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## Craft, Play and the Strange Stranger

I propose a practice-led presentation, based on the findings, and subsequent work flowing from, a research project, *Writing\_Making: Object as body, language and material* (RCA, 2016). During this project, 'new' methods for bringing writing closer to making were developed; methods that explored the potential of making as a means of generating writing and of writing to generate, or to contaminate, making. Influenced by Object Oriented Ontology, craft making was considered as an intimate engagement with, or a form of contact with, another object; as an altered state that might afford privileged access to the 'inside' of an object, or a 'strange stranger', to follow Tim Morton. Central questions that emerged from the research were:

- Can making function as a model, or a spur, for settling deeper into inter-object relations?
- What voices might emerge from such relations and how might the various objects [maker, material, image, language] that cohere around the activity of making be presented?
- How might maker, and audience, become an object among objects and access the subjectivity of the strange stranger?

Several material/textual, or material/conceptual making processes were developed - what I am calling *writing\_making* methods that, taken together, constitute the only answer I can offer to the above questions. Some of my methods are repeatable, but I would expect other researcher / practitioners to produce very different results. If these methods can be established as successful, through exhibition, thesis and conference paper, then I would hope that others might explore similar territory, using my methods as a reference point.

Perhaps counterintuitively, artistic research seems to be an ideal tool with which to stretch the boundaries of craft practice. The research process revealed, for me, the generative value of both textual and visual documentation of process: as artwork and as feedback that generates the next engagement. I will discuss the relationship between practice and research, writing and making and explore how craft and art processes might be considered as tools for building resourcefulness and resilience, with reference to Ian Bogost's anti-anthropocentric work on play:

Play is the opposite of irony: rather than distancing ourselves from things, in play we draw them close and meld with them. We give ourselves over to them, even, subordinating our own agency to a larger system.

Ian Bogost, *Play Anything: the pleasure of limits, the uses of boredom and the secret of games* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), p. 92