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Why Matter Matters

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Art engenders becomings, not imaginative becomings . . . but material becomings . . . in which life folds over itself to embrace its contact with materiality, in which each exchanges some elements or particles with the other to become more and other (Grosz, 2008;23).

Installation + Performance = Provocation

My current (practically complete) PhD with practice was initiated by attending the first Making Futures conference, where the working title of my project - From Materialism to Materiality: how can my textile art and textile craft processes contribute to an ethical dialogue through an emerging materiality - was conceived. I have attended and presented at the conferences since, always valuing the daunting process of presenting not only my practice as a maker but also my theoretical writing to a discerning and critical audience.

Implicit in craft, art and making, yet still largely inexplicable and tenuous in its ontology is the connection with matter we all enjoy and depend on.

I prescribe a connection with matter that results in a 'deep materialism', a materialism which questions the impact of our use and mis-use of materials, re-assessing its impact on the biodiversity of the planet and also on ourselves.

I suggest that although through micro-political action we can alter the way we situate ourselves in the world as humans, bringing about a shift in how we relate to, and exist within, the wider biosphere, the impetus to bring about this change demands an ethical rethinking of current viewings of inertia and stasis within the world of matter.

The contextualisation of this practice has been challenging, sitting as it does outside of current definitions of a commercial craft practice and decrying the capitalist consumption that has subsumed our society. My study of what actually constitutes waste and our troublesome relationship with this material is embroiled with issues of disposability and human hubris that threatens to alienate ourselves both from the material world and from knowledge of ourselves.

I would relish the opportunity to describe my project in a more 'material' way; by working in situ with the materials that I have been working with and writing about over several years amidst the development of a low impact practice.

I propose a 'working' installation, where I place myself, as the maker, at the centre of these materials and work with them in situ so that I can describe them more closely to others, provoking a reaction both verbally and non-verbally. This could be indoors or outdoors, the outside renders us closer to where these materials have originated from. How can we alter our 'inside' to better consider this matter with more respect and give it more dignity than it currently possesses?

In a post-anthropocentric world of diminishing resources, some may say an ecological crisis, it is crucial that we re-assess and revise our relationship with matter. The response that I provoke will be documented and disseminated, leading to further development of a practice which has reached a hiatus in its examination of 'the material turn'.

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