/researcher. As mentioned earlier, the evolving relationship between the personal and family narrative/performance, guests and home begins to address the guest as a public presence entering into the private world of the home space, positioned to view the work in a particular way.

I aim to appreciate and understand the everyday and cultural phenomena of family life. I claim my home space/fieldwork is lived and fully immersed in my everyday life, rather than only the subject of the research. Researching the family and our everyday events accommodates subjectivity and emotionality and, therefore, my position as mother/artist/researcher can influence the research (Ellis, 2010). In the process of documenting family life, Trinh T Minh-ha argues that we create a form of conscious staging. Whilst filming we cannot gain self-reflexivity by filming ourselves alone - there are other

mechanisms at play: the staging of the camera, the thought process of when and where to film (T Minh-ha, 1991). Therefore, gaining critical distance throughout this study is a challenge, which I have tried to embrace as a necessary discipline. Ellis states, a story's 'validity'

can be judged by whether it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is authentic and lifelike, believable and possible; the story's generalizability can be judged by whether it speaks to readers about their experience.

(Ellis in Tierney and Lincoln, 1997: 1333)

This process of documenting and curatorial practice is particular to the nature of the event, and is both a normative and performative activity, where the relationship between every day and art making is a feature, and there is a blurring of the boundaries that echo the boundaries of the mother – artist role.

Researching with Children

This section is concerned with the creative and documentary methods I have developed while working with my children. The children's practice is part of the documentation strand and the ethical debates running through the thesis (see *A Collaboration with Children* page 65). Since the start of this PhD, my children have been important in the study, but I am not performing an in-depth study on them. I have designed the project so that they do not perform in live large-scale performance projects; however, they are present as part of the family in most of the performance events in the home. I do, however, work with them on smaller pieces of research that engage them as co-researchers and artists. My overriding premise when researching with my children is concerned with their consent, and willingness, to be involved in creative work. I am guided primarily by their imaginative, educational and emotional worlds.

I draw upon scholars and practitioners who explore researching with children. Priscilla Alderson (2001) addresses notion of consent and power in research with children. I refer to the concept of Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development ZPD (1933) and, in particular, I draw upon Miffy Ryan and Lena Simic's event *Motherhood and Live Art 2* on maternal

ethics. This combination of research provides a platform to explore and approach working with children in research. When working with my children the main aim is to recognise them as subjects, rather than objects of the research, who can speak in their own right. I ask as a mother/artist/researcher what is my duty of care to my children and who is represented in my artworks? (Ryan, 2017). I address this question in stages throughout the thesis, particularly through creative methods.

My approach to consent shifts between two main approaches; when the focus is on motherhood within the art, my children are free to come and go. When the focus is on the children, it becomes *our* work, and the nature of consent is different. For example, in *Isabel's Shoes*, the focus is on Isabel, as she plays with shoes that I set out for her. The work is ours; the negotiation between adult and child is in the achievement of a playful task. This way of approaching consent and power emphasises my duty of care and what I believe to be in the best interests of the child (Alderson, 2001). I explore and establish parameters of consent between the mother and child as an extension of my own mothering practice.

When working on *our* work, I draw upon what I believe are the current interests for the child, and build upon them. Therefore, the children have a voice in forming my view of their best interests. This establishes the balance between the child's background knowledge and understanding and the introduction of new ideas and skills in an efficient way. Vygotsky identifies that 'what is in the zone of proximal development today will be the actual development level tomorrow – that is, what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow' (1933: 33). This conceptualizes the differential roles of child and adult in learning encounters. Within this study, I am guided by the level of understanding that my children have of the artistic processes and the development of them.

In *Oliver's World*, I explicitly explore Oliver's agency and active role in this research (see *A Collaboration with Children*, page 65). Children and young people have often been placed passively in research and maybe have not had the chance to analyse and represent their own position (Alderson, 2001). *Oliver's World* positions him as photographic documenter who comments on his subjective view of the world through the power of the image. This positioning of my son as co-creator in my art making poses particular questions for me, as adult, as to how the material chosen by Oliver is integrated and/or informs my own creative

decisions, and how I document such contributions. This is a negotiated relationship between adult and child, rather than one in which I, the adult, decides on Oliver's interests.

In the event *Motherhood and Live Art 2: Are we screwing the kids up?* (April 29th 2017), Simic and Ryan open a platform for mother-artists to share their experiences of working with their children in performance. Simic shares her ideas and approaches, where she sets the premise to let her children come and go, in and out of performance. Simic performs live with her children predominantly in a theatrical setting. In a conversation at the event, she states – '*some things work and some things don't, the key point is not to be too attached and put too much emphasis on the work, it is part of their journey and not just mine so there is no pressure to complete*' (L. Simic, 2017, Personal Communication 29th April). Similarly, Live Artist Grace Surman also performs with her children. In the performance *With Grace* (2016), she examines the relationship between parent and child in all stages of life. Surman takes her 9-year-old daughter into the performance space with her. The underlying themes of her work explore child development and schooling experiences. Surman exposes the mother and daughter working together in a theatrical setting and the possibility of certain outcomes this may present. She asks the audience to challenge her in her decision to put her daughter on the stage, and to question her as a mother, woman and artist.

Like Simic and Surman, I have developed arts-based methods that accommodate our lives, and therefore reveal something about our world. These methods encompass and respond to the practicalities of life, working to a mother's timetable which integrates interruptions such as feeding times, bed times, tantrums, my energy levels, and frustrations (see *The Development of Bed Bound* page 61). Such interruptions and practical issues have impacted upon my research in interesting ways. For example, the form and content of my performance *Trace* (2013) was a result of working with and around the needs of children. The children's daily activity would move me from room to room, from emotional state to emotional state, which ultimately shaped my thinking and research methods. The constant state of flux between the everyday activity and my intention of recording the moment for research purposes recognises the multi-tasking that is required not just of mother, but especially of mother as researcher,

As a mother turns herself towards a child mid-sentence, mid-mouthful, mid-thought, or in the middle of the night, she often makes herself available without finishing the things that replenish her.

(Baraitser, 2009: 67)

Baraitser (2009) refers to this multi-tasking as relentless. After the interruption, I thought the trick was to be able to pick up the creative process from where I left it. The interruption of the child is a series of blows that brings the mother back into the here and now, 'drawing the attention to the immediacy of the child, which wrenches the mother from the world of thought or action' (Baraitser, 2009: 68). While the act of interruption acts as a reminder to me as researcher that I am working with an element of unpredictability, it enhances my sense of agency in selecting and curating material for performance. Interruption highlights the ethical relationship between me, mother, and child, and reminds me of the challenge and opportunity in these moments, and how they can be expedited in other ways.

Modes of Writing - Academic and Anecdotal Registers

This section addresses the use of different registers of writing which have informed the process of gathering knowledge and visual presentation of this thesis. Whilst the text is written predominantly in a scholarly style, there are anecdotal diary sections dispersed throughout the thesis, written from my position as mother and deliberately integrated into the text and echo the act of interruption. I draw upon Baraitser's (2009) notion of anecdotal and auto-biographical writing. Baraitser writes through a succession of subjective positions where she encounters herself through a series of unexceptional incidents which reveal maternal subjectivity to be defined not by '[...] fluidity, hybridity or flow, but of physical viscosity, [...] and a renewed sense of oneself as a speaking subject' (Baraitser, 2009: 4).⁷ Similarly, Suzanne Juahsz (2003) in *Mother-Writing* explains,

bringing together in the same textual space the aggregate of identities that mothers possess and establishing a viable relationship, or "grammar," among them. Though frequently difficult to achieve in lived experience, this process is enabled by locating a connecting point in the woman herself, for all these identities are hers.

⁷ Baraitser performs an approximation of anecdotal theory offered by Jane Gallop (2002). Gallop blurs distinctions between the 'reality and text; she approaches reading the account for the theoretical insights that it offers, 'a short account of some interesting or humorous incident' (Gallop, 2002: 2). Baraitser approaches Gallop's anecdotes as 'textual fragments that can be unravelled to find within them theoretical insights, while at the same time using them to evoke a relation with what she refers to lived experience' (2009: 12).

I position these interruptions as repositories of information and understanding of personal reflections, where the layers of maternal subject positions unveil an intimate, corporeal, textual exploration of mothering and family life - through self and others. Through these interruptions I reveal becoming a mother, my ever-changing and sometimes failing body, conversations with my children, the ebbs and flows of frustration, guilt, boredom and the complete and wholesale messiness of motherhood and of family life. By including these accounts, I enhance the theoretical discourse in this study.

The anecdotal writing is not offered as an individual piece of performance research but exists as smaller pieces of writing which collectively explore the daily experiences of mothering. My responses to maternal experience are creatively driven; the written anecdotes empower me to respond through the body, and I have created reflective and highly personal movement pieces that capture the complexity and multi-layered concepts associated with my role as mother/artist/researcher. I consciously construct an 'agentic practice' (Baraitser and Siegel, 2009), where I engage and respond to the writing through developing solo dance performance, within which I embody the complex territory of the amassed subject positions of motherhood. *Bed Bound* (2014) is an example of this writing and dance performance practice: see *The Development of Bed Bound* page 58.

The writing of this thesis is a sited practice in itself, as I write in the home within the intimacy, immediacy and interruptions of daily life within family. Therefore, I aim to balance some personal and intimate details of my family and art making on one hand and the scholarly imperatives of theory, knowledge and analysis on the other. Whilst it is important to my process to write about the difficulties this represents, I believe part of the procedure is to express the contents of my own home, the sights, objects, sounds, the ways we interact as a family, the ways I interact with my children, our spatial relations, the emotional demands of working within this practice, which are not always easy to articulate in scholarly contexts.

Summary of Methodologies

Gathering the materials for my research project was designed with family life in the foreground. On the one hand, this presented flexibility and a great range of research possibilities, and, on the other hand it was difficult dealing with such a vast range of potential areas for enquiry and research materials. The process of reflection and writing up the thesis, keeping in mind how the act of interruption was such a present reality, enabled me as a researcher to bring together a body of practice which positions the unpredictable, messy, and banal moments of living within a critical framework. This is in keeping with Kershaw's observation that the '[...] more rigorously consistent the research design the *greater* maybe the chances of missing out on producing reflexive results' (2011: 117). Dealing with the multiple voices in the data was complex, challenging, but ultimately insightful.

The content of the material is unique, and as such hard to analyse. The steady and committed documentation of family life presented landmark moments, which revealed opportunities to follow areas of practice: for example, within the children's practice, areas of my own photographic studies in *Oliver's World*, or playful encounters with Isabel in *Isabel's Shoes* (see *A Collaboration with Children*, page 65). The narrative enquiry and polyvocal consideration (see *Family Art Making Practice* page 82) within the practice encourage an enquiry from different angles, acknowledging the perspectives and understanding of family, rather than drawing solo from my own experiences of family life. The everyday narratives, qualities, and experiences of life deepen the knowledge base of this study, giving recognition to the importance and value of the everyday, the banal and the prosaic. As a result, this research is enabled to consider the idea narrative practices in daily life contribute to family identity construction. Yet, the anecdotal writings encourage my own insights and tracks my personal journey through the thesis, and because of their intimate nature have had a profound effect on me as well as contributing towards the theoretical scaffolding of the thesis.

The challenges I have noted here are inherent in PaR. The application and testing of innovative methods contributes to the emerging field of maternal and family art making. At the same time, I have been able to engage with my research topic, as well as live through

the immediacy of daily life. The next chapter addresses the transition of woman to mother, articulates the project's theoretical positioning within maternal studies, and brings my children into focus within the research. I offer a field review of maternal performance by mapping some of the major developments in this area as a way of framing the thematic material of the chapter.

Visual Essay 1

TRACE (2013)



TRACE

Trace (2013) was the first exploration of creative practice within the home. The installations were based upon the family and home as a lived-in site.

The main performance elements

Family Day, Trace - Photographic series

Stairs - Live and film version

Isabel's feet - Film in Isabel's room

1,2,3,5 - Sound recording in Oliver's room

Toothbrushes - Installation in the bathroom

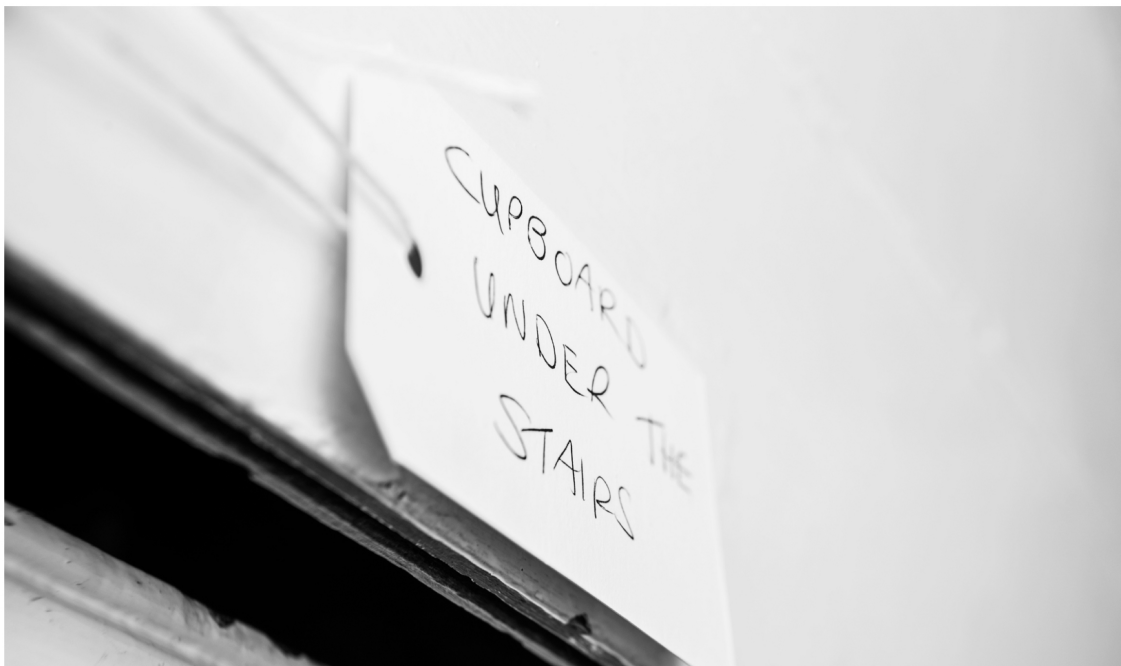
TRACE

When we moved in I was pregnant, full of life. The house was full of the last tenants possessions I had to clear their life away. As I bagged up their bric-a-brack, I found a packet of photographs. I began to look through them but this felt intrusive, the intimate memories of another person. To reconcile this act I decided to burn them. Weeks later I would see the images, as I was moving our family into the new house and slowly claiming the space as our own. I decided to draw the images, as away of appropriating them. This process fuelled my interest in photography and memory, and instigated my first sited project within the home.



TRACE PERFORMANCE

Installed film and photographic imagery. Moments from the installation.



Isabel's Feet Screen shot of Isabel's Feet as seen from video installation projected onto her cot.



Stairs Film document of live solo piece.



Photographic Series Images situated throughout the house



Wall Paper

During the live event, I asked our guests to strip the wall paper in the front room.



The guests are invited to walk through the house watching installations in different rooms.



Snapshots of guests at the event.



Chapter 2

Maternal Practice⁸

This chapter is divided into three main areas of enquiry, beginning with an overview of current practices and discourses in the rapidly emerging field of maternal art and performance, followed by the mother working on her own art making practices and finally the mother working with her children. The introductory section draws upon the multiple forms, approaches and ideological positions of mothers making art. As there has been a recent proliferation of maternal arts practice (Simic & Underwood -Lee, 2017), this field review does not claim to map an overall area, but offers, instead, precise examples of work which resonate with my own art making practices. Secondly, I turn to my own position as the mother-artist in *Mother Working on her Own*, critiquing the dynamics of transition from woman to motherhood through contemporary maternal studies' scholarship to determine a body of thought which frames my own art making. I then draw upon and discursively record elements of my own performance making, whilst highlighting the complexities and challenges I face. In particular, I expose intimacies and (re)consider core principles of the mother-artist role through critiquing *Bed Bound* (2014): a short solo dance film. From the *Mother Working on her Own* I shift the focus to the *Mother Working with her Children*, wherein I highlight the particular ways I work with my children in artistic practices. I draw upon two examples of performance and documentation – firstly *Oliver's World*, a photographic collaboration between mother and son, which expresses the child's role within this performance practice. This is followed by *Isabel's Shoes*, which highlights the ways a mother and child interact and forms of maternal documentation are created. Importantly these two works elaborate upon adult and child relations and demonstrate different contexts under which art making can happen. I introduce and consider the relevance of Baraitser's (2009) notion of 'interruption', where she emphasizes the act of interruption as a way of altering the direction and energy of a given situation between mother and child. This enables me to recognize moments of interruption as both a creative opportunity and a challenge to the art making process

⁸ In relation to the title of this chapter, I want to disassociate the term maternal from a particular strand of maternal scholarship from the 1980s. The term 'maternal' was used then to re-valorise 'female creativity' in opposition to male thought, or the female body and its inchoate rhythms, fluids and pulses. Its disruptive temporalities were celebrated against the dominance of a universal masculine rationality (O'Reilly 2010).

During this chapter I articulate the importance of the *Mother Ethics* strand through practice and the reasoning of certain issues that arise. I define the maternal art I am engaged with as a projection of care and labour. I primarily draw upon the written works of Ruddick (1989) and Baraitser (2009) (as introduced in pages 11 and 13) to develop and apply my ethical approaches and maternal thinking when exploring work with children.

Ruddick argues:

I was- and still am-interested in maternal thinking because of what maternal concepts might introduce into political and philosophic discussions. But maternal concepts can be reflective of mothers, and a help to them, only if they are anchored in thinking about children.

(Ruddick, 1994: 30)

Ruddick notes the possibility of the wider impacts of maternal thinking across the fields of politics and philosophy. In my own work, I consider maternal thinking a core feature of the ways I interact and approach art making practices with my children (see *Mother Working with her Children* page 64).

More broadly I suggest that the performance practice and artistic processes of the mother-artist are not 'distinct for the work of the artist, but are on the contrary enabling life and art' (Tyler and Baraitser, 2013 :3). In other words, the mother-artist role reaches beyond practical considerations such as: How do I feel about mothering and art making? How do I, as a mother, attempt to strike a balance between my own personally driven needs and desires within motherhood? How can I deliver upon the needs of my children as they change, grow and develop, whilst I too mature and change? The ideological dimension of these questions illuminate tensions and borders between mothering and creating art which are fundamental to this project.

Mothers in Art Practice – Current Practices and Discourses

The beginnings of the maternal art movement are linked to second wave feminism. The feminist art movement in the 1960s and 1970s gave rise to the ways women articulated and represented their voices as women, exploring the realm of the domestic and the debasement of women's work (Liss, 2009). Some of the key figures associated with this movement are Faith Wilding and the group of artists known as *Womanhouse* (1972), Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1969) (see *Sited, Domestic and Private Art Practices* page 113). The

themes and interests of their work were the history of gender difference and speaking to the cultural and conceptual links between femininity and the domestic, while articulating their experiences through installations and embodied approaches (Perry, 2013). This work, however, did not explore the themes and bodies of motherhood, nor did it directly tackle the lack of respect they as mother-artists experienced at that time (Liss, 2009). Curator and artist Lucy Lippard described the maternal body as a cultural taboo within feminist art practice (1976). However, these early work mark a crucial moment in feminist thinking that broke the silence imposed on the maternal as a subject within art, and comments upon the experience of the life of the mother-artist (Liss, 2009). Feminist artists explored ways to negotiate and refute polarized thinking that forbade the coexistence of feminism and motherhood and art (Liss, 2009).

In recent years, there has been a growth in the visibility and scholarly work in the area of mother-art practice. A leading researcher in this field is artist/academic Elena Marchevska, who set out to map maternal performance in her editorial *Performing Everyday Maternal Practice* (2016) in response to her conference *Motherhood and Creative Practice* 2015. In this document, she sets out to map maternal performance, seeking to create links between mother-artists by defining their approaches, identities and ideological standpoint towards their art making practice. This is in response to the lack of published, archived literature within this area. In particular, Marchevska (2016) records the works of maternal artists to address the spheres of maternal invisibility, and to highlight how current maternal practices are sharing personal experiences in a public space. Similarly, Lena Simic (see below) and Emily Underwood-Lee have also been instrumental in raising awareness of performance and live-arts practices in maternal studies with their recent edition *On the Maternal* (2016) for *Performance Research Journal*. These contributions highlight the recent turn to performance and art making practices within the maternal sphere.

In my own work, I have sought to make motherhood visible without embarrassment and without the anxiety of sharing personal and family experiences through a considered and ethical artistic practice; this is evidenced in *Bed Bound* (2014), discussed below. I approach this field review with an agenda; I am not attempting to map maternal performance in the same way as the scholars mentioned above, but reveal, through the positioning of my own original arts practice in relation to their established practices, that there are areas of

intellectual enquiry within the maternal sphere that warrant exposure. I discuss the work of maternal artists in second wave feminism, such as Mary Kelly (1973-1979), *The Mother's Art Project* (Krall, Siegel, Silagai: 1974), and more recent artists namely *Residency in Motherhood* - Lenka Clayton (2012), Lena Simic (2004-present) and Grace Surman (2014-2016). This field review articulates and gives voice to maternal art and performance, and locates my own research concerns and motivations. However, the maternal scholars who are referenced in this section, such as Ruddick (1989), O'Reilly (2007) and Rich (1986), wrote about their maternal experiences when their children had grown up. Their work reflects upon that time, rather than negotiating its visceral immediacy. Whereas scholar Baraitser (2009) and the contemporary artists mentioned in this literature review construct discourse and art in response to their immediacy of being/living with (young) children. This, like my own work, embraces and reacts to my own maternal position, which I see as a mother-artist who cares for two small children.

I begin by surveying the thematic and strategic work of artist scholar Lena Simic, artist Lenka Clayton and live artist Grace Surman; their work seeks to combine the acts of mothering and artmaking, thus exposing the complexities of the maternal. Simic and Clayton address the mother-artist role within the home space, which opens the opportunity to examine the usually separated roles of parenting, motherhood and performance. Simic's body of performance combines two main focuses, an activist live art practice located within the home - *The Institute for The Art and Practice of Dissent at Home* (2008-present), with her children and husband Gary Anderson (see *Family Art Making Practices* page 82), and her solo performance practice, where her intention is to reveal the complexities of the maternal position, and she performs in various performance contexts which expose the maternal to a critical space (Tyler, 2013). Simic's autobiographical approaches to art making acknowledge her lived experience and aims to de-authorize the public/private boundaries, through what she calls a feminist critical arts practice of everyday life (Simic, 2008).

Recently, Simic and Underwood-Lee, have explored the ways in which maternal ethics and care can become ideas or performance in their collaborative work *Manifesto for Maternal Performance (Art)* (Simic & Underwood-Lee, 2017). This co-authored manifesto embraces the smaller acts of life and strives to nurture an understanding of maternal daily practice (Simic & Underwood-Lee, 2017). Written through as a series of diary entries whilst

corresponding with each other, the authors chart their maternal time, drawing parallels to 'dead time, wasted time and interruption' of maternal reality (Simic & UnderWood-Lee, 2017). These ideas resonate with my own anecdotal practices found throughout this thesis, where I not only pull on my own examples of daily life, but feature the experiences of my children to interrogate the wider frame of family life.

In a similar way, Lenka Clayton aims to combine the theme of mothering as integral to her art making context by bringing together her parenting, her home life, and life as artist. One element of her work is to challenge the perception of art residencies and institutions, which are inhospitable to parents. For as she states they are

set firmly inside the traditionally "inhospitable" environment of a family home, it subverts the art-world's romanticism of the unattached (often Male) artist, and frames motherhood as a valuable site, rather than an invisible labour, for exploration and artistic production.

(Clayton, website 2012)

Clayton developed ways to continue her art making in the home after the birth of her children. She later developed this into a conceptualized practice called *Artist in Residency in Motherhood (ARIM)* (2012-present). Through *ARIM* she invites mother-artists to turn their homes into a place of artist residence, offering a designed structure to inspire mother-artists to start their own performance practice within the home space. Both practices involve and discover ways to combine mothering, the home and art making. Similarly, I identify throughout this thesis how this environment – the mother-artist working in the home - leads to a particular practice. More precisely, in my work I consider how this cultivates a way of working which reveals certain ethical considerations of the mother-artist role and certain insights between the mother and child. This is explored later in the section *Mother Working with her Children* page 64. I pay particular attention to, for example, how I face the challenges of responding to the needs of the child whilst simultaneously developing creative work, and the implications of working with children in a performance environment, which inaugurates a layer of unpredictability where the rehearsed and spontaneous can collide (see *Interruption - In the Presence of Children* page 68). Surman explores similar concerns as she combines the life of an artist and mother in *Performance with Grace* (2016-

18). She takes her young daughter into the performance space and examines the relationship between parent and child in all stages of life.

My own practice *Mother as Curator* echoes some of the characteristics of Simic, Clayton and Surman's work, while at the same time it investigates and conceptualizes curatorial practices, which I consider as an extended projection of care through the preparation and sharing of materials in performance. This is developed as an act of curating a sited practice within the home (see *Home (as Site)* page 117). The strategic and aesthetic qualities found in Mary Kelly's (1973-1979) text and object installation *Post Partum Document* and Simic's series of work in *Maternal Matters* (2009) also reflect some of my explorations into curatorial practices. Kelly's work is an exemplar of the ways mothers have documented and curated intimate materials and displayed the mother's labour. Kelly's themes in this work exhibit the intersubjective relationship between mother and child, which establishes the mother as anything but passive (Liss, 2009).⁹ However, it is the ways in which Kelly shared the work in developmental stages over the course of six years which displays the time and energy invested in the creation of the work, highlighting the continuous care and attention of the mother that resonate with my own practice. Kelly states that the heart of her work concerns her lived experience as a mother and her analysis of that experience (Iverson 1997). Kelly's curatorial practice has inspired some of my own explorations, especially the ways in which the viewer can see 'the reciprocal relationship of the child's development through the loving eyes of the mother' (Iverson, 1997: 41). This is evident in my work *Bed Bound* (2014), and in the sections *Mother Working with her Children* and in *Documenting as Mother* (see digital documentation).

Developing ethical principles which guide and activate both theoretical and practical elements has been an important process in this PaR project. Art as a projection of care has been an aim, especially when working with children. Simic's work helps cast a particular light on this issue and aided me to articulate and implement a way of researching which recognized the need for the formulation of a series robust ethical principles. In April 2017, I

⁹Kelly's work refers to Julia Kristeva's (1977) extensive exploration of the child's mediated relationship to the mother as a separate or separated subject: '[a] mother is a continual separation, a division of the very flesh. And consequently, a division of language-and it has always been so' (1977: 178). I am researching this discourse in my own work, but it is an important theme in *Post-Partum Document* (1973-1979).

attended an event at *The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home - Motherhood and Live Art - Are we screwing the kids up?*, hosted by Lena Simic, co-director of *The Institute*, and live artist Miffy Ryan. The central focus was on maternal ethics in relation to art making: 'the notion of being overspent, tired of some real or imagined ethical standards, the guilt, all in relation to performance making processes with children' (Ryan, 2017). This event consisted of a group of mother-artists sharing their experiences of ethical approaches and, in some cases, the dilemmas of working with their own children. The term 'active consent' was established by the group as a term which begins to describe and question what constitutes an ethical process. Similar examples and experiences are evidenced in my practice *Mother Working with her Children* page 64.

This particular group of artists and their range of practices resonate and compare to the principles of my own work. Simic, Clayton and Surman share the ways in which 'the mother' seeks to combine her daily life with being at once mother and artist. This thesis further draws upon the spectrum of such approaches, and not only develops this ideology but allows such approaches to inform my own understanding and analysis of my own mother-artist practice. This stance is similarly supported by the work of Kelly (1973-79), whose art making practices extend and speak of the labouring mother, revealed through a detailed and lengthy curatorial practice, sharing deeply intimate materials of her son's early life. This field review emphasizes the connections and characteristics with my own maternal strategies and processes. In the next section I move onto the *Mother Working on her Own*, where I share an example of my own performance making *Bed Bound* (2014). I offer this description as an example of a complete cycle of making and sharing work, conducted within the ethical principles for practice that this research project has established.

Diary Excerpt – 19th December 2012

Naomi Klein says in Misconceptions 'that new mothers are not born but through a great effort made. Bonding fiercely with your baby may be natural, but good day-to-day mothering, as few seem publicly to acknowledge, is no more 'natural' than is any painstaking, exhaustive, difficult work that is both biologically driven and deeply willed' (2003: 5). I feel like I am in mourning for an old self. It feels more acute this time during the second birth with Isabel... I have found it hard to lose a part of myself-again, a part of myself to motherhood, when I feel like there is no patience or acknowledgement for the labour of mothering. The opening of one world, and the closing of

another. I am fascinated with my child, and yet I resent giving over the absolute self, my body, my time and my mind in-between constant anguish and love.

Mother Working on her Own

In this next section I draw upon practices of making art as the maternal subject and articulate my approach, which foregrounds my daily life and perception of mothering as the creative source. I discursively record my work as an artist, whilst referring to ethics, memories and, more precisely, conveying maternal experience. I focus here on *Bed Bound* (2014) for it reveals artistic processes that combine anecdotal writing (which are a critical and reflective form) and movement practices. More precisely, I suggest that the project *Bed Bound* succeeds in exposing the darker side of the maternal experience. I am not critiquing the choreographic form of the movement, rather the thematic and the context of the solo study.

Bed Bound (2014) is a short dance film, which explores the transition of woman to mother. It was originally presented in an informal viewing in the home and now, as a piece of archival performance, it continues to speak to the ways in which such a practice destabilizes notions of the public/private binaries (see *Ethics in Home Performance*, page 128). This work also offers me a position from which I evaluate the mother-artist dyad. Being a mother-artist is a core part of the concept of *Mother as Curator* (see page 12). *Mother as Curator* is one practice which encompasses different positions and poses particular questions to the ways I situate myself as artist. This positionality alters depending on the context and interchanges between mother and child.

Maternal Experience

Much feminist critique has been preoccupied with the positionality of the mother and the maternal body. This particular critique was dominated by important contributions from scholars such as Julia Kristeva (1986) and Luce Irigaray (1985), who state that the abject mother is a figure in which meaning breaks down, and who is dependent on our subjectivity and humanity (Simic & Underwood-Lee, 2017). Maternal subjectivity is then concerned with metaphors of excess and otherness that have also been used in discussing femininity and

masculinity. In this strand of thought, the feminine is identified as the lost subject, and the maternal as the messy interdependent left-over. The moment of transformation from woman to mother creates a new self, while, at the same time mourning the old self (Baraitser, 2006). The mother is then 'reduced to being the other of meaning, of individuation and thus remains of body' (Pollock, 2010: 11). Through a critical reflection on my practices, I arrive at conclusions about my own maternal experience and positionality, by recognizing the tension as articulated by Pollock from woman to mother.

In contrast to these positions, the theorists I engage with through this study, such as Ruddick (1989) and Baraitser (2009) describe their own maternal experiences, locating the mother in different ways but with the similar position of articulating the mother's maternal subjectivity as the norm (Baraitser, 2009). They describe maternal experience as a set of complex and changing relations which give rise to the ethical implications of being in the presence of the child (Baraitser, 2009). (The complexities of such changing relations will be explored in what follows in my analysis of my practice *Bed Bound*). In a related fashion, Ruddick defines mothering as a form of work which leads to a mode of cognition. Her notion of 'attentive love' (1989: 119) resonates with my own practice, and is referred to in the section *Mother Working with her Children* page 64. Ruddick conceptualises this as a way to understand the amalgamation of reason and emotion in motherhood, which articulates the ethical and dynamic experiences between mother and child. She asserts 'maternal thinking is a discipline of attentive love' (Ruddick, 1989: 123).

Arguing for maternal subjectivity, which can be taken as a normal state of being, Baraitser (2009) expresses the difficulties during the day to day involvement of mothering and maintenance of daily life, which is also evident in my practice *Bed Bound*. She is not examining the metaphorical relations within the mother-child dyad purely for analytical purposes, but as a relationship in and of itself (2006). In her work, she draws upon the earlier writing of Emmanuel Levinas (1989) who positions the maternal subject as one who does not exist prior to the Other, and one who is called into being through ethical responsibility.

Baraitser suggests

it is almost impossible to think of the maternal subject without reference to a dependent yet constantly changing other, and yet there is no maternal subject without understanding how this new and transitory subjectivity comes to rise.

(2009: 19)

In response to Baraitser, I articulate my own experiences of being in the presence of the other, through the *Mother as Curator* role in my own solo explorations and the works I develop with my children. Baraitser's notion of interruption contributes to understandings about positionality and is addressed in several ways throughout this thesis (see Introduction). Baraitser expresses interruption as an experience which itself constitutes maternal subjectivity, from the

cry to the babble, to the tantrum and finally the stammering child who presented the mother with a kind of model for her own experience of interruption, in which the child attempts to establish itself over and over (I I I I) in the mind of the other.

(Baraitser, 2009: 157)

Equally, my own solo work, and especially *Bed Bound* (2014), explores the tropes of maternal experience through a mother-artist practice. More precisely, I investigate how maternal experiences and ethical relations with a child are explored as creative tensions and starting points for performance practice. This is evidenced in *Mother Working with her Children*.

Diary Excerpt – 12th September 2012

I am not sure where the time has gone

I don't sleep much; I always have my beautiful baby with me in bed, nursing, she sleeps. I surface read to keep me in touch with the outside world.

I read the pro-woman, pro-life sisterhood campaign, the New Feminism is telling American Women they are capable and strong, and if keeping an unintended pregnancy is not possible, adoption is a beautiful option, and you can still follow your dreams. This is floating around my head as I think of Sarah Palin, the pro-life campaigner who dragged her children around with her on political campaigns.

My thoughts are interrupted, pulled back to the present, by the stirring child.

My head swims, I hold you, and I turn off the computer.

*Still I don't feel rested, my thoughts are not clear.
I hope I am doing ok, in the micro moments of this new life I find complete
solace
and clarity. Those moments are fleeting, but the whole picture looks different.
It's blurred, the boundaries are blurred.
This feels isolating,
isolated.*

*I live in the bedroom; I live in-between time. The now is difficult to define. I
have
arrived at a new place, but I can't find a name for it. Maybe I could feel better if
I could name it. Like the naming ceremony of a child. This place is consumed
with cooking, feeding, holding, dressing, cleaning, cooking, dressing, holding,
cleaning, dressing, holding, dressing, feeding.*

*The ground, the bed, the surfaces of life feel like sand, they move.
I am bed bound*

The Development of Bed Bound (2014)

My work on *Bed Bound* started in June 2014 and culminated in an informal performance in July the same year. *Bed Bound* was concerned with exploring what might be considered the darker side of the maternal experience, and breaking down essentialist perceptions of motherhood.

The artistic process was primarily developed from an embodied response to the anecdotal writing passages after Isabel's birth. I chose to develop a movement and visual language which explored the emotions of that time as voicing the darker or unspoken, for as Imogen Tyler says, 'lived maternal experience remains, in a fundamental sense, unspeakable' (Tyler in Baraitser, 2013: 24).



Untitled screen shots from *Bed Bound* (2014)

Diary Excerpt – September 13th 2012

*Is this the extent of me? Where do I end and where does she begin? I hover,
hang in time, paralyzed, I can't move she is asleep. She sleeps on my chest, I*

can feel her heart fluttering, she is so full of life, 'Life piled on life'. I if move she will wake. If she wakes I cannot move.

Working on my bed – the place where I had written the passages and spent time with children, the place that I had felt chained to, I read my anecdotal writing from that time, and isolate some short passages of text from which I begin to move. Text such as *'The ground, the bed, the surfaces of life feel like sand they move'* (2012), gives rise to improvised sequences as I visualise different textures of the bed. I spend a long-time lying, moving, re-charting memories from that time. I focus on the borders of the bed as the edges of subjectivity. This spatial relationship conjures feelings of confinement and isolation which interest me as a dance maker. I couple together the notion of time and isolation, repetition and interruption, and I develop a physical score of falling, sitting and lying, which become the main motifs of the work.

Whilst structuring the movement material I felt tension about performing the work live. I was not sure I could commit to the personal investment of re-engaging with the emotional content of the piece through a live event. The difficulties of such 'investments' are heightened as the making of the work was structured around the daily life of the labouring mother performing her duties: caring for children, domestic chores, teaching and preparing family meals. This sense of duality can be helpfully understood by Baraitser's notions of time, more precisely the hidden time that we experience in the day to day, as 'the disavowed durational activities behind every person [...] behind the maintenance of everyday life' (2006: 21). By maintenance, she means the durational practices which are forms of labour that maintain the material conditions of ourselves and others (Baraitser, 2006: 21).

In the light of such labours and tensions, I decide to create a film from the movement explorations. This is a personal, practical and ethical consideration, emerging from reflections upon my own best interests. I collaborate with filmmaker Rachel Arnold; we capture and edit the material. In the editing process, I overlay the falling and labouring body. The duplicate bodies are intended to hold the viewer in the grip of time and visually explore the 'aggregate of subject positions, or 'representations', experienced by a woman who is a mother' (Juhasz, 2003: 395). The quality of the film is pixelated and distorted to create the feeling of anxiety and messiness. Andy composed a sound track combining my

voice reciting my diary excerpts mixed with a rigid, polyrhythmic soundtrack creating unease and tension.



Screen Shot *Bed Bound* (2014)

The ethical implications of this work are approached in certain ways. Upon watching the finished work, I decided it is inappropriate for my children to see, and for them to be included in the event of sharing the work. This work was made primarily for me as mother-artist, and was ultimately not to be shared with my children. In this decision not only was I acting upon my instincts as a mother, but responding to an invariant aim of Ruddick's tripartite approach (see Introduction page 7) to maternal practice, where nurturing the child's emotional and intellectual growth is a constitutive maternal act (Ruddick, 1989). I asked: what would my children gain from watching such a piece of work, learning about this stage in my life? As Ruddick explains 'children have complicated lives, that their minds and psyches need attending' (1989: 19). However, Ruddick notes that it is difficult to judge what all mothers really believe are the acceptable conditions of emotional and intellectual growth (1989: 20). This piece was undoubtedly made from my own yearning to explore the thematics of the unspoken or darker side of my maternal experience, implicitly observing my own interior landscape and the relations between mother and child. I was absolute in my determination that my children would not understand the nuances of this work and did not want to share this transitory experience with my children.

The desire to make this work was driven by my need to work through my private and intimate experiences, and more specifically occurrences that could be shared with mothers who may have common stories. As Andrea O' Reilly comments

I believe increasingly that only the willingness to share private and sometimes painful experience can enable a woman to create a collective description of the world which will be truly yours.

(O'Reilly, 2007:7)

Three mother-artist friends were invited to watch the film. They saw it one at a time, from the bed whilst the film was projected onto the ceiling. The situated-ness of the work aims to draw the audience into the heart of the piece, and the origins of the work. Inviting the audience to sit upon the bed brings the work into a critical space where I challenge the notion that the mother's experience should not be confined to a private world. This discussion is developed in Chapter 4. *Bed Bound* troubles the more clandestine aspects of the maternal experience and labouring mother. It is part of a body of work where the maternal experience is made visible and is carefully performed and staged to expose certain structures and expectations (see Chapter 4). What follows in the next section investigates the work of the mother-artist working with her children; the focus changes and highlights relationships between mother and child, and the work we develop together becoming 'our' work.

Mother Working with her Children

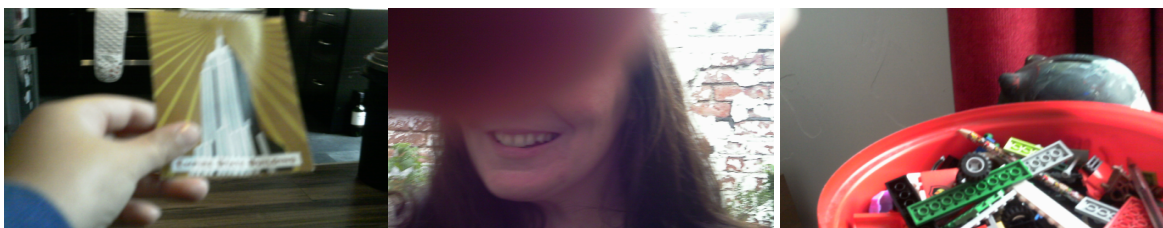
Shifting the focus of attention from me making work about my experiences of being a mother to consider the mother making art with her children, I present some examples of work we have made together - *Oliver's World* (2014) and *Isabel's Shoes* (2015). This work, created by 'us', is part of the documentation strand – collectively called *Children's Practice*. I talk through this practice and relate to Ruddick's (1989) notion of attentive love (see *A Collaboration with Children*, page 65) and Baraitser's (2009) notion of interruption, which here is described as an experience during performance. During the discussion of these works I debate the salient themes of asymmetrical power and the nature of consent and autonomy. The practice of employing 'active consent' (Ryan, 2017) is actively sought in each new situation (Ryan, 2017), seeking to develop a quality of fluidity dependent upon each specific dynamic and the focus of each work.

I position the child as artist as this practice was born out of developing art whilst looking after children in the home. Fundamentally, this section addresses issues that arise from developing art¹⁰ with and in the presence of children, which in turn reveals relationships between mother and child, identifying the wider ethical implications of this thesis.

¹⁰ I position my children as artist throughout this practice. Ethically I position the child in this way as I want them to be considered as co-participants, where they have the chance to exercise their own ideas. My children may not be seen in the live event, but they are present and artists in the moments of performance within the home.

A Collaboration with Children

The work I investigate with my children has been an ongoing process. Primarily making art with children is an extension of my caring labour as a mother-artist. This is explicitly linked to the curatorial practice of the *Mother as Curator* role, where, as part of that continuum I approach art making with a certain sensibility. *Oliver's World* (2104) and *Isabel's Shoes* (2015) are explorations that reveal creative processes with children and subtleties in the mother and child relationship. *Oliver's World* is a mother and son photographic collaboration. The origins of this came from Oliver's decision to not have his photograph taken. I had to tussle with my desire to document the family and fulfil Oliver's wishes for privacy. I stopped documenting the family. Sometime later I approached Oliver with a proposition; I would buy him a camera and he would document for him/me. He gave his consent and embraced the idea, photographing his world, his sister, his toys, his parents, some trips out of the house. As this process continued we developed a method together – Oliver would photograph, we – mother and son – would view the images on a computer screen, Oliver would describe the pictures, and select the images to put into a curated book. This process was not without its complications; Oliver enjoyed the photographing but not always the archiving of them. He would come and go out of this process, therefore there are lots of images that will never be seen, and are still stored away on a computer. This project located Oliver as artist and his work as a visual contribution to the research.



Oliver's World 2014.

The context of *Oliver's World* can be helpfully understood by Ruddick's notion of attentive love (1989). Ruddick defines this as an act of maternal thinking, which is conceptualised as a form of responsive care. She articulates that the mother's role is to love a child without seizing him, seeing a child with a patient eye. Attentive love itself is a discipline, but does not optimize maternal work (1989). Mothers can train themselves in the task of maternal

attention, which is prompted by the responsibility to act and, when successful, gives way to the action it informs (Ruddick, 1989). Such loving attention can describe the separation of mother and child from the mother's point of view (Ruddick, 1989). This kept my attention fixed on the wider situation of how Oliver did not want his photograph taken and, more generally, on the ethical implications of documentation and the position of the children within the research. By turning this into a collaborative project, Oliver and I had the opportunity to develop a practice which located him as artist within the research. Attentive love is a hard, uncertain, exhaustive and exhilarating work of conscience (Ruddick, 1989).

Isabel's Shoes (2015) presents a different encounter between mother and child. In this piece I set the task for Isabel to line up her shoes in size order, which reveals an unfolding and playful space between the mother and daughter. This short piece opens a space where mother situates the child in a task and lets the dynamic of the relationship develop between us. Isabel has the freedom to come and go out of the activity. The focus of this activity frames the work as a piece we do together, making this our work. In the context of this thesis it exposes a certain form of documentation performed by the mother of the child, wherein the focus is from the mother's perspective, locating the mother and child in the action, while demonstrating an act of caring labour.

There are certain tendencies found in the documentation between the mother and child; this is seen in the approaches of Kelly (1973-1979), Simic (2009) and Clayton (2012). Kelly (1974) and Clayton (2012) have demonstrated similar ways of developing documentation and installation projects which house artifacts related to their children. For example, Clayton collects objects she has taken out of her son's mouth and presents them in a glass case in a gallery context. In this piece, there is evidence of the son; he is located in the engagement of the work, but we do not see him. Simic's *Contemplation Time* (2008) similarly presents the mother's perspective, but she locates both mother and child in the work by visually documenting their time together. We see the son, the location, and we hear and read the mother's thoughts.



Untitled Screen shots from *Isabel's Shoes* (2015)

Set against a backdrop of these forms of documentation and installation processes, *Isabel's Shoes* displays a playful encounter. More precisely, I experience *Isabel's Shoes* as a durational work, indirectly documenting our life together shown through her life in shoes. This is a gentle film, which shows the particular approaches to documentation processes which I consider as art, and highlights the interaction between mother and daughter. Isabel happily embraces the activity, playing with her shoes, trying them on, seeing her growth and begins to slip into and out of spontaneous moments of play.

When working with my children the approaches and ideological position I have taken to document the interactions between mother and child can be helpfully situated by the ways Ruddick defines the child as open structure, whose acts can be unpredictable and mysterious (1989). In my own experience of combining everyday life and art making practices, the mother's relation to maternal practice is something that can fall short of her demands (Ruddick, 1989). Therefore, I have developed a considered approach to working with my children, which exists within a responsive framework. This documentation records and invokes an open and safe space where the status of the task and the art making does not outweigh the interaction between the mother and child. In daily life the demands of the child can be contradictory, and challenging; therefore, through this process I have attempted to find ways to develop creative expression and stimulation with my child alongside my parental obligations. Ruddick states the judgements we make, the metaphysical attitude a mother adopts, assigns maternal labour as a discipline, where specific social and relational practices give rise to an ethical maternal thinking (1989).

In the Presence of Children – Interruption

Diary Excerpt – August 13th 2014

The children are playing and occupied in their imaginary world.

*I lie back on the sofa and choose to write in my diary,
Oliver sees my total absorption in own activity, this is an invitation for him to
bring his pen and join in with my writing. He begins to scribble all over my
book.*

I am no longer a writing subject I am an object that plays and writes.

Whilst working in the home space, I am often in the presence of my children. A consequence of being in the presence of children is the reoccurring theme of interruption, which can interrupt my daily thoughts and actions. Interruption, as conceptualized by Baraitser is the given maternal experience; she questions whether this fundamentally changes the mother's experience of being (2009). On the one hand, Baraitser explains that interruption makes it impossible to exist in the realm of reflective thought or one's own reflective maternal space of experience. On the other hand, this opens an opportunity so that something *new* can be created. During the making of *Trace* (2013), I experienced the interruption of two very small children whilst I tried to work on an installation in the home. This form of interruption determined certain characteristics in the practice, which I discuss further in Chapter 4 (see *Sited Sensibilities* page 120).

The encounter I am concerned with here led me to an alternative, contemplative space – a place of differentiated attention, a place between separation and immersion at the same time, or perhaps, a new way of being with my son. In *31 Days Old* (2016), I created a solo performance in the bedroom. During the live event, I performed this solo twice, and invited people to watch from the bed. The performance of the solo demands a particular attention as I move across the furniture to get from one side of the room to another. During the solo performance, Oliver enters the room and sits on the bed to watch; he has seen this piece in rehearsal. He extends his hand to me as I am moving, and I see he is holding a DVD: 'Mummy can you put this on please?'. I take the DVD, and pass it back to him, and continue until the end of the performance, and then I take the DVD and put it in the player, responding to his interruption.



Untitled screen shot *31 Days Old* (2016). January 2016. Oliver passes the DVD during the performance.

I look down at Oliver in that moment, and see him looking at me, needing my attention. He had created the opportunity and found another way of our being together. In that moment, I experienced the conflation of being the mother and performing subject. Baraitser explains: 'She who is subjected to relentless interruption, and she whom interruption enunciates; a subject, that is, who emerges from the experience of interruption itself' (2006: 66). This experience of, and emerging from, interruption presents a temporality to motherhood, which is elongated, so that reflexive thought must be abandoned, presenting a more immediate form of thinking – not a thinking from or towards elsewhere (Baraitser, 2006). I held the DVD – my intention was to reassure him – and returned to the dance. Underwood-Lee explains that in performance where the mother is foregrounded, the construction of a maternal identity is happening before our very eyes (2016). In this instance, both Oliver and I negotiate our identity in relation to each other in real time. As Tyler (2008) describes that motherhood, is not a property, but a series of relations between subjects (2008). There is a triangular relation established between mother/performer, son and action. It is in the moment of performance, when the mother is joyfully/innocently disrupted, even usurped, by the immediate need of the child in his moment of livedness/being, that Tyler's idea of the mother's positionality and multiple forms of being is played out.

Diary Excerpt – 18th December 2012

I found myself day dreaming of work today. I pictured what people were doing – drinking coffee, grabbing conversation before they head off to teach. I day dream about moving, moving freely through the space, moving to music, rolling on the floor, pausing, breathing, (re)connecting with my body. I long for a dancer's touch, the weight of the hand, guiding me through space. I come back into the room, I put music on and pick up Oliver, I swirl him around he laughs and giggles. Follow mummy, I roll on the floor and stretch out, he jumps on me, his weight, his touch. We roll together.

Summary

This chapter has explored the growing field of maternal studies and has focused on key artists, such as Kelly, Clayton, Simic and Surman, and how my practice has been informed by, and contributes to, this area of study. I have located my work alongside the work of established artists, and explored new and emerging concerns within the field. My work is particularly relevant to forwarding the debate about the mother-artist dyad, the making of art from within the family home and the ethical challenges that present, both for the mother and the discipline as a whole.

Maternal ethics, in relation to the works of Ryan and Surman, are explored through approaches to performance making with children. This is where artistic choices balance with ethical reasoning, and new boundaries and questions are set to identify the shifting relations between the adult and child. This chapter is concerned with the ways, as a mother-artist, I move across the spectrum of the *Mother as a Curator* role, firstly the processes engaged in my solo performance making and secondly with my children. I turn to the *Mother Working on her Own* and more precisely the phases of making and performance of *Bed Bound*. This chapter theorizes the maternal from the point of transition to the mother. As Tyler and Baraitser state, without adequately theorising the maternal, the maternal becomes a structuring dimension in human subjectivity, culture and society. By not appropriately addressing the maternal, she becomes recognized as just a complex and diverse set of socially produced experiences (2013).

In *Mother Working with her Children*, (page 64) I differentiated between the process of the mother making her own work, and working with her children. In my experience as a professional artist making performance in many contexts, making work with children is different to any other artistic collaboration. This is due to the complex relations between the mother and child, the unseen power relations and the status of the performance work within daily life. I suggest that these practices are responsive ways of working from the maternal position that incorporate ethical considerations. This thus exposes the challenges and insights of the ethical relations that exist not only between mother and child, but between child and performance work. The documentation of these explorations has been shown to guests, but more they are explored as reflexive accounts where I can identify

pertinent issues playfully; for example, Oliver's concern about documentation in the home. This concern was important for Oliver, and was approached with attentive love (Ruddick, 1989). However, this presents the question of who benefits from these encounters. Through small projects, I identify with my own desire to generate work, and the need to respect my children's privacy. From the experiences of making work with or documenting both of my children, I question the power I hold relative to them as collaborators or artists.

The following chapter now turns more specifically to the mother working creatively with family. I emphasize the process and implications of exploring family narratives to generate possible performance materials. I identify how memory is ignited at specific points during creative process through the application of Kuhn's Memory Work (2002).

Visual Essay 2

Reclaiming the Ritual (2014-15)



Reclaiming the Ritual

Reclaiming the Ritual first took place during the week of 20th to 27th December 2014 at Fferam Bailey, Wales and again at 49 Allington Street, Liverpool on the 23rd September 2015.

Fferam Bailey

Three families and close friends spend Christmas together.

This is the documentation of organised rituals and the daily activities of domestic tasks and childcare, people gathering, children playing, eating and rejoicing, all of this material was the product of family spending time together at Christmas time.



Christmas Rituals at Fferam Bailey

21st December - Winter Solstice. Esther and Sarah write their wishes and desires for the upcoming new year

22nd December- Children build Christmas tree, make decorations, decorate house, make Christmas presents

23rd December - Women cook

24th December - Christmas Eve walk

25th December - Children open presents, we cook Christmas lunch

All of these events were recorded by film,
photography and writing.

Rituals

Winter Solstice writing ritual



Making and decorating the tree



We Cook



Christmas Eve walk



Cooking Christmas Dinner



Reclaiming the Ritual - Fferam Bailey (Christmas 2014)



Reclaiming the Ritual - Home Presentation 2015



Photography - Wesley Storey

Reclaiming the Ritual - Home Presentation (2015) Photography - Wesley Storey



Reclaiming the Ritual - Home Presentation (2015) Photography - Wesley Storey



Reclaiming the Ritual - Home Presentation (2015) Photography - Wesley Storey



Chapter 3

Family Art Making Practice

The preceding chapter, *Maternal Practice*, foregrounds ways I have conceptualised and attended to working on my solo practice: locating the external and inner landscapes of the mother as stimulus for performance making and writing, with the specific focus on the sensitivities needed when working closely with children in art making. This included the design and implementation of ethical approaches and levels of care as an artistic practice. This chapter broadens the critical scope, to include perspectives on mother working with family, in order to locate the ways in which I approach art making with and for family, relative to scholarship in the field.

This chapter is divided into three main areas of enquiry. Firstly, I present an overview of relevant practices and discourses that are associated with family, narrative and memory. This section surveys and draws attention to artistic approaches and performance works that share principles, characteristics and aesthetic sensibilities similar to those informing my own work with family. Second in the section *Mother Working with her Family* (page 86) I move on to locate and position my family and concept of family within cultural theory by referring to Pierre Bourdieu's (1996) discourse, which frames the ways family is collectively and socially recognised. I draw support from feminist theorist Katherine Allen's (1993) treatise that the lived experience and the voice of women is needed in family discourse to document and give meaning to women's lives. Following on, I suggest that Langellier and Peterson's (2004) approach to narrative storytelling in everyday life provides a strategic tool to approach the function of narrative within family and the ways it can be explored in creative endeavours. Additionally, I propose that memory and narrative are linked, and discuss this in relation to Halbwach's (1992) account of the ways that collective and localisation of memory operates with group structures such as family. I present my practice *31 Days Old* (2016) and offer an in-depth overview of the ways I collected personal and individual memories which could present opportunities for art making with, and for, family performance. I turn to the ethical implications of working with intimate family memories and the sensitive approaches taken to developing solo work with family.

In the third and final section *Polyvocal Family Practice* (page 97) I then introduce and conceptualise the term 'polyvocal' as a central notion, accommodating and honouring the

written and aural voices that run through this practice. I offer a detailed discussion of *Reclaiming the Ritual* (2014-15). My analysis reveals the creative dynamics of polyvocal and co-authored narratives over the course of a family Christmas.

Family Art Making Practices – Current Practices and Discourses

The focus of this review highlights artists who turn to the family as a source for art making, which is in contrast to the emphasis of the preceding Chapter, *Maternal Practice*, where I was concerned with the position of the maternal. I now move onto artists who have certain tendencies and approaches in thematic qualities of family, working directly with family, and families who make art together. This field review presents a range of methods, aesthetic choices and ideological standpoints which cohere with, as well as differ from, my own art making with family.

I begin by considering the work of two established family (artist) groups: Townley and Bradby – *Artists as Parents as Artists* (2007 – ongoing) and *The Institute for Art and Practice of Dissent at Home* (2008 - ongoing), who strive to combine their art practice and their family lives. Both families work in a live art context and perform as a family group. The outcome and form of their art share similarities: importantly, both families highlight both personal and political issues of family, and broader social concerns that could otherwise be relegated to the private sphere.

Townley and Bradby focus on the ways their children's play can point the home environment toward artistic enquiry. Their starting points are the simple actions of drawing, misunderstandings and arguing; much of their work is un-shown or un-showable as it stems from everyday conflicts within their family life. The work which is made visible presents the family exploring their relationships, with a sense of playfulness and the multi-vocal textures of their family life. They achieve this through a range of activities, such as presenting questions to each other which could not be answered during performance, and domestic chores, such as the children making beds, which serve as springboards into performance making.

The Institute combines all elements of family life, and the children are involved in all activities, which include artist family days out, political demonstrations, academic conferences and events with *Family Activist Network (FAN)*. *FAN* consists of approximately 20 families who combine political activity and family life. Artist scholar Lena Simic (2013) (see *Mothers in Art Practice*, page 52) states that their children enjoy these events as they look forward to meeting other families who share similar lives and ideologies and spending time with their children. Primarily, the families seek to integrate daily family life and their art projects.

I share similar priorities in my own work; the family is at the heart of the work I choose to pursue. Equally, I aim to highlight the personal and political narratives and issues of family life through a performance lens. However, I do not pursue activist tactics in performance making, and I do not approach performance with the family in the same way. We – the family – do not take performance out of the home into the public sphere, and I do not perform live with my children. Rather, as a family, we create and make performance pieces and documentation which can be installed and curated within the family home.

There are a range of artists who work thematically and strategically across the fields of family and memory, and I particularly focus on Jo Spence, Pat Holland and the *Family Ties Network (FTN)*. Jo Spence established a critical mode of documentary photography, which she called political, personal and photographic autobiography (Spence 1986), where she addresses her personal identity framed within her family identity. She developed an analytical approach which was both a confessional and emotive mode of photography (Spence, 1989). In collaboration with fellow artist Pat Holland, Spence explored the family album as an artefact resonant with complex personal and shared memories, and approached photographs themselves as sites of struggle (Spence & Holland 1991). Spence's famous, final, work *Cancer Shock* (1982), presents a deeply personal narrative through a series of images. This body of work has influenced some of the methods and aesthetic qualities I have explored with my family, most precisely when processing sensitive and even traumatic materials (see *Intimacy and Ethics* page 92).

In a comparable way, Rosi Martin, an independent artist and member of the *Family Ties Network* (2012), explores photography and memory and the psychic processes that

photography can crystallise. In *Too Close to Home* (1999) Martin carried out an eight-year project documenting her elderly mother. Martin photographs the typology of her mother's home, focusing on the objects, wear and tear, and her mother framed within the home space, focusing on the materiality of the home, which might otherwise be overlooked. The film and photographic series draws upon tiny fragments of detail, piecing a narrative together over space and time. In my thesis, the study of domestic and personal photography is not a primary creative research method; however, I recognize that there is an established tendency for artists working with family to explore photography as a medium within their work. Jo Spence concurs and identifies her particular enquiry into family photography in her introduction of *Beyond the Family Album* (1979); she explains that popular and family photography is a complex site of ideological negotiations between family, domesticity, class, gender, and social life. For Spence, the family album is a presentation of particular, selected, family narratives and she notes that much of what comprises family life remains undocumented.

In my work, I use photography both as documentation strategy and creative tool. For example, connections between photography, family and memory were explored in the making of *31 Days Old* (2016). Domestic photography becomes a memory trigger in the retelling of personal and shared family histories (see *Memory Work and the Making of Stories* page 90). This approach maps onto the practices of *The Family Ties Network* (FTN), a group of female artists/academics/researchers who work independently and collectively to explore 'memory, space, place and the family in photographed image' (*Family Ties Network*, 2012). In particular, Sally Waterman develops autobiographical photographic and video works that explore memory, place and familial relationships through literary adaptation (*Family Ties Network*, 2012). Although in my own work I do not explore literary texts, rather narrative approaches, I appreciate the aesthetic parallels in Waterman's poetics of the still and moving images that are evident in my own work. Waterman explores the recollection and re-imagining of memory, featuring domestic, architectural and landscape scenes, as she frames the body among landscapes in multiple ways. In *In the Cage* (2008) (from *Waste Land*) she frames her body moving slowly within an architectural site, and captures the movement with slow shutter photography, which presents a visual experiment in ghosting or tracing a memory. This anticipates the aesthetic qualities both of

31 Days Old and Reclaiming the Ritual and individual works such as *Trace* (2013) and *Dust and Bone* (2016) (see digital documentation).

This field review points to connections and approaches and attitudes of artists whose work attends to family and the connected discourses of memory and photography. What is emphasised in the position of these artists is the ways family is approached as a subject or a theme, and the focus of family artists making art as family. In the sections that follow, I will demonstrate that family and their narratives offer rich potential for performance making. Whilst I consider methods of developing performance within my practice, I also refer to the implications of this chosen way of working; in particular, I will make reference to certain areas of enquiry, such as the introduction to narrative and Memory Work with family and the collection of family stories, and how I negotiate ethical implications of working with family when intimate stories are explored for performance making.

Mother Working with her Family

Given my practice encompasses the exploration of working directly with family members in art making, this section considers the dynamics at play as the mother works with her family to cultivate a performance practice. I begin by introducing the family as theoretically framed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1996) and Langellier and Peterson (2004) (see introduction) to position (my) family in wider societal contexts and more precisely within the parameters of this research study.

I approach personal and group narrative as central to how family forms identity, and as a way to explore a performance practice. I consider in this context polyvocal is the multiple narratives and perspectives of family life. Working with family, I am reminded that this practice is multi-voiced; listening to and respecting these voices presents a rich and diverse landscape of narrations. Alongside narrative, I consider the way memory is tacitly part of family narratives, and triggered in the making of my practice as discussed here. To do this, I draw on Maurice Halbwach's (1992) notion of collective memory and remembering (see *Memory Work and the Making of Stories* page 90) and the ways Annette Kuhn's (2002) notion of 'memory work' has been activated within my work when interviewing family members. In a related vein, I also include sketches and text from Oliver and Isabel as they

describe their own experience of family. The following sections outline certain considerations of the practice and builds a comprehensive picture of the *Mother as Curator* role.

I locate and position my family by drawing upon Bourdieu's (1996) argument that the family may be seen as a cultural landscape, a group of people organised in various ways which we call family, and who have been affected by the relationship between social change and social behaviour. As such, Bourdieu states that in family discourse, the language family uses about family is an active agent, endowed with a will, which is capable of thoughts, feelings and actions, which can ultimately prescribe particular ways to conduct family life and domestic relationships (1996). Family, therefore, can be collectively and socially recognized and organised by language and actions, and ideas relating to home (see *Home (as Site)* page 117) and linked through alliances such as marriage. Bourdieu (1996) acknowledges that the shifting landscape of family discourse needs to accommodate new definitions and recognise different forms of family bonds. He emphasizes that the 'traditional oppositions between the public and the private conceal the extent to which the public is present in the private, and is the very notion of privacy' (1996: 25).

Similarly to Bourdieu's understanding that, in relation to the modern family, the private is a public matter, feminist scholar Katherine Allen (1993) suggests that a central theme in feminist scholarship on family emphasises the private life experiences of women as a public issue. In her work to generate and interpret knowledge of family studies, Allen advocates ideological and passionate views on family studies, from her standpoint 'as the mother of a young child, as an educator of teachers of young children and a feminist scholar' (1993: 49). By stating her position within her critique of family scholarship, she pushes the boundaries of the discipline (Allen, Few & Lloyd, 2009). This brings forth the agenda that family is as much a discourse as it is a concrete set of social ties and actions (Allen, Few & Lloyd, 2009). Following from Allen's proposition, I too recognise the importance of addressing my role as mother/artist/researcher to triangulate my complex roles within family, and as she states, to address motherhood and family as a discourse to engage with.

Since I have been formulating and exploring my lived experience of family, I asked Oliver and Isabel to contribute to this discussion. I have included some of their drawings and discussions on family.



Oliver Frizell aged 5 years old - May 2015. Isabel Frizell aged 5 years old – Sept 2017

Conversation with Oliver and Isabel about family – February 2017

Mum – Isabel, what is family?

Isabel – I don't know

Mum – Who is in your family?

Isabel – Betty (dog) Auntie Esther ...I forgot... Emma, Nanny, I forgot all the other ones... Oh You Oliver and Daddy in the house.

Can I play the rest of my game now?

Mum – Oliver, what is family?

Oliver – I don't know...Mum Daddy Isabel. I don't know.

Mum – Ok. Do you think family is about people or a feeling?

Oliver – I think it is love.

Langellier and Peterson (2004) suggest that the family is constructed on a social level, and this is reflected through the practice in *31 Days Old* and *Reclaiming the Ritual*. Family narratives constitute the basis for much of the performance practice, and these are explored in sensitive ways to construct and present performance which ultimately produces a topography of this particular family. I commit to a polyvocal practice, under which I have explored the co-authoring of narrative where multiple voices can add and offer the richness and diversity of more than one story without compromising the main flow of the storytelling (see *Polyvocality in Reclaiming the Ritual*, page 98). Family members construct their stories

through group formation and as individual members, revealing that family identity is neither static nor permanent. Langellier and Peterson suggest that, therefore, family identity is formed through the cultural context in which it is situated (2004). Narrative in this research is an intergenerational family activity where remembering and forgetting is part of the forming and reforming of family identity through the telling/retelling of family stories, as in *Reclaiming the Ritual* and *31 Days Old*.

In the exploration of family narratives as a way of grasping people's experience of family life and the developing of art making, as indicated I acknowledge memory as part of this process. Halbwach (1992) describes the family as an ideal site for memory orientated work, for the family is a relational system which lives across time, where parents can pass on heritage (cultural codes) to their children, which can help them to develop a sense of belonging and history. In this way, the family acts as a formulation for the memories to exist within a collective framework. When focusing on the interrelations of family life, Halbwach (1992) identifies *collective memory*, where shared versions of the past are transmitted through family conversation and interaction. Scholars Rathbone, Moulin & Conway suggest 'what people remember is then socially determined. But how people remember is also socially shaped' (2008: 1402). They continue by suggesting the transmission of memories can be through everyday mnemonic objects such as photographs or through embodiment, such as gestures, or oral histories (2008).

In the pursuit of exploring memory through mnemonic devices, Annette Kuhn (2002) warns, however, that even though memory can be prompted by mnemonic objects such as photographs, the memories are not necessarily directly about the photograph (2002). In Kuhn's formation of Memory Work, the memory comes about via a negotiation between 'past and present, spectator and image, and between all these and cultural contexts, historical moments' (2002: 14). Therefore, the photograph is not enough for meaning making; there are other elements involved, in this instance the network and interrelations of family. Kuhn states that 'cultural theory tells us there is little that is personal or private, regarding the photograph or the memories they evoke' (Kuhn, 2002: 14/15); memory is shared (Halbwach 1992) between relations of people. I engage specifically with Kuhn's notion of Memory Work through a series of questions she devised to mine photographs for meaning (see *Visual Essay 3, 31 Days Old* 103 - 111).

Memory Work and the Making of Stories

Elaborating and exploring these ideas, I address and reveal the processes involved in developing *31 Days Old*. *31 Days Old*, performed by myself, mother, auntie and my daughter Isabel, presents narrations through film, soundscapes and digital technology (see digital documentation). The work was developed in a five-month creative process between Aug 2015 - January 2016, culminating in the sharing of performance work in my family home.

In this work, it is the personal and the shared family memories of women in the maternal line of my family that form the focus. The initial process involved female family members choosing family photographs to work with, exploring them as mnemonic devices. This created thematic content, which was primarily developed through a sequence of interviews designed to explore the images for memory and meaning. This led to a series of narrative scores, which were further explored as the basis for creating performance.

Developing a one-on-one interview format, designed to respond to and engage with the personal conditions of the interviewer and the participant, the interviews were informal, held in private, and could be stopped and resumed at any time. During the process, I asked that the photograph be hand-held for a memory prompt, or as a pretext of memory. This approach was to stimulate an experiencing of the weight and texture of the photograph, and thus could encourage emotional connotations to provide an effective response in recalling memory. For example, the photographs chosen by my mother and auntie were taken directly out of the family album; some of the images were old, dog-eared and written over, whereas most of mine and Isabel's images were printed images from computer files holding hundreds of photographs. Although this may not have impacted directly upon the act of remembering, I could see the reverence and the care taken over holding the images as if holding and touching the memory and the people themselves.

The interview questions were devised through a reading of Kuhn's (2002) notion of Memory Work (see visual essay 3, *31 Days Old page 103 - 111*), which moves from a personal reading to a wider contextual reading of the image. The narrations from the images revealed individual memories reaching beyond the personal and connected to the extended network

of family. This was explored through the arranging of narrative material and was seen during performance in the live event. A clear example was the development of a piece of practice where the stories of birth common in one family became an installation. These interconnected birth stories were presented as one soundtrack (see digital documentation). This approach revealed that memories are not solely owned by the individual, but can be held communally in the context of the collective act of sharing (Halbwachs, 1992).

Some of the memories triggered during these sessions were intimate and presented questions as to whether they should be publicly shared. This decision primarily rested in the hands of the owner of the memory (see *Intimacy and Ethics in 31 Days Old* page 92). Studying the family album in this way produced a series of tensions. Holland and Spence state, in their interpretation of family pictures, that the difficulty in negotiating the family photograph can be a 'potential site for conflict' (Holland, 1991: 2). They discuss their interpretations of family pictures, which are in essence difficult to negotiate, as they are an entanglement of 'private fantasy and public history' (Holland 1991: 2). In particular, Holland (1991) alludes to 'secret' tensions and relationships between family members that only members of that family would be able see. Holland asks the question, does one want to include pictures in the album that reveal tensions as they are not the memories we want to project into the future?

Similarly, working with photography and memory, members of the *Family Ties Network* consider the visual representation of family memories and the family album. In particular, Suze Adams (2012) explores how memory confronts imagination where there is a tension between facts and fiction. Such concerns were evident within my own practice, whereby, as the *Mother as Curator*, I had to decide whether we as a family wanted to share and reveal certain family narratives, tensions or secrets? My responsibility in the *Mother as Curator* role is to share and curate materials with attention and above all care, which is a primary ethical concern in this practice. My aim in relation to these issues was to openly discuss and share our thoughts and parameters of the project with all involved. This led to a decision-making process about what would, and what would not, be shared. This enacts an ethical commitment which reinforces that each person has agency in the ways they are represented (see *Intimacy and Ethics in 31 Days Old*, below).

After all the interviews were conducted and the materials gathered, Andy and I listened to the chosen narratives. We began to isolate phrases and sections into themes and stories. Our method was inspired by Langellier and Peterson's (2004) approach in selecting sections of aural narratives so as to retain the feel of the telling. Andy and I preserved the false starts, repetitions and self-interruptions, where the struggle to remember can be heard, whilst at the same time keeping the speaker's original meaning and intention. The main aim of this phase was to generate narrative recording which could serve as frameworks or scores for solo work. This process revealed a particular way of working with family, which was guided by the principal intention of sensitively recording and listening to personal and family memories. This form of working, I suggest, is a key feature of this practice. The actions of interviewing, collecting stories and conversing with family about their lived experience constitute a prominent aspect of this practice. As described above, ethical debates have risen to the fore and will now be explored in the next section. I will discuss how placing the family as artist plays a crucial role in the realisation of working both ethically and sensitively.

Intimacy and Ethics in 31 Days Old

A core element of this research project locates family members as artists, which speaks directly to the ways I as a mother/artist/researcher can help family realize their own artistic aspirations within the context of this work. This has led to a mixture of person-centred¹¹ artistic approaches and a range of aesthetics and artefacts which are presented as artworks. This is a natural consequence of this way of working. For example, my mother's physical response to one of her memories presented the opportunity for us to create a movement phrase together (see digital documentation, *31 Days Old - Cordie Film*). The research imperative was to work with my mother as an artist and help realize her ideas rather than to impose my own aesthetic standards. We worked collaboratively, generating a series of physical gestures that embodied her response to her chosen photograph. As she had never performed before, remembering a series of gestures was quite difficult, so we choose two gestures which for her articulated her thoughts. These gestures were then arranged and filmed, generating a short movement piece. Placing my mother's comfort at the foreground

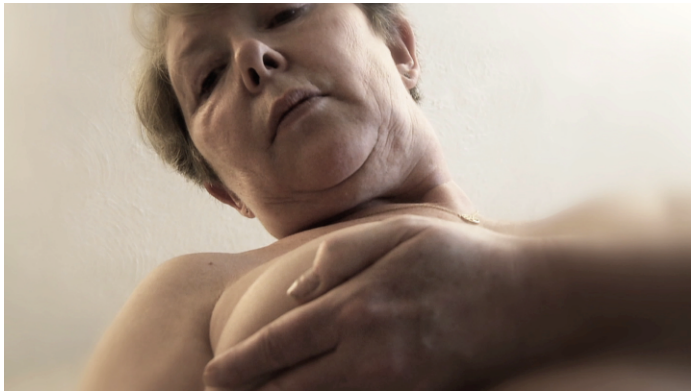
¹¹ Person-centred artistic approaches, are ways of working which can change and adapt to the needs of the participant.

of the process led to a thoughtful way of working, which meant that her experiences of her memories, and experience of the artistic process were not ever trivialised or devalued (Brennan, 1999). I describe this as family work. The ways I approach creative practice foreground the individual and their needs, while also developing my own practice of facilitating an ethical approach to art making which also situates the family as artist and collaborator.



Screen Shot – Untitled Cordie’s Film – *31 Days Old* (2016)

To explore this further I highlight one particular story from my aunt Barbara. Barbara’s story is one element of the installation *31 Days Old*. This narrative explores her battle with breast cancer. It was presented in two parts, an aural recording via Layar (see *Visual Essay 3, 31 Days Old*, page 103 - 111) and a dance film. The process of making and presenting this work reveals certain issues pertaining to status and ownership of the story, ethics and notions of care. Barbara chose to share this particular story as it related to a range of images she was working with in the project (see *Visual Essay 3, 31 Days Old*, page 103 - 111). In the initial stages of the work I showed Barbara *Cancer Shock* (1982) by the late Jo Spence (1934-1992), to demonstrate how artists work with intimate and graphic materials. This work demonstrates how Spence used photography as a non-clinical therapeutic tool in response to her diagnosis of breast cancer. *Cancer Shock*, her final work, was her way to expose the medical side of illness whilst presenting it through a critical, distanced gaze, and yet still communicating the emotional toll of a very frightening experience (Spence, 1986). Barbara’s feelings towards cancer, and her expression of how she experienced her body, inspired the making and aesthetic of her dance film. In a recorded interview she states, ‘I was in and out of hospital, I felt like my body was not my own. I am never going to look the same again, I am never going to feel the same again, I want to show how scary that feeling is and how beautiful I am’ (B. Thompson, 2017, Personal Communication 10th February).



Screen shot – *Barbara's story - 31 Days Old* (2016)

During the making of Barbara's dance film, I worked with filmmaker Jayne Farley, collaborator on *31 Days Old*.¹² The aesthetic of the film is a deliberate play on scale and perspective of the body. Barbara wanted to show the physical and emotional impacts of the radical alteration of her body after surgery. Jane filmed extreme close-ups of her scarred skin, which looked like a desert landscape, and was then overlaid with the vision of her naked upper body. This is reminiscent of *Patience* (2016), a solo performance by artist scholar Emily Underwood-Lee. In this piece, Underwood-Lee explores her own painful cancer story, as she performs 'her experiences of grief, which are a profound part of her journey to motherhood' (2016: 18). In this solo performance, she combines spoken intimate texts with graphic images of scars, mammograms and CT images. Underwood-Lee emphasises that *Patience* (2016) was personally driven and absolutely essential for her to make (Underwood-Lee, 2016). Although the performance aesthetics of *Cancer Shock*, *Patience* and *Barbara's Story* are different, the driving force for Barbara was very similar; she comments, 'I didn't think I was going to live, so having the opportunity to think about my cancer in this way, was a new experience for me, it was a celebration of living' (B. Thompson, 2017, Personal Communication 10th February).

This process revealed certain implications, both of working closely with family, and of the notion of care as explored through this practice. I believe – as Barbara's niece and because of our close relationship – we could develop a level of intimacy which enabled us to create such work. This way of working is a facet of the *Mother as Curator* position, where I embrace a range of working principles, the nuances of which can change depending on the

¹² See page 19 *A Note on Collaboration*

context. Working with her on such personal content in this way is an implication of this practice. I was working with Barbara on an element of her internal life, exposing her body, her thoughts and life experience to family and to guests. This reveals a deep commitment to this principle of performance making, where I, as instigator of the practice, need to work with Barbara to share her story, and realise with her the representation of her life.

Barbara, like other family members involved in this project, had never performed before, therefore the making and curating of her story documents my efforts to develop sensitive working processes. This can be described as an ongoing responsibility and commitment to the notion of ethics and care within the thesis. Caring in this context is a relational term, which Ruddick explains as caring which attends to the needs of the other in a particular circumstance (1989). I worked with care and attention throughout this project to discuss Barbara's thoughts on process and on the aesthetic qualities of the film. For example, she wanted to film in her bedroom, rather than in a studio. This presented some technical difficulty but Barbara felt more comfortable. These kinds of considerations attend to individual needs rather than prioritising aesthetic and technical issues.

Secondly, story ownership is a fundamental way that we manage our relationship to our own experiences, mobilising the powerful role that narrative storytelling has in understanding power relations and social relationships (Fivush, 2011). Through the development and setting of her experiences through performance, Barbara had found another way to articulate her story. The process of creating the dance film was not the appropriation or exploitation of Barbara's story – not one's person tragedy for another's person creativity.

Scholar Amy Schuman helpfully suggests that

claiming ownership of a story, or challenging someone else's right to tell it, points beyond the stories themselves to issues of status, dignity, power, and moral and ethical relations between tellers and listeners.

(2015: 38)

The relationship between tellers and listeners in the context of this performance practice invites a certain form of intimacy, not only in the subject of the materials but within the context of the home setting. Jerome Bruner explains: 'Like all speech acts, a story is a

location, but it also has a specific purpose: What a speaker intended by telling it to this listener in this setting' (2002: 24). Similarly, my work is not governed by the analysing of quality or the reception of the performance work; I am concerned with the home as a setting for such material, that this may present opportunities to engage with the work in certain ways (this is developed further in chapter 4). Stories extend and travel beyond the person who has experienced them; they can, like memories, change or take on new interpretations or meanings (Schuman, 2002). In this way, Barbara's story extended beyond her own experience into sharing it with guests within the intimacy of the home. In the creation of her dance film, I was not speaking on behalf of Barbara, but from a place of privilege – I had insider knowledge of the story, and we discovered a new language to represent it. As Bruner states in *Life as Narrative*, 'In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives' (2002: 694). After the performance of *31 Days Old*, Barbara and I discussed how she felt about the work and in particular her cancer story; she commented - 'Well I'm not easily embarrassed when it comes to my body, but witnessing the performance being watched, was actually ok. As the performance came over very caring and gentle, so I enjoyed watching it... and it gets it out there, the reality of it, that's what I and everybody needs' (B. Thompson, 2017, Personal Communication 10th February).

Diary Excerpt – 7th October 2015

All motherhood is based around time. Time. Stealing time for oneself without interruption. Interruptions such as love and crying and maternal stuff.

Time away from the children, finding enough time to work, but it drips through my fingers.

I cannot hold onto my maternal time, watching my children grow in front of me. Their youth so physical in form, I love watching them, they grow so fast.

Polyvocal Family Practice

I now move from intimate and ethical considerations into the wider frame of polyvocal narratives. It is clear, then, that my practice has sought to elucidate and make space for the

stories of my family members. This can be understood to be a 'polyvocal' approach, in which I weave together voices, practices and perspectives, and I have directed co-authored narratives and formed polyvocal performance works in different ways within the creative research, depending on the particular contexts with which I am working.

As an approach to narrative, the polyvocal identifies and celebrates multiple voices – voices which can be at once messy, complex, contradictory and harmonious. This can be the inclusion of my children's voices as diary excerpts, or performance pieces with the recorded voices of people talking. A commitment to polyvocality does not enable a claim that, as editor/dramaturg the voices which run through this practice are presented as autonomous, and independent of one's own perspective feelings and concerns; rather, it implies differing levels of joint ownership or development of a story.

As feminist scholar Diana Meyers (2010) notes, speaking in one's voice denotes agency, creating a sense of self, choice and reflexivity. It is thereby my ethical responsibility to respect and represent these voices and contributions, in my processes and ways of working (see *Intimacy and Ethics* in *31 Days Old*, page 92) and also to take care of the ways in which the stories in this study live before performance and continue after; they are not constructed but are reconstructed, re/remembered. In the sections below I choose to highlight particular narratives, stories and performances, which reveal certain aspects and concerns about working with personal and intimate narratives and the ways these insights concern the wider thesis as a whole.

Diary Excerpt – 21st February 2016

The children are fighting, constantly. I can't seem to make the peace. Part of my mothering role is peace-maker. Finding ways to compensate for moody, unhappy children, distracting them.

We are trying to go out, a cold and wet day, a day on the beach with the Iron Men. The day seems doomed from an early start. The voices shouting over each other, Oliver formed words, Isabel still forming hers, but the intention is clear. It is over a toy, I try to find another. The fighting continues, escalating to crying and screaming. I reach over and turn the TV on. Distraction.

Polyvocality in Reclaiming the Ritual

I turn to the process of making *Reclaiming the Ritual*, and discuss how I draw upon polyvocality as the main source of material for exploration. Most specifically, I highlight certain documented moments which are submitted as practice components of this thesis. The context of this research was a week-long holiday in Wales over Christmas; present during this week was my immediate family along with Andy's father, our friends from Liverpool and their families. This was a short research process, where the immediacy and the experiences of the people at the Christmas event comprised the practice. The context of this work exists in a similar framework to the *Family Activist Network*, wherein families come together to explore certain agendas as combined within family life. My proposal was to create a series of activities, which I describe as rituals,¹³ designed as platforms to instigate certain ways for people to engage with each other throughout the week. The rituals were as follows: a writing task on the winter solstice, a cooking event especially for women, a walk, making Christmas presents and decorating the Christmas tree especially for the children (see Visual Essay 2, *Reclaiming the Ritual*, page 72 - 81). These activities were documented as discrete moments, which show particular engagement with the ritual and interactions between people, which could later be shown to guests in our family home. During the course of the week, I also filmed the normative everyday interactions such as talking, eating, reading, playing with the children and watching films. The documentation of this event blurs the boundaries between art making and the everyday. I am consciously aware that I am staging the filming, and whilst doing this my own personal stories are implicated in this filming. Catherine Russell, filmmaker, states that one's personal history will be involved in the wider frame of the film document (1999). Although I am not reading or analysing the content of the film documents, I argue that the experience of being at the event and the documentation of the experience of being at the event, is the art work. However, I do acknowledge that there is also a concurrent crossing over of the public and

¹³ The notion of ritual began as a form of analysis in the 19th century, as a way to identify human experience. This was a shift in the way European culture compared itself to itself and other cultures (Bell, 2009). Bell describes ritual as 'a type of critical juncture wherein some pair of opposing social or cultural forces come together' (Bell, 2009:14) – for example, belief-behaviour, tradition-change, subjectivity-objectivity, nature-culture. The term 'ritual' is identified by Catherine Bell as that which exemplifies individual perceptions and behaviours which are socially or privately appropriated or conditioned (Bell, 2009). Whilst I observe ritual as a series of performative actions, I identify them as part of our everyday life, which are exposed by the family to the public world (Schechner, 2002). As Schechner states, the difference in rituals lies in the context and emphasis (2002).

private worlds, where the subjects in the film become the artists themselves. More specifically, the work offered in this PhD thesis operates on many levels and across a range of modalities. *Reclaiming the Ritual* examines the development of narrative formations and the ways documentation can help to access the world of the research.



Christmas Lunch, screen shot Fferam Bailey (2014).

I decided to film the preparation of the Christmas lunch, capturing the normative activity of cooking by placing the camera aside in the room, to record as much content as possible: I filmed in silence to privilege wider action rather than narrative minutiae. The documentation reveals the interactions between people preparing Christmas lunch, and places family and friends as a central focus of the film. Robin Nelson comments that documentation can serve as one kind of evidence to articulate findings of a research project (2013). This documentation not only serves to translate practice, but also to demonstrate the experience of it.

To explore a different facet of the ways polyvocality is explored, I will discuss *The Cooking Ritual*. This is presented as a co-authored narrative where the women talk, commemorate and share stories whilst cooking together. I position the camera to focus on the hands cutting, chopping and preparing food; we hear voices and are not sure of the owner of the story. The quality of the film is raw, clipped into small chunks to show the polyvocality. The co-presence of multiple voices, as an aural narrative mode, presents the listener with diverse perspectives on the participating women. This is significant to this practice as it is an ongoing engagement with narrative, where I continue to place the lived experience of the participants at the centre of the work, and focus on the contribution of people involved in the practice.

When discussing co-authored narrative in wider terms, Langellier and Peterson suggest that

participation of multiple tellers may appear to change direction, delay, derail, backtrack, or bring in irrelevant information but this narrating is not an instance of a *story* but of (*stories*) being offered.

(2004: 44)

In the *Mother as Curator* practice, the significance of narratives explored in this way can present a nuanced understanding of events, ourselves, and even how others feel about the past. More precisely, this piece of practice positions the experience of the ways we share stories, as the practice itself. To understand this, Bruner suggests the terms *landscapes of action* and the *landscape of consciousness* (1991), to indicate that narrative provides the ways to share another's perspective of the past.

In relation to the wider context of the thesis, polyvocality is a key approach to addressing and honouring the many voices which contribute to the work. Polyvocality, narrative storytelling and other forms of narrative exploration are considered important in the meaning-making process of telling and re-telling stories. Bauman (1986) argues that narrative storytelling is itself a form of performance, and performance provides a frame or a context in which narratives can be understood. I suggest that the frame and moment of the voices talking over each other and the experience of the cooking comprise the art work. The documentation of *Reclaiming the Ritual* aims to draw the viewer into the context of the event, revealing the narrative telling and the co-authorship in real time. I consider that the documentation is both visual artefacts and documentary archives, in which the role of *Mother as Curator* is exposed in precise, and complementary, ways. This is a form of documentation and art making characteristic of this practice, as the creative, curatorial choice to document everyday normative actions re-frames them as art practices. These pieces of practice also emphasise the experience of the work over the aesthetic quality of the work. These films and others were shown in 2015 in my family home. The guests who were present at Fferam Bailey (2014) were invited to see the films. As they were presented in the intimacy of the home, to be experienced by the people depicted on screen, this deepens the transactions and complex relations between the boundaries of the public/private space (see *Ethics in Home Performance*, page 128).

Summary

This chapter has offered several examples of the ways in which I have explored or developed performance work with and for family, by delineating the ways narrative and memory can function and more specifically the way narrative can be explored for performance materials. Narrative formations, according to Langellier and Peterson (2004), are communication practices which are at the root of family identity, and *31 Days Old* and *Reclaiming the Ritual* are analysed for their content and meaning. Also, their treatment, and the practice of collecting and systematising narrative, has been influential in the ways both Andy and I collected and organised recorded narratives. This approach simultaneously retained a feel of the telling, while also presenting memory scores explored for their potential in the development of solo performance.

Narrative has been explored both as a visual and co-authored means of identifying the ways people interact with each other over a Christmas holiday. This supports my claim that art making with family in the home, with its diversity of components, cannot be reduced to a linear, predictable, creative act. For example, I argue for a certain kind of positioning for artworks, which are not judged mainly for their aesthetic qualities, but which either capture an experience of an event, or project a level of care in the making.

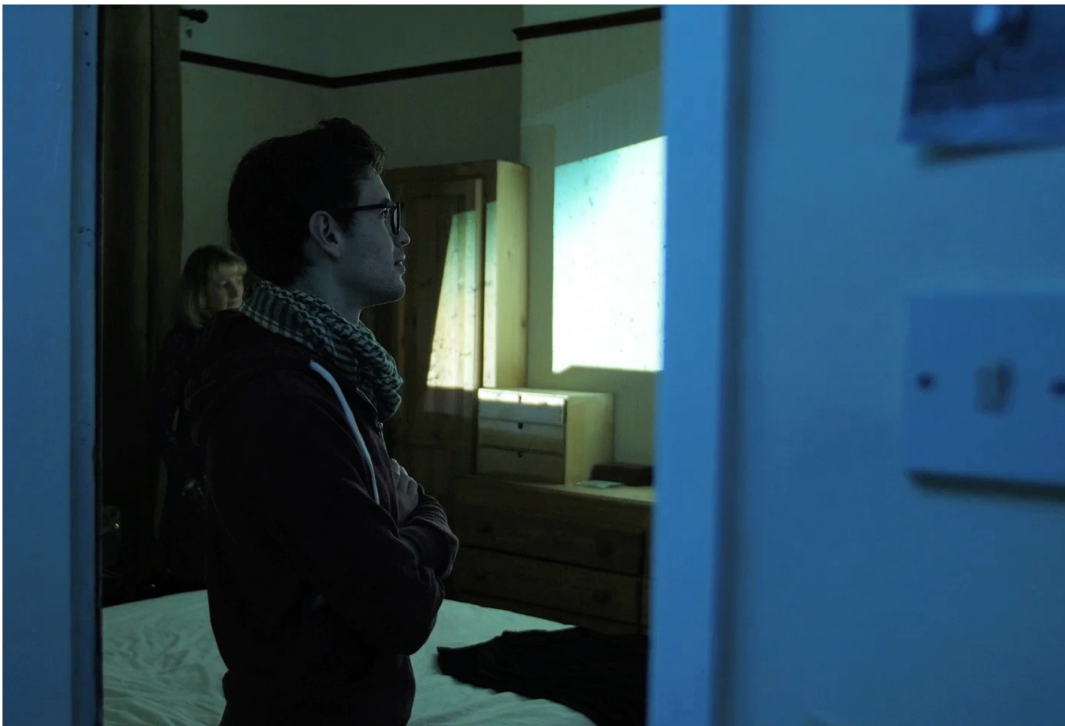
The level of care taken to work sensitively with family members in *31 Days Old* was an ethical imperative, as the stories were intimate and at times traumatic. This became a detailed process in developing solo works with family. I argue that the process of exploring and developing performance work with family members, who had never performed before, determines a way of working where the performer, her needs and aspirations take precedence over the aesthetic quality. This presented this particular process and way of working, for example interviewing and filming, as a possible way of working artistically with family in the home as a form of family work. I iterate that this practice is multifaceted, it encompasses many voices and the performance work operates on different levels.

The artistic process in *31 Days Old* addresses the ways remembering can become material interrogated for its possibilities and meanings, and, as Kuhn states, so becomes a conscious

staging of memory (2002). In *Memory Work*, Kuhn undercuts assumptions of the authenticity of what is being remembered, claiming it not to be truth, but a kind of evidence (2002). Regarding the wider thesis and the making of *31 Days Old*, this process revealed an interesting tension and potential in the staging of memory, namely making meaningful stories rather than assuming their significance.

The next chapter, *Home as Practice*, locates the work within a broader critical framework and discusses how I critique and situate the home as site for this practice. By situating performance work within the home, I address the issues of investigating a lived-in family home as a potential performance space, and the position of the family and the viewing guest, which fuels further debate on ethical practices.

Visual Essay 3
31 DAYS OLD (2016)



31 DAYS OLD

31 Days Old is a film and image installation throughout the home.

It explores the lives and memories of three women and one child in one family.

Mum Cordie - 65 years old

Auntie Barbara - 56 years old

Sarah - 43 years old

Daughter Isabel - 3 years old

To gather material we all looked through family photographs and each chose 3 as the focus of our exploration. I helped Isabel by showing her our family's photographs and then she choose her own.

After the final selections were made, we performed a series of interviews. The result of the interviews provided memory scores which were explored later for art making. During the inteviews we explored our family lives that touched on private and public memories. We explored memories that we all shared, and narratives that became new family knowledge. Using domestic photography as a trigger for memory, we explored our personal lives and our interconnected lives within family.

The process began with the selection of photographs from our family albums.

Sarah 's selection



Isabel's selection



Cordelia's selection



Barbara's selection



MEMORY WORK

The questions were adapted from Annette Khun's notion of Memory Work, and were asked in relation to each photograph. Annette Khun designed her questions so that the memories and associations could stand on their own as discoveries. The memories can be explored for their reflective and interpretive qualities.

I wanted to focus on a personal response, and then move into the wider cultural implications of the image.

1. Are you the owner of the photograph, are you in the photograph, where was the photograph taken, do you know who took the photograph?

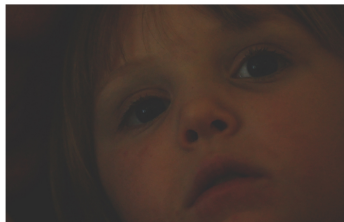
2. Start with a simple description, and then move into a more detailed account where you take up your position in the photograph. To bring out the feelings and emotions associated with the image you may want to visualise yourself as the subject as she was at the moment the photograph was taken.

3. Who is in the image with you? Can you remember their names and relationship to you?

3. Who took the image? What was the photograph taken for, who has it now, where is it kept, who saw it then, who sees it now?

4. How do you feel about this photograph now and why did you choose it.

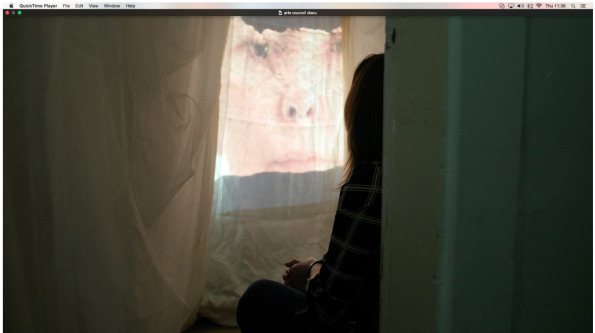
5. What does this photograph mean to you?



31 DAYS OLD PERFORMANCE

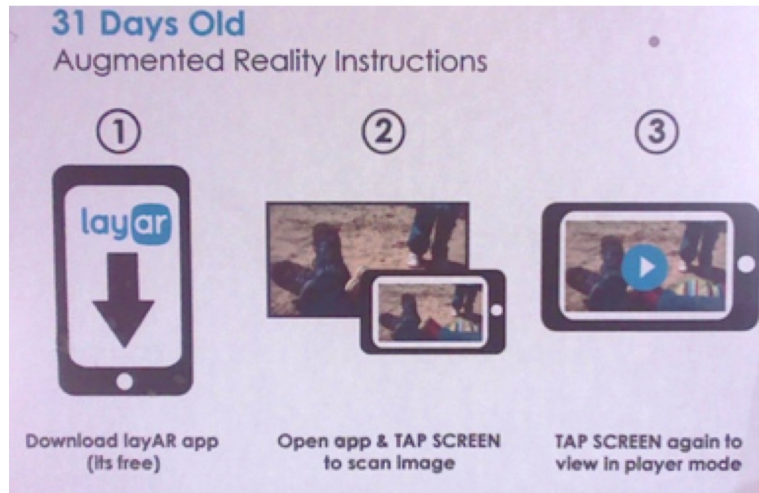
I transformed the house with stories, memories through film, image and soundscape. This is a selection of film and image and guests watching.





Augmented Reality Instructions

If you would like to access some of the video materials in performance you can do so by following the instructions.



Available between April 2018 – April 2019

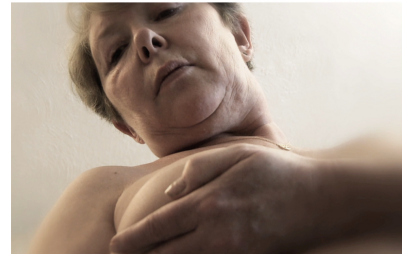


Trigger Image for Cordie's Story





Trigger image for Barbara's story



Trigger image for Sarah's story



Trigger image for Sarah's story



Chapter 4

Home as Practice

The two preceding chapters have been attending to the ways I have developed and facilitated an art based practice, which explores the ways a family can make art with particular attention to certain areas such as ethics. Chapter 2 focused on writing from the position of the mother and critiqued the development of a solo practice and the development of a children's practice. Chapter 3 shifted to the wider position of working with other family members, to explore personal and family narratives as source material for creating film and installation work. In this chapter, the emphasis is on the home, the place where we live, and the locus of the practice. I consider the implications when home becomes also a place of and for performance, a place where guests are invited to enter to experience and participate in performative works.

I begin this chapter with the third and final review of current art practices and discourses – again bringing forward the work of artists and writers that pertain to the particularities of the theme of the chapter. As such, in this review I discuss Fran Cottell's *House Projects* (2001-17), as she explores the tension between home for family and home as a gallery space. She particularly focuses on the role and positionality of the audience within her home. I also signal the ways in which I identify with artists Lena Simic (2004) and Lois Weaver (2011) as they trouble the public/private binaries, with Weaver exploring airing her dirty laundry as a political theme and Simic washing her children's clothes in a public performance.

I then move onto *Home (as Site)*, situating discourses which frame the home within the parameters of this research. After defining the home, I position the home (as a site) where performance can happen and discuss this, albeit briefly, in relation to sited practices. I choose to frame the home through the feminist critique of Iris Marion Young (2005) and feminist geographers Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2004-2005) as a complex and contended place. I suggest that as I approach the home as a site for the dissemination of an artistic practice, I call upon my sensibilities as a site and installation-based choreographer. By activating the home space that situates the practice, I begin to change and develop sited

performance language and tactics to accommodate my own working methods and approaches. I include Mike Pearson's (2010) approach to sited performance and Josephine Machon's (2013) critique of Immersive Theatre Practices. Through my own practice, I redefine home and site for – when working directly in one's own home as site – a certain focus that is heavily dictated to by the rhythms, flows and interruptions of an everyday family space emerges. Furthermore, working in the home requires that I consider not only aesthetic sited decisions and concerns, but also address areas such as human agency and ethics (see section *Family, Site and Guest* page 126).

I draw on examples, such as *Trace* (2013), *Reclaiming the Ritual* (2014) and *31 Days Old* (2016) as sited practices. Through these works I reveal the potentialities and difficulties of working in the home, leading me to unpack a series of sited sensibilities I have developed for my work in the home. I discuss not only practical decision making and aesthetic choices made, but how I have engaged conceptually with sited practice to adapt and draw out the significances of working in the home as a site.

I go on to identify the relationship between the *Family, Site and Guest* (see page 126), by considering the positionality of the guests, who are, in this project, invited to move freely through the lived materiality of home and engage with the, at times, very personal and intimate art installations. The final section discusses the impact this research practice has upon my home and family. I address issues of the public/private debate as a framework to comment upon inviting guests into the private sphere of home. This leads me to some observations on the ways performance and installation can destabilise the home environment.

Sited, Domestic and Private Art Practices – Current Practices and Discourses

In what follows I introduce a number of artists whose work, like my own, works across themes connected to home. I do not perform a detailed reading or analysis of their work; rather, I seek to align affinities or identify in these approaches in order to position my own work. My brief overview reveals family life, challenging public/private binaries and domestic labour as common themes. I turn first to Fran Cottell, as her series of works under the

umbrella term *House Projects* (2001-2017) approaches similar questions regarding installation/curation and, in particular, the position of the audience in relation to the home/art, all of which this practice has similar concerns in my own work.

In her introductory essay to *'House: from Display to Back to Front'*, art historian Katy Deepwell (2013) discusses Cottell's work and questions what it means to turn a house into a gallery space, or to turn the home space into a site for installations. She describes that, whilst she began asking questions concerning everyday mess over domestic order, gradually, the focus shifted to how she positioned the visitors in the home, discussing power relations between the status of the audience and the viewpoints within the home.

Cottell's installations are not just a series of objects placed on display in the home; she reveals the interior of her home and questions the framing of our gaze, and how we formulate our questions surrounding art (Deepwell, 2013). Cottell situates her audience on plinths or runways, specific places, determining particular viewpoints, where one stands and what one sees within the space. As Deepwell argues, in Cottell's work there is an interplay between the meanings of home, gallery and museum space, which creates a complex and charged space for interrogating ideas of display (Deepwell, 2013).

Cottell (2001) chooses to use her home as gallery space; this raises a series of questions about my own practice within the home. How do I approach and situate the guests within that encounter, and is my home a place where I just situate performance, or is there something more nuanced about that relationship? (see *Sited Sensibilities page 120*). Cottell's family is present in the home when the audience enter the space; her family continue with their daily lives, yet they do not acknowledge the audience. The audience are asked to see the space differently, with their frame of reference and perspective challenged. Cottell seems to *other* the audience, separating them from the action, where they take up the position of watching or observing (Deepwell, 2013). In my approach, I do not attempt to *other* the audience, but purposefully align their entry to the spaces as that of family guest, while inviting an involvement, a conversation, or extend the experience of joining my family, rather than watching or viewing my family from a distance. This requires a different engagement with the physical and metaphysical structure of the home, where a tactile, immersed, textual journey of the home is welcomed. The guests do not attend a

performance; they are invited to join us in a shared space. So, whilst I share similar interests to Cottell, I frame the home as a social familial space, where the guest is positioned to engage with art work, artefacts in the home, space and conversations with guests and family members. I situate film and performance work throughout the home and invite guests into more intimate spaces, for example placing them upon my bed, which leads to questions relating to how we experience the public and the private, and the ethics that arise when blurring these spaces (see *Family, Guest and Site*, page 126).

Picking up the theme of public/private, I move on here from installation and curation in the home, to artists who foreground the domestic realm in their work, in public forums. Contemporary live artists Lois Weaver and Lena Simic tackle issues of the public/private dichotomy in their work. I refer to Simic's (2004) work as she approaches public/private tensions from the position of the mother (see *Mothers in Art in Practice*, page 52), while Weaver (2011) installs private materials in full view of public audiences; both of these themes relate to the private nature of the home and the domestic being revealed to public audiences.

Lois Weaver, known for her work in arts activism, experimented with using laundry as her medium to make a statement about the domestic and the invisible. She established that in some states in the United States of America, it was illegal to hang your laundry outside in a public space. She created *International Laundry Day* inviting people from across the world to hang out their private in public. This extended to a version in New York (2011); she called this event an act of domestic terrorism (Weaver 2011), wherein Weaver aired her laundry in public, crossing boundaries between what is considered to be public and private.

Lena Simic explores comparable thematic materials but presents a different set of questions in *Medea/Mother's Clothes* (2004b). Simic takes a subversive slant on the Mother archetype, exploring ideological representations of motherhood through her performance making. She performs private acts, in a public forum. In her performance, she constructs a washing line suspended in the space, hanging Medea's clothes and a white sheet. Juxtaposed to this are the clothes of mothers and children from toddler groups she attended with her own children upon the floor. She performs the banal yet sensitive and intimate action of washing clothes whilst a soundscape of the Greek Myth Medea plays.

In doing so, Simic reconfigures the Mother Archetype in performance, through an opposition of the anti-mother Medea (2004b). The overarching questions in Simic's and Weaver's work are different; however, it is through revealing private acts of mother in a public space, and washing clothes in a public sphere that exemplify and disturb the perceived notions of public/private binaries through live art practices.

There are also artists who tackle and reposition housework as political acts. In particular, Mierel Laderman Ukeles aligns domestic work and care-giving as maintenance acts.

She states

D,Art:

Everything I say is Art is Art. Everything I do is Art is Art, I am an artist. I am a woman, I am a wife. I am a mother. (Random order.) I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, supporting, preserving, etc. Also (up to now separately) I do Art. Now, I will simply do these everyday things and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them as Art.

(Ukeles cited in Liss, 2010:52)

In her *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* (1969), Ukeles maintains that the monotonous, demeaning and tedious labour of maintenance – cooking, cleaning and rearing children – is not solely defined to the domestic sphere. Similarly, feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir documents women's oppression through domestic labour: 'Few tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition' (1952: 451). In Ukeles' work the labour of maintenance becomes not just a personal issue but a systemic one. She encourages us to view housework as a political site similar to artistic work.

In reference to domestic labour and my performance practice, whilst I do not perform domestic labour or maintenance in the same way as Ukeles, it is part of and considered in the work I do as a mother and an artist. By this I mean it is revealed in particular ways throughout this practice, and more specifically when developing art or performance work in the home. This is demonstrated through the labour of looking after children during the creation and installation of performance work in the home, through my conscious decision to not clean the home ready for guests before a performance, and in the caring labour of welcoming and catering for guests during a live performance event. This performance work pinpoints and dramatizes the home, the themes of family, and the public/private as complex notions. They

especially highlight the themes of home as attributed ingrained significances and inherited social-cultural implications for women in particular.

The above artists' work gives rise to a series of questions relating to intentions in my own work. I can see differences in the positioning of the guests in my work, which I reflect upon in *Family, Guest and Site*; I note how Cottell deeply considers the audience's relationship to her work and home, and I point to my own interrelations here. This leads to the ethical debates concerning public/private issues of audience and family in the home space. Weaver and Simic both destabilise these boundaries in their practices, yet do so from a public space. I engage with my decision to invite guests into the intimacy of the home and question the personal and ethical dilemmas this can present. I touch upon the notion of domestic labour and care work with children through the live events. Although this is not a developed stand in the work, it is implicit within the context and framing of the work I do within the home.

Diary Excerpt – 16th January 2016

Ukele's Manifesto is so clear to me, I read it from the fortress of my own domestic situation.

I am exhausted, tired, I can't order my thoughts – order the house– keep the children in order.

I resist the urge to clean away our mess. I look at the dirty dishes, I pick up the clothes from the floor. I clear the surface where I will perform, I look at all the odd socks. Should I leave them out of display, they look like art. The house is our display cabinet, it reveals our life.



Dust and Bone (2016)



Home Photograph – Before 31 Days Old (2016)

Home (as Site)

In the section above, I address a range of artists who reveal the home, and women's labour within it, as a complex place for women. I now acknowledge and elaborate further some feminist concepts of home, revealing it as contested site, and consider the ways in which my practice (re)positions the home. Indeed, through my practice I have come to understand home as a place where we live as a family. It is a place full of life complexities, saturated

with personal feelings, relationships of everyday life and cultural meanings; it is safety for my children and individuation, and holds notions of privacy. Home, according to Blunt and Dowling, is a complex and multi-layered concept related to context, it is a site, a place where we live and work (2005). Home is also now a place where I facilitate and instigate performance; I have chosen to locate my practice here as it also articulates uniquely human experiences, it encompasses feeling and ideals, despite the oppressions and privileges that home transmits (Young, 2005).

As I explore the home as a site for sharing a performance practice, I acknowledge that much has been written and theorised in the field of sited performance practice and, although I describe my home as a site, I also do not completely engage with this field. In this area, there are many shifting frames characterising site specific performance; however, there is a shared notion that sited performance explores and attends to a broader engagement with environments, histories, found spaces and audiences (Pearson, 2010). Site specificity communicates and foregrounds a relationship between performance, sculpture or art and the space it is situated as a focal point (Hunter 2010, Kaye 1996, Kwon 2004, Turner 2004, Wilkie 2008). In particular, I resonate with Mike Pearson's (2010) approach to found-spaces from the domestic, houses, derelict urban spaces, and ecological sites. His notion of archaeology and themes of transformation are explored in more detail in my development of sited sensibilities below.

So, whilst my work touches upon these notions of site and sited practice, I come at this work from a feminist position and address the complexities and characteristics of the home as gendered and familial space. Addressing the complexities of situating my work in a domestic space, I consciously reject more institutional (art) settings and the recognisable presentational frames they bring. By exploring home (as site), a domestically inflected space, I embrace the ways my work needs to be installed or curated in particular ways to make it happen, and this is elaborated below.

Advocating the significance of home, I draw upon Iris Marion Young's seminal essay, *House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme* (2005). Young addresses the deeply ambivalent values of house and home and offers a personal and experiential critique, whilst highlighting the complexities embedded in the notion of home, for it carries heavy ideological burdens.

She states 'home as a place where the image of women is equated with domestic labour, child rearing and oppression [...] and the comforts and support of the home historically come at the women's expense' (Young, 2005: 123). She refers to the oppressive patriarchal values held in concepts of home, proposing that the private sphere of the home has historically confined women, limiting them to a certain realm of activities and excluding them from others. Blunt and Dowling state that 'home is not often a haven for women; it is not a space in which they can claim privacy and autonomy' (2006: 41).

These notions of home inevitably frame any practice situated in the home. By developing and presenting performance within the home, I seek to challenge and open the private sphere of the home, reclaiming and re-figuring it to reveal care and labour, sharing the home as a meaningful place, holding significance of and for family (Blunt & Dowling 2005, Blunt & Varley 2004). So, whilst the notion of home evidences complexities for women, I advocate a positive idea of home, which, as Young notes, is attached to a particular locale as an extension and expression of our daily bodily routines (2005).

In my home (as site), I explore both personal, intimate memories and the normative activities of the everyday as performance materials. These are positioned within the context of the messiness of the 'lived in' (see below), social interactions and the labour of the domestic circumstance. Blunt and Dowling express that home is a process, an ongoing mediated sense of interactions, between self, others and place (2005). In this way, the notion of home is created and re-created through everyday living. Such actions are significant for, as Young states, home and the practice of home-making 'support personal and collective identity in a more fluid and material sense, and [that] recognising this value entails also recognising the creative value, to the often-unnoticed work that many women do' (2005: 164).

I pull these notions of home together, from Young's personally driven notions of home as a complex and contested place, to the geographies of home which identify the home as multi-layered concept. I now move onto developing my own series of sensibilities, which explores the home (as site) for art making.

Sited Sensibilities

Through working and presenting my practice in the home, and in light of these debates, I have developed sited sensibilities which reveal a range of approaches and characteristics particular to the nature of creating and responding to a home space. They are as follows; lived-in site, interruption, transformation, nooks and crannies, home and technology and taking care of guests.

Lived-in

I have developed the term lived-in site to identify characteristics of working in the home. The notion of the lived-in site comes alive in the making of work and in the subsequent performance of it, therefore this concept is part of the performance. I find this is also the lived experience of my family, the materiality of our home, our possessions, our taste; all of these elements are integral to the making and the experiencing of performance.

Mike Pearson and Cliff McLucas (2010) create performances in a range of found spaces; however, they state in their approach to site specificity that performance is conceived for and contributed to by the particulars of a space,

They make manifest, celebrate, confound or criticize location, history, function, architecture, micro-climate....They are an interpenetration of the found and the fabricated. They are inseparable from their sites, the only context within which they are 'readable'.

(Pearson and McLucas cited in Kaye, 1996: 211)

Similar to Pearson's and McLucas's last statement, my work is conceived within the home and is the only context in which it can be read.

When installing work into my home, the space becomes temporally transformed into a form of living art; this is an interesting notion in a space which is fully and already occupied. As a family, we live in and through a performance work, and this inspires a different reading and way of being in our home. In my experience this correlates to a different awareness of site, or lived-in site, where as a result of my experiences as a site-specific choreographer and a mother who lives in the space, I experience a tension which opens, occupies the home, and results in my familiar and familial place of living as feeling different, slightly estranged.

So, when considering the lived site as the site of engagement, the tropes of every day experience comprise the material of the work, which is then reconfigured, (re)- installed into the home site. Pearson describes that in the 'presence of life in the home, we ourselves and our environment are part of a historical process [...] continuously in the touch of flesh on metal and stone, we also leave signature *traces*: the traces of our bodies' (Pearson, 2010: 42).

My family's identity and history is on show, which is very much part of the experience of coming to an event. This is a form of archaeology, or traces of the family present in the environment of the home. This can be seen in the physical contact on our surroundings, through the scuffs, scraps, hand prints, toys, and daily mess, being brought about by social events and the daily routine of living in the home: all mnemonic records of our shared life in the home. 'These are the authentic traces of the performance of everyday life' (Pearson, 2010: 43). I leave on display life's clutter and daily mess as a way to make a statement on domestic labour. In my own practice, I am working within the framework that the home and its intimacy is part of the experience of the work, therefore I do not clear or clean the space, so that the boundaries between life and art are destabilized.

Transformation

The concept of transformation in this practice describes the process of installing performance – film, sound and installation into the architectural landscape of the home. Whilst I do not transform the home past its recognisable state, the act transforms the appearance of the home and its nooks and crannies, making our familial space look different, beautiful and uncanny. Transformation also explains a fundamental shift in the home environment by the presence of performance, and the presence of guests. Pearson describes that site can be transformed by the disruptive presence of performance (2010). Our home and our relationship to it is transformed by performance and also disrupted by it.

I consider how when in the mode of transforming the home, I play to the functionality of the space, transforming functional rooms in the house into installation areas. For example, in *31 Days Old*, the amount of film and installation used in rooms and on surfaces in the house altered physical appearances of the home. I also felt the content of the films added

an emotive layer within the home. Exploring the intimate memories of family and projecting them into the intimate setting of home ignites a transformation of often banal spaces into poignant spaces. The bathroom, a functional space, became the home for a collection of family birth stories. This also became an interruption, as the room still needed to function as a bathroom, which speaks to the ongoing of family life in the home. These examples of transformations, whilst they are disruptive in home and family life they are ephemeral and transitory. After an event, the home is cleared; the performance may linger, but the home continues to operate and function as a family space.

Nooks and Crannies

The nooks and crannies of the home and daily life can offer exciting and complex sites, for presentation and transformation. I have expanded my understanding of site through an engaged dialogue between the content of the performance materials and the relationship with space. I work with the sensibility of a site-specific choreographer who is exploring the architectural space and as mother/artist/researcher working with the sensitive personal family materials. In *Sarah's Story in 31 Days Old*, I used a cupboard under the stairs as a site for a dance film. The space, used for shoes, brooms, broken toys and tools, was opened up to house a performance. Guests were invited to sit on a small box amongst the detritus and watch as my body in the filmic material was framed in a small linen box, and the reading of this was enhanced by the small claustrophobic space under the stairs. These used spaces present opportunities for art making and or sharing performance. In my experience engaging with familiar spaces can create an uncanny response to familiar space, and possibly a space common in most homes.

Nooks and Crannies also encompasses architectural spaces to generate site responsive material. I explored the physical structure of the stairwell in *Trace*, and invited the audience to watch the piece from laying on the floor, looking up at the work. Feminist geographers Blunt and Varley state that the spatiality of home is important, and the home is invested with meanings and experience that are at the heart of human life (2004). Domestic spaces are often conceived of mundane everyday, banal, gendered practices, such as cooking and cleaning; therefore, exploring the architectural and physical spaces within the home reaches beyond the mundane and reveals a critical engagement with the space.



Stairs – Screen Shot Trace (2013).



Trace Photographic Series (2013).

Curation

Curation is conceptualised as a way of taking care of this practice from my position as mother/artist/researcher. In relation to a sited sensibility, curation employs some of the traditional characteristics of the curator, the gathering and organising of performance materials as defined in the opening statements in the introduction. Curation is conceived from the position of the mother, who sees this as a way of taking care of family, performance and the representation of lived, maternal and family experience within the home.

I aim to set up a critical context in which to see the work curated into the home space. This implies that, as a curator, I am concerned with the reading of the work within the home, and one of the main focuses of this is to not over-expose family and my children. Curation allows me to work on the ethical relations between art work and family care. Whilst I grapple with the notion of the lived-in site, I also install work with the sensibilities of a mother-curator who makes artistic decisions based on ethics.

Practically, curation allows me to navigate the installation process and vision of the overall work. *31 Days Old* demonstrates a curatorial practice where I managed the practicalities of installing a large volume of performance materials and technology into the home, whilst still working with awareness of how these aspects tie together. Curation in this context allows me to have a holistic approach and to be able to see the larger picture of working in the home, where I can work with attention and the detail of installing performance work into the nooks and crannies of the home, the positionality of the performance within the home and looking after my children

Care of the Guests

I touch on the subject of guest here and develop this in the section below. Below I explore Machon's framing of the audience in *Immersive Theatres* (2013) to structure particular ways I position the guest inside of this work. I consider that caring for the guests is also a sited concern, which encourages a particular engagement between guest and performance within the site. Similarly to Cottell's *House Projects* (2001-2017), I approach the guest as integral to the heart of the work. Cottell's considered approach to her audience is to *other* them, dislocating and separating them from the intimacy of the space. I too consider the guests' engagement but in counterpoint to Cottell's decision to other; I work towards a level of familiarity. A significant part of this is to invite the guest to narrate their own journey through my home. This encourages the guests to take their time, sit in our living room, talk to other guests, engage at their own pace and intensity, and involve themselves in a way that may not be possible in the setting of a theatre or institutional setting.

Interruption

The notion of Baraitser's (2009) interruption has been explored through this thesis in a variety of ways. I now move away from the maternal and consider interruption in relation to site and a sited sensibility. I expand my understanding by considering a series of interruptions, interceptions and messiness in performance. During this performance practice, I rarely experience a condensed period of uninterrupted flow. In relation to sited practice, I explore the interrelations of site, performer and audience. I explore and appreciate that, within this practice, there is a relationship and active process of engaging with the messiness and interruptions the lived-in site has to offer. The interruption between site, guest and performance is considered both as challenge and opportunity in

relation to this performance work. I welcome the interruption between these components as this introduces another experience of the site, which replicates family and social life. There are a series of interruptions; the guests interrupt the family, the performance interrupts the home, the family and children interrupt the guests. This cyclical succession of interruptions is an inevitable and invited characteristic of this work.

Soft use of Technology

Various forms of technology are used to share performance in the home. *Soft use* is a term I have devised that describes my intention when using technology in the home. I see and experience technology as an interruption, an obscure object within the domestic space. With this said, I have explored different ways to interact with technology. Collaborator Jane Farley introduced me to an augmented reality programme called Layar. We used this in *31 Days Old* (see Visual Essay 3, *31 Days Old* page 103 - 111). The guest would hover a smartphone device over a photograph, to trigger the application, and a film played. This generated a series of intimate moments, where guests could choose when to engage with performance. Some people found the augmented reality complex to work, and this promoted more interaction and conversation between guests, with younger helping older to navigate the software.



Untitled Screen Shot – *31 Days Old* (2016)

Within the small intimate structure of home, the technical aspects and the amount of technology can sometimes contend with aesthetic qualities of the home environment. There is a balance between striving to achieve the outcomes of the performance research and relinquishing aesthetic concerns and the concerns of working in a home space. In *31 Days Old*, the amount of technology used to accommodate the volume of performance felt as though it compromised my intentions of working in the home. The home teetered on the edge of becoming or being viewed as a gallery. The significance of this observation frames

my attention of working in the home, and the balances I am striving to obtain, working within the intimacy of the home environment whilst still exploring the home as a sited practice.

Some of these sensibilities echo or resonate with tactics of other artists and sited practices, for example Mike Pearson (2010) and Victoria Hunter (2010). With Pearson, I explore similar archaeological sensibilities, which demonstrates an awareness to the family living in the site of contention. I also identify a similarity to the way in which Hunter explores interrelations between site and audience; in my own work this is a consideration. My own approaches are nuanced and tailored to suit the demands of working in the home. More precisely, they encompass a sensitivity and awareness to sited work which is practiced in a complex and contended site, reflecting the unique qualities and necessities of working within the home.

I now move onto exploring the relationships between the family, guest and site, and how these operate in relation to the practice whilst it is happening in the home space.

Family, Guest and Site

A key aspect to working in the home site is the positionality of the audience within that environment. As explained previously I only invite close friends and families, and have realigned them from the position of audience to guest. Such a placing of the guest within the family home and the context of performance seeks to invite a level of familiarity between family and friends that could replicate a social event. This positioning is primarily an ethical decision based on my attention to care throughout this performance practice. This is directly connected to the *Mother as Curator* practice, where care is conceptualised through various forms. This care can be seen simply as the labour of cooking food, offering drinks, and being welcoming and hospitable to my guests. It is also seen as the mother's labour caring for her children whilst the home is occupied by guests and performance.

There is another level of awareness and attention, and ethical understanding, by inviting guests to the work they can be considered to be part of the work. Performance theorist Machon helpfully identifies that in forms of immersive practices, the guest (audience) is

positioned as integral to the 'experiential heart of the work and central to the form and aesthetic to the work' (Machon, 2013: 72).¹⁴ Immersion in this way also implies access to the inside of the performance in some way. This can be encouraged by the social and domestic arrangement of home, which dictates that the guests, the performance and the family are close to each other. Immersion as a concept does not completely work in relation to this project; however, it does begin to get closer in suggesting that the positionality of the guest is key.

Fran Cottell's *House Works* (2001-17), in particular *Forced Entry* (2017), raises the question of the status between the visitors and the inhabitants. During *Forced Entry* (2017), Cottell's family remain in the home; the viewing platforms built for this show provide a proximity for the visitors to observe the family. However, the route and placement of the visitor is determined by the architectural runways, which ultimately separates them and does not encourage social interaction. This presents a fundamental difference in the way we approach the reception of our work. I encourage the guests to move freely through our space, interacting with the family and the home. For example, *31 Days Old* presents an example of a curatorial practice where the guests are invited to engage with the installation in an order they choose, thus narrating their own journey, creating a 'space for reinvigorating human interaction and exchange' (Machon, 2013: 72). Due to the thematic nature of *31 Days Old* (as explained in Chapter 3) the practice of installing the film and performance work was designed to replicate the ways family narratives and memories weave together.

Diary Excerpt – 16th Jan 2016 31 Days Old
I overheard Jane talking to Esther, should I take my shoes off? I want to sit on the bed, but don't want my shoes to go on the bed.

Jane lay on the bed and Esther pulled off her shoes, Isabel was watching and laughed. She began to jump on the bed. I will never forget as her small frame coming in between the projector and her own film, Izzie Path, on the wall, her shadow jumping obscuring, playing with the image. She played with Jane, they giggled.
Is this the performance?

¹⁴ Josephine Machon critiques a strand of Immersive Theatre Practices from installation to physical and visual theatre. My work does not fall under the title of Immersive Practices; however, it shares some qualities when considering performer and audience relations.

Ethics in Home Performance

Above I reflect on the ways in which I position and take care of the guests within the performance events, yet there are still other ethical considerations within this practice, some of which I do not have answers to. For example, what does it mean for a mother to invite guests into the privacy of the home, which is a contested for women, and then suggest that they lay on your bed and watch performance? These actions, which are primarily considered elements of the performance practice, are carefully deliberated before staging such a situation, and yet I tussle with the ethical implications of such actions. Young (2005) refers to the oppressive patriarchal value of house and home, stating that the private sphere of the home has historically confined women, limiting them to a certain realm of activities and excluding them from others. These essentialist and exploitive implications that the notion of home carries have been considered alongside this practice, conceptualised through the notion of the public and private.

By activating such situations, the invitation of the guest, the placement of them on the bed, within the private sphere of the home, I knowingly destabilise boundaries between the public and private sphere. Young argues that the home can carry a positive meaning which does not oppose the 'personal and the political, but instead describe conditions that make the political possible' (2005: 149). Simic (2004) and Weaver (2011) perform acts associated with the private sphere in public spaces, their intention to address and make visible domestic and maternal issues (see *Ethics in Home Performance*, page 128). I make similar comments, by engaging directly with the private space, and interrogate this further by investigating the deeply intimate space home has to offer. This presents moments of slippage, where the boundaries are not always clear whether I should be doing this as a mother-artist. I have authorial control over the decisions I make in the work, and pay attention to ethical care. However, it is a challenge and it is not always clear to me that this is the right thing to do.

Such moments can be seen in *Bed Bound* (2014), which I highlight to expose these types of ethical tension through performance in the home. *Bed Bound* is not part of a large-scale installation; however, it still shares similarities to the other performance installations in the way the performance is situated, and as such operates as a micro example of performance

practice. *Bed Bound* explores the darker side of my maternal experience. The audience are invited to watch the film from laying on the bed (see *The Development of Bed Bound*, page 61). I suggest by placing the viewing subject at the heart of the work – the bed – I have knowingly created a tension. The invitation to physically participate or immerse oneself in the performance activates the watching. In the final showing I placed the viewing subject on the bed to watch the work projected onto the bedroom ceiling. The placement of the guest within the installation gently destabilises their relationship to the work, and therefore challenges levels of intimacy and perspective. Pearson (2010), states that performance can transform space, alter your experience of it, and this does not necessarily speak of a positive experience. I understand the home as momentarily destabilised, or an intense engagement with thematic material and space can shift our relationship to it.

When approaching these situations with my children, I return to Ruddick's (1989) notion of attentive love, which heightens my awareness and acknowledgement that, for a variety of reasons, some events are not appropriate for my children to see. Not only can the thematic material not be appropriate, but as a mother/artist/researcher I sometimes need to experience personal work and its setting without the children present. *Bed Bound* is a primary example of this, as it was shown whilst the children were at school to a female audience. This work was prominent in establishing certain ethical parameters, deciding what was and was not acceptable for the children to see and experience. This opened a dialogue: do I want my children to see, experience, work which features them in some way that they may not understand the nuances of? I state this especially as my children are still young, and am aware that they will grow up and may have access to this work in the future.

With this question in mind I focus on the wider question of my children's involvement in the practice as whole. What does it mean for my children to be a part of a performance practice within the home? As I approach the act of mothering as an ethical practice, I also extend this notion of care and curation to the practice in its interiority. So, as mother I remain critically aware of the home space within performance. I instinctively respond to this as a mother who wants to protect her children, yet still yearns to develop a performance practice. I prepare my children, explaining the events, and the ways people will move through the home. We, mother and father, explain this as another way of our family being in the home. The ethical and moral questions concerning our children will change as our

children grow, and ways of approaching these subjects will also have to change depending on their experiences and attitudes.

Summary

This chapter introduces and contextualises the home as a place where performance can happen. The chapter has furthered specific areas of this research practice, the use of home as a complex and contested site, a series of sited sensibilities and the ethical implications of working in the home. The home with its chaos, intimacy and lived-in qualities can open and disrupt this relationship and therefore presents other ways of being in home and performance, for example the social encounters between guests and the possible interruptions that occur.

I describe and critique my own development of sited sensibilities, which display my approaches to working and living in a site. More especially I account for the ways the house is used as a site in performance, revealing artistic and aesthetic choices, for example correlating personal narratives and particular spaces. The home is both a potential site of exploration and a site which contains social codes and practices. This is explored through the ways this practice tackles the private sphere of the home by inviting guests not only into the home, but to move freely through space.

This further leads to the ethical implications of this practice, and as such I fundamentally propose that the home is firstly a place where we live but is also the locus of a performance practice. I attend to the dual function of the home (during performance events) from the position of the mother, and approach mothering as a form of ethics itself (Baraitser, 2009). Hence, I work with a form of attention and awareness that negotiates certain issues. One such issue is the potentiality that the home is destabilised during a performance event. This is a complex issue which demands a certain sensibility and understanding that during performance the home can be destabilised, and I attend to the ways I articulate this to my children, presenting performance as another way of being within the home environment.

Conclusion

This thesis sets out to study the mother developing and curating an art making practice, within the family home, with a primary consideration of an ethics of care. It principally asked ‘*When a mother initiates and develops an art practice as a family project, with and for her family, what specific processes and characteristics emerge? What are the personal, professional and ethical questions that arise in such practices?*’ These questions rise from and are framed by my (at least) dual role as mother and artist who develops a practice with her family.

I have developed three major installations which explore a series of concerns emerging from the concepts and practice of *Mother as Curator*. *Trace (2013)*, an exploration into sited practice within the home, which foregrounded the development of a social practice. *Reclaiming the Ritual (2014)* explored the essence of home and family and the development of polyvocal and co-authored events and narratives. *31 Days Old (2016)* developed an ethical process of working with intimate family narratives and memory and a curatorial practice in the home. I also developed a further series of smaller works which ran parallel to the main thesis and which explored my maternal experiences in the form of a solo dance piece, *Bed Bound, (2014)* and facilitated *The Children’s Practice* where I work and collaborate with my children.

The written thesis outlines the theoretical, contextual and ethical base and serves to frame the practical elements, and the presentation of the practice within the home. The introduction outlines the general trajectory of this thesis, where I provide a theoretical positioning that maps and traces resonances with scholarly writings which contribute to the research. I engage principally with maternal theorist Sara Ruddick (1989) and maternal psychotherapist Lisa Baraitser (2009), to develop language which aided in the articulation of my practice through this research project.

The practice emanates from three worlds - the maternal, family and home and this is reflected in the chapter structure. Chapter 2, *Maternal Practice*, establishes the mother-artist position, who develops a solo practice in response to her personal experiences and creates works with her children. Chapter 3, *Family Art Making Practices*, turns to the wider

circle of family and friends, exploring two major installations, *Reclaiming the Ritual* and *31 Days Old*, and the narrative and ethical art making processes which constitute the body of these two works. Chapter 4, *Home as Practice*, identifies the home as the place where I situate the practice, exploring the ethical and practical concerns of using the family home as a site of art making and sharing. Each chapter introduces current practices and discourses, theoretically framing each world, critical analysis of the practice, and complementary writings. I present visual essays between each chapter of the written thesis, sharing images and short descriptive notes about the practice and process.

The major developments of this thesis are seen through the conceptual title *Mother as Curator: Performance, Family and Ethics*. Under this title, I have developed a series of methods and processes that I consider are transferable and can be explored by artists interested in this kind of work, for examples artist who are interested in maternal studies, interdisciplinary process and sited practices. The processes I have developed with my family and close friends have been purposeful a thread throughout and constitute a major contribution and knowledge to the field of family performance. The development of the *Mother Ethics* principles, contributes knowledge for artists and mother-artists interested in performance making in intimate and sensitive contexts or directly with children. These principles also contribute to other areas of performance studies, such as sited practices. Sited sensibilities came out of the *Mother as Curator* practice from the staging of my position when working in the home as a site. The sensibilities were a necessary outcome resolving the ways of working with site, and as such became an unexpected consequence and contribution to knowledge. Below I unpick in more detail the insights of the research and outline the major developments.

The Children's Practice contains two pieces of practice, *Oliver's World* (2014) and *Isabel's Shoes* (2017). *Oliver's World* can be described as an artistic dialogue with Oliver, where I found an inventive way to respond to his request for privacy and develop an agentic practice with him. The significance of this practice presents how as a mother I worked with Oliver and his needs through an artistic process. This positioned Oliver as artist, and his photography a contribution to art works submitted for examination in this thesis. *Oliver's World* is part of a portfolio of work where there isn't a precedence for a hierarchy or aesthetic value imprinted on the performance work; rather, I refer to the importance of the

intention and artistic process of the work. Similarly, *Isabel's Shoes* meaningfully encourages a dynamic to unfold between mother and daughter. This practice explores the notion of consent and presents the opportunity for Isabel to come in and out of the encounter. I identify this work as a way to document these encounters and it is evidently presented from the mother's perspective of the encounter. *The Children's Practice* reveals certain ethical issues, such as the relations between mother and child, and child and the performance work. This art making reveals the ways I challenge the context of the art making by clinging onto my parental duty, where my duty to the child and the act of mothering and daily-ness occupy the encounter and the frame.

This practice thrives on the contributions from family. *Reclaiming the Ritual* explores polyvocality and co-authorship of events and narrative with and of home and family. During *Reclaiming the Ritual*, three families shared time and space together; the documentation processes employed throughout this time captured the family's interactions in different ways, curating, for example, the making of Christmas dinner and the co-authored narratives of women cooking together that arose. These sessions were designed so that the content offered was gentle and of the everyday, and where the relationships between people unfolded in real time. Prioritizing the family member as artist and their experiences of making the work are key, and as such I, as the instigator and facilitator of the work, exercise my position and closeness to family to co-construct the work. This elaborates the ethical and intimate relations between family members and friends, which can make this kind of performance practice possible. I argue that ethics and care are important considerations in the mother-artist role. Working in this way underscores the way I explore curating as an extension of care.

31 Days Old shares some similar approaches to working with intimate family narratives and memories. This piece of practice was the result of a particular methodology which was also made possible by our close relationships within family. The significance of the piece was the way I worked intimately with family and their memories. To do this I developed a series of provocative questions, drawing upon Kuhn's (2002) notion of memory work. This process presented a series of memory scores which were later explored to generate performance, films, soundscapes and live elements. A particular feature was keeping and honouring the original intention of the spoken memories to retain a 'feel' of the telling, guided by

Langellier and Peterson's (2004) approach, wherein they focus on the speaker's original expression of the narration. *31 Days Old* explored explicit and intimate content from personal and family narratives, exploiting a particular relationship between myself and the family participants, and heightening ethical considerations when using this content in an artistic work – whether that be sensitive material revealed orally or a performance from someone who has never performed before. This is done through developing processes that are person-centered and changeable, depending on the needs of the participant. A secure environment is essential. For example, in *Barbara's Story*, the process of developing this work was not only creative, but for her personally was a reflective journey on her recovery from illness. Whilst these elements were not seen in the final sharing of the work, the process of developing this work was, I believe, an emotional experience for her.

The theme of interruption has recurred through the thesis, both within practice and as an experience in multiple ways. Exploring interruption as a concept in daily life and art making has presented insights to my practice. I argue that the micro-blow of the interruption and the puncture in time and attention has presented other ways of being in practice and research. In Chapter 2, *Maternal Practice*, I present the argument that interruption has led to a different experience of being within performance. During a live solo dance performance Oliver interrupted as he needed my attention. In that moment, the performance was abandoned and the child's needs foregrounded, revealing an aspect about the mother-child relationship which Baraitser identifies as ethics (2009). I was unbalanced by the interruption and a set of new relations established between mother, son and performance action.

The significance of interruption has been identified when exploring a sited practice. I seek to open and observe the relationship between the site, guest and performer. Interruption can be seen as a dynamic which reveals the way the site guest and performer relations can be disturbed or destabilized within the live event and encourages a potential reading of family art making in the home. I embrace interruption and suggest that the unpredictability of social interactions are a characteristic of art making in the home.

The role of the guest is integral to the work, and as such is carefully considered. Whilst I frame the social interactions of the home as an important element in the setting of this

performance work, I acknowledge that some of the more personal and sensitive narratives of family need a different setting. The home as a site for performance offers this potential, for example Barbara's *Cancer Story in 31 Days Old*; we felt needed to be somewhere away from the interruptions and social encounters. In a quiet room at the top of our house, I constructed an environment where the guest could enter and sit with the installation. I argue that this setting honoured the content of the narrative.

I establish the home as a place where performance can happen, by defining it in relation to feminist critique, identifying the home as a complex and contended space for women. I find that working in the home is both liberating and complicated. I have been able to work on a mother's timetable; when the children are asleep, are at school, playing games with each other, whilst daily life happens, and at the same time these daily occurrences have prevented me from working. These situations, or interruptions within the home and family life, have presented time and material for developing art making, and points where I have ground to a halt, where life itself takes over. By living in the site of contention I have been able to develop and refine sited processes to accommodate my present artistic enquiry. These processes reveal a nuanced approach to sited practice where I focus on the site as a lived-in space, not found, and this dictates a new approach in sited work. They identify an awareness of our everyday lives as impacting upon our environment, and how this gives rise to a particular awareness in sited approaches, for example the site work in *Trace* (2013). I consider these *Sited Sensibilities* as a contribution to sited practice knowledge, not only for artist/researcher exploring home spaces, but as sensibilities to exploring subtle yet important shifts in approaching particular and nuanced sites.

By affirming the role of the mother who is exploring a performance practice I place the notion of curation as an extension of care. Working under and through the concept of *Mother as Curator* gave voice to this research through a series of methodologies and concepts. This form of research is not necessarily concerned with whether or not this thesis is essentially correct, or provides a potential solution to a problem, but presents a series of processes, approaches that can offer insight and knowledge about family. The audience and networks who can engage with this research are artists or parents and carers who want to work with their families in art making. This thesis makes a broader contribution to fields of

family practices, and makes a direction contribution to networks of mother-artists and those in maternal studies.

Future research projects in this area could move in several directions. There are still unanswered ethical implications which arise in this practice. The most pressing for me as a mother-artist is the role and contribution of my children. As I have watched my children grow through this project and they have, in turn, seen this process grow, they express their understanding of performance in different ways. I foresee that the ethical questions that arise will change as my children also change and develop. Their contributions and attitude to this practice will be an important consideration to the direction of this work. I have noticed how receptive my children are in art making dependent on their age, and I anticipate this will change/develop as they grow older still. I value the importance and input of my children's contribution to this process and wonder how that will continue.

This thesis has demonstrated the commitment and joy of working closely with my family and extended family group in the development of a family art making practice. I hope the work inspires families that they too can develop a family practice that suits their needs, desires, aesthetic choices and familial situations.

Appendix:

***Trace* (2013)**

Director, performer and host - Sarah Black
Composer and performer Andy Frizell
Participant and performer - Oliver Frizell and Isabel Frizell
Photographer – Photography Wesley Storey.

***Reclaiming the Ritual* (2014)**

Director and performer Sarah Black
Composer and participant Andy Frizell
Participant Oliver Frizell, Isabel Frizell and Lesley Frizell, Esther Wilson, Dan Wilson, Paul Wilson, Louis Young, Laura Campbell, Glenys Campbell, Adam Sloan, Andy Delamere and Carl Cochram.
Photography Wesley Storey.

***31 Days Old* (2016)**

Director, performer and host Sarah Black
Composer Andy Frizell,
Film and Editing Lynne Harwood and Jane Farley
Performer Isabel Frizell, Cordiela Black and Barbara Thompson.

***Bed Bound* (2014)**

Director, performer and host Sarah Black
Musician Andy Frizell.
Film Rachel Arnold.

***Children's Practice* (ongoing)**

Director Sarah Black
Artist Oliver Frizell and Isabel Frizell.

***Documenting as Mother* (ongoing)**

Director, film and participant Sarah Black,
Participant and composer Andy Frizell,
Participant Oliver Frizell and Isabel Frizell.

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