

Material Intangibilities

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*Without bibliography and footnotes this document has 37752 words.

Abstract

This practice-led PhD research investigates the affective and embodied materialisations of long-term endurance of cisheteronormative structures. At its core, my research is concerned with exposing the possible ways in which white, cisgender, heteronormative and patriarchal frameworks are nonconsciously processed. I build on the concept material intangibilities to rethink how *form* — the production and reproduction of patterns — travels, spreads, diffuses in efferently multiple and afferently unpredictable ways.

My research challenges questions of *corroborability* in relation to realities that are not capturable through normative forms of legibility. I give an embodied account of the viscosity of affect involved in the process of endurance, when my own identification began by being imposed rather than self-asserted; I allow for my injuries to speak their shape, and in doing so, I highlight the materiality of injuries that are dismissed due to the way they are made invisible, and therefore less important; by prioritising invisibilised injuries and microaggressions, I expose embodied and embedded forms of normality allowed to operate as tools for white, cisgender, heteronormative, and patriarchal supremacy.

I position my research in relation to Feminist, queer and decolonial practices that have been providing critiques to white-western patriarchal knowledge systems and their hindering of social justice (da Silva: 2007, 2016, 2019; Hartman: 2012; Jackson: 2020; Wynter: 2013). I draw on thinking frameworks put forward through investigations on nonconscious cognition (Hayles: 2017, 2019), queer aesthetics (Macharia: 2019; Musser: 2014, 2018), Linguistics (Yao: 2021), and semiotics (Kohn: 2013) to inquire how *form* is processed, propelled, and absorbed consciously and nonconsciously.

Operating under a fine art methodological framework, I exercise a practice-led approach to what I am calling nonconscious semiosis of affect: the production and reproduction of patterns, and how the remembering of sensations is tied to affective experiences archived in the body. I use still and moving image, archival retrieval, photographic assemblages, and writing to create speculative *non-fictional* narratives that challenge pre-established perceptions of embodiment. In doing so, I weave injury and repair, joy and anger, tiredness and endurance through patterns of resistance that reveal how the [hopeful] absence of white, cisgender, heteronormative, and patriarchal structures enable non-hetero futurities to be materialised in the present.

Declaration

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mariana Aboim', written in a cursive style.

Mariana Aboim

Date: 31 December, 2023

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The knots on my back, 08:25, 2022, <https://marianaaboim.hotglue.me/?the>

Where the fuck are you looking at?! 00:40 min, 2022, [https://marianaaboim.hotglue.me/?Where the fuck are you looking at/](https://marianaaboim.hotglue.me/?Where%20the%20fuck%20are%20you%20looking%20at/)

Patterns, 15:42 min, 2023, <https://marianaaboim.hotglue.me/patterns>

Vampires, 09:43 min, 2019, <https://youtu.be/BYLneFLulik?t=3477>, min.: 57:57.

Whale [notes of a dream], 01:12 min, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/898888549/4b485e9898?share=copy>

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All gif work is available at: <https://marianaaboim.hotglue.me/gifs>

Go figure! (1991), animated gif, 2021

Flag (2011), animated gif, 2021

That's what comfort looks like (1990/2020), animated gif, 2021

Wtf (1987/2019), animated gif, 2021

A selection of still image work that is not added to the body of this thesis can be found in Appendix 1.

Preface

I started this PhD journey in September 2018, at that time my goal was to understand the different ways in which *utopic* forms of care and solidarity were materialised in street activism. This was triggered by my own experience of protest[ing] and ways of doing street politics based on a period of my life I spent living in Istanbul, Turkey, from January 2011 to September 2014. I wanted to understand how, in the grounds of protest, the interaction of distinct socio-political agencies, cross temporal affective stimuli, and the situated shared urgencies combined propelled forms of relationality that undid white supremacy, cis-hetero normativities, and patriarchal frameworks. My experiences with protest marked my positionality, but having that experience being the catalyst of my research was something I was not willing to follow. Of course, when I started this PhD, I could barely understand any of the emotional struggles bound to addressing that period of my life, let alone articulate the reasons behind wanting to talk about protest, and not being able to do so in my research. There was something characterising what happened in the grounds of protest, something that through the work of Denise Ferreira da Silva I began to understand as *raw* relationality. I had an understanding of relationality in the grounds of protest that was, in a way, *raw*; it was less processed, less conditioned by hierarchical impositions designed by gendered and racialised normativity. *Raw* relationality was how I perceived [*raw*] solidarity, the support across differences I saw happening without having time to process the intricacy of *what* was happening. There was a nonconscious, and conscious, semiotic affective response, a contagious effect propelling unquestionable solidarity in multiple forms, and resulting in collective resistance.

I came to understand that the place of my experiences of protest[ing] in this research exists in relation to quotidian resistance, which is bound to the way bodies are affected in intangible ways. I speak of bodies as the physical marker through which normativity perceives all its invented others; I chose bodies because of the liminal reality of invisible pain — a body is tangible, perceptible, targetable, and yet it can hurt in ways that are not always exteriorly visible. Discussing how the body can be hurt in invisible ways allows attending to [less visible] inflictions and injuries triggered by ignorant utterances, what is also known as microaggressions, and how they manifest themselves on the body.

In relation to the body I began speaking of injuries that are less visible not exclusively because of the way they are not perceivable to everyone, but because of the way they are normalised,

turned into a “common sense” relational dynamic, because of how offensive patterns have been institutionalised and have become, therefore, embedded in behaviours of those benefiting from white, cisgendered, heteronormative, and patriarchal regimes.

Mentioning what my research did not become is a necessity, because it was through a practice-led approach to articulate the affective assemblages formed in the grounds of protest[ing] that something else emerged:

*they were sucked into the void, but in different directions at random
yet, still sucked into that vacuumed emptiness
how can flesh be sucked into and apart, toward opposite directions?
the question is not a question but an image of being pulled apart
leaving a trail of wetness up in a curve, as if a snail had passed by
but, this is another type of slime
it is a pleasant slime that as it is absorbed it contaminates that
through which it passes, and then it spreads
it continues its contamination process weaving its way into the
fleshiness that wants to be pulled apart
now that it is contaminated, the flesh feels in its most raw existence its
parts enjoying being pulled by a slime that is no longer wet
the slime goes through the flesh, it passes through/under/within its
rawness reaching every bit and, as the slime made its way through the
whole, the flesh turns into slime itself
merged with poison, it enjoys its own effect while it lasts, and before
becoming another type of raw.*

Figure 1: *another type of raw*, 2019, digital image/poem.

The poem above is an example of my attempt to recall specific affective responses from moments of protesting in ways that would not objectify my own position, or the fact that this experience and these moments were not mine alone. But what these remembering exercises did instead was to trigger other affective responses, pre- and post- what I was trying to recall, and it was through the resurfacing of embodied memories — the specific way certain moments

viscerally felt — that I understood how protest had been present before I even had the words to articulate what it meant. Navigating through a map of affective resurfacing[s] I identified resistance and cisheteronormativity as commonalities across my memories from childhood until adulthood. I began using memory as a time travelling vehicle through which I could revisit previous experiences, it became a mediating practice between consciousness [present] and nonconscious cognition [embodied memory]. Mapping my own embodied memory in tandem with the semiotic processes tied to identity formation, I recognised a similarity in the afferece of sensations across moments of protesting, resistance, and confrontations *with* cisheteronormativities — I have termed the complexity of sensations involved in these moments material intangibilities.

The material practice is composed of moving and still image work in a form of assemblic compilation that interrogates the material intangibilities of my confrontations with and resistances to normative structures. The visual work presented in chapter two are experiments through which I sought to understand the affective cisheteronormative structures marking my own body; this series of experiments, some of which are ongoing, is followed by finalised moving image narratives that retell confrontations with normative hierarchised relationalities.

– a few reading instructions

In working *with* what I mention above as the liminal reality of invisible pain — how a body is tangible, and yet it can hurt in ways that are not exteriorly visible — I crave for semantic transformations that can come closer to what is happening in the body, and what is being *affered* towards the body.

My approach to writing is informed by *mis*-location as a method to narrate experiences of my own body when inquiring into the viscosity of specific injurious or violent confrontations. It is neither un-location nor dis-location. *Mis*-location is a wrongly situated narrative that is done intentionally to amplify the way affect is manifested through the body; I fully explain *mis*-location in chapter three. The reader will encounter *mis*- and other intentional transformations italicised due to my choice to emphasise the words I am transforming. I also use italics for general emphasis, for *raw*, for terms that are not mine, and for the title of works. I use inverted commas for quotations, but also for what is “so called.” I use square brackets to comment on

my own writing; I use a formula, and I am informing the readers of this formula, so as to refrain from having to footnote every single transformation, and to safeguard myself from the unproductive tendencies that confuse my intentional transformations with linguistic ignorance [typos].¹

— terms

In order to inquire into the ways cisheteronormativity manifests itself on the body, I inquire into the ways I experience the world with a body that has to face gender and sex policing through confrontations with strangers who are not able to situate my identity within a binary system. Throughout this thesis, I use the terms affect, emotion, and sensation; although these terms have been extensively distinguished and exercised in the Humanities and social sciences, most notably by Baruch Spinoza and philosophers influenced by his thought, my use and articulation of these terms derives from thinking with Sara Ahmed and Amber Jamilla Musser's work. Here, I refer to affect as an umbrella term under which sensation and emotion in relation to experience occur, which allows me to speak of experience in context and conflict with wchp's supremacy.

I use affect to emphasise sensations, emotions and feelings one may not be aware of, I deploy the term when developing my understanding of nonconscious semiosis of affect, that is, the nonconscious processing and digesting of certain occurrences or experiences. Nonconscious semiosis of affect is the term I use to inquire into the possible ways normative patterns and standards are rooted in one's body; I explore these normativities through habitual behaviours, relationalities, and embodied forms of knowledge. Throughout this thesis, the behaviours and knowledges I speak of are linked to the way symbols of white, cisgender, heteronormative and patriarchal (wchp) frameworks are nonconsciously processed; these symbols refer specifically to visual and descriptive stereotypes implicated in definitions of wchp.

¹ Mariana Aboim, "Fucking with grammar," in *InterAlia: a journal of queer studies*, issue 18/2023, <https://doi.org/10.51897/interalia/UVEW9057>.

With Ahmed and Musser I can analyse the materialisation of oppression on the body, embodied experience, and the physical implications of certain confrontations. For Musser sensation is that which allows understanding how bodies have been made to feel differently through histories, politics, and social status;² for Ahmed emotion allows her to closely name what happening in the body, to contextually analyse different ways of being in the world.³ Both Ahmed and Musser articulate sensation and emotion as *sociogenically* constructed.⁴

My understanding of emotion cannot be dissociated from the *emotional labour* brought upon through experiences of violence and marginalisation — the lack of agency in having to engage and respond to factors deeply affecting one’s experience. In the same way that I use affect as an umbrella term under which sensation and emotion in relation to experience occur, emotion is an umbrella term to point at sensation and feeling. I use sensation to express the conscious feeling *of* in specific moments of experience; even though I understand sensation as conscious, its conscious awareness is not synonymous to understanding what that sensation entails. One might feel good or bad without knowing exactly where that feeling comes from. By feeling I understand an identifiable emotion, like being upset when someone is rude.

I am not situating my use of these terms in relation to psychology, Affect Theory, or western philosophy. Even though I am not inquiring into distinctions of forms of affect, I use these terms to describe experience within this research, so as to create a space for injuries to speak, to have a space to exist and to be recognised as part of experience. The latter is, in a way, how I see it is possible to counter the obfuscating lenses through which scars inflicted by wchp are made illegible.

In terms of methodology, my intention is to break down and enunciate the process and experience *of* being confronted with patterns, standards, and violences perpetrated through wchp. Throughout my thesis I deploy the above-mentioned terms, so as to dissect how these intangible, immeasurable, unquantifiable, [immaterial] and yet foundational aspects of one’s experiencing the world have concrete materialisations on one’s body.

² Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power, and Masochism*, Sexual Cultures (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 21.

³ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 208.

⁴ I return to the sociogenic principle in the introduction and in abstract II. Sylvia Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic Principle,” in *National Identities and Sociopolitical Changes in Latin America*, eds. Mercedes F. Durán Cogan and Antonio Gomez-Moriana, 1st ed, (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 30-66.

Introduction — intention and [its] discontents⁵

This practice-led PhD research investigates the affective and embodied materialisations of long-term endurance of cisheteronormative structures. At its core, my research is concerned with exposing the possible ways in which white, cisgender, heteronormative and patriarchal frameworks (wchp) are nonconsciously processed; I explore the intangibilities of embodied and lived experiences of oppressive gendered impositions, and how these are situated in relation to hierarchised knowledge systems; I reveal ways of working with one's own body through a practice-led approach to research, challenging questions of self-identification within phenomenologies and aesthetic theories; in doing so, I carve a space within studies of affect as conducted by scholars in the humanities by proposing a creative practice-led approach to inquiring embodied experience and identity.⁶

Feminist, queer and decolonial practices formulate critiques to white-western patriarchal knowledge systems and their hindering of social justice.⁷ In my research, identity is indivisible from the way representation has been shaped through colonialism and its heritages; although this relationship has been prominently articulated by many scholars and thinkers across disciplines, I map a contextual lineage of representation and identity via Denise Ferreira da Silva, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, Walter D. Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez, and Frantz Fanon via Sylvia Wynter. The bibliographic choice follows the way these thinkers have made interventions in aesthetics, phenomenology, ontology, and epistemology, which are then tied to knowledge at large.

⁵ Named after Maria Boletsi's *Basbarism and its Discontents*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

⁶ In my work I refer to embodied knowledges, embodied memory, and embodied awareness. When tied to nonconscious cognition, these embodiments refer to the affects stored at a subconscious level, and that can be triggered or resurface at a later point. Embodied knowledge and memory can also refer to inherited information and learned practices; embodied knowledge or awareness can refer to the aftermath of experience.

⁷ Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, *Borderlines 27* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*, *Difference Incorporated* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

There isn't one formula or theory that can be universally applied to read each single experience of marginalisation. Therefore, I find imperative to deploy methods and methodologies with the capacity of comprehending intersectional layers of oppression built to deny validity of experiences based on constructions invented in relation to the body. To do so, I deploy a fine art methodological framework, because it is through fine arts that I can propose an analysis capacious enough to foreground the complexity of experience through the immateriality, invisibility, and the non-universality of affect.⁸ I do this by working with and through the body as a site where normative impositions are captured and exposed. I explore what Carlos Ulises Decena calls "experiencing the evidence," confronting how demands of *corroborability* related to lived experience are tendentiously weaponised to sustain the non-acknowledgement of what one endures from wchp.⁹ I bridge an analysis of how inventions of body differentiation are indivisible from the way one is socially, politically, and culturally situated, as well as aesthetically represented, with approaches enabling the pursuit of material intricacies of embodied experiences of subjects that slip through the pillars of normativity.

— my faggot/dyke anthology [context]

Throughout my thesis I speak of white, cisgender, and heteronormative patriarchy, cisheteronormativity and cisheteropatriarchy; white-cis-hetero-patriarchy is the indivisible complex operating to sustain relational hierarchies, cisheteronormativity and cisheteropatriarchy are partly descriptives of my own experiencing. I am a white person who is

⁸ In *Toward a Global Idea of Race* Denise Ferreira da Silva explains how during the Enlightenment, universality was shaped through pairing morality and knowledge as the ultimate capacity of Man. The representation of a universal nomos intended to mirror what science invented by the west used as measurement through which power is enforced. Universal reason is measured in conceptions of law, moral and reason derived from white-western-christian-patriarchal supremacist ideals. Here, I refer to universal tools as measuring systems derived from the aforementioned supremacist heritage still operating in the present day. For more on da Silva's study on universal category of man please see chapter six, "The Science of the Mind," in *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

For examples of the ways in which these universalised categories operate in the present see: Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Dorothy A. Brown, *The Whiteness of Wealth: How the Tax System Impoverishes Black Americans — And How We Can Fix It*, (New York: Crown, 2022).

⁹ Carlos Ulises Decena, *Circuits of the Sacred: A Faggotology in the Black Latinx Caribbean*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2023), 64.

part of two educational institutions, one where I have a permanent contract teaching art and design undergraduate degrees, and another where I have the privileged position of finishing a partly funded arts and humanities PhD research. Although I am involved with institutionalised white supremacist frameworks, and although I regularly deal with racist utterances, relationalities and frameworks, my experience in relation to racism is propositional, it is one *with* and not *of*. I use my own body as a space where traces of normative impositions are captured and exposed, despite cisheteronormativity and cisheteropatriarchy working hand in hand with white supremacy, what is projected onto my body is a cisgendered normative.¹⁰

I embarked on a journey guided by the similarity of sensations that kept waking memories of resistance: the affective responses of remembering moments of protesting indicated I had had previous experiences with which there was a sensational affinity. I began working with pictures of my own family archive, analysing my own past through photographic and moving image work, which then began shaping a biography of endurance *of* and resistance *to* cisheteronormativity.

Although I identify as a cisgender woman, I have been misgendered since childhood. I have dissected my memories in order to pursue some sort of reasoning for this confusing misgendering people obsessively project onto me. I have done this through fine art based methods and methodologies, so as to engage with aspects that are immaterial, imperceptible, and normalised. I say normalised because of the ways in which bodies have been made to feel differently seems, at times, worldly coordinated: I have lost count of how many times I was called a faggot, and yet I cannot recall ever being called a dyke. The embodied experience of being misgendered since childhood led me to use my own body as the ultimate ground for my research.

Most of the work referenced throughout this thesis has engaged in one way or another with western phenomenologies. Yet, I steered away from philosophies of experience explored most notably by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Michel Foucault, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. This has to do with questions of self-representation when it comes to understanding individually

¹⁰ This is a complex distinction to address. Obviously, I am marked by white supremacist inflictions, as they are co-constitutive of gendered hierarchies and marginalisation. With the distinction in the paragraph above I want to make clear that being marginalised by wchp has many layers, and the degrees of injury inflicted are not comparable.

situated affective structures impacting experience, what Sylvia Wynter developed from Frantz Fanon as the *sociogenic principle*: the way subjective experience is not solely shaped through biological “factors,” but through social constructions as well.¹¹ When working with memory and the body in ways that confront wchp, philosophies that maintain at its core a white cisgender phenomenological approach to deconstructing identity and experience are evidently insufficient, despite having marked a breaking point with hierarchies and binaries perpetuated throughout modernity.¹²

Inquiring into identity in relation to experience[s] requires understanding the foundations and ideologies of differentiation whose goals are to sustain human hierarchies. This is crucial because it allows formulating a perception regarding constructs projected onto one’s body; simultaneously, by tracing back hierarchisations beyond white cisgender phenomenologies, it is possible to find out what happens [and what happened] when wchp impositions are dismissed; it is possible to highlight how egalitarian relationalities thrive when wchp is not operating as ruling force; and it is possible to celebrate those who still stand despite wchp’s efforts to make them otherwise.

This research articulates some of the different ways in which the body can be used as medium and method to trace affective manifestations implicated in the endurance of wchp. In doing so, I propose alternatives to pre-established perceptions of embodiment that amplify the liveable non-hetero futurities being materialised in the present.

— questions and companions

In order to speak of something that has no shape — affect, sensation, emotion, something that is not measurable with universalised tools for scientific measurement, something that is not

¹¹ Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic Principle.”

¹² In relation to modernity, I consider knowing and being to have been co-defining of experience. This entails having an approach to phenomenology inseparable from ontology and epistemology. Throughout my thesis I will refer mostly to phenomenology, as experience of cisheteronormativity is my focus; I will refer to denied ontology, as articulated by Frantz Fanon; and knowledge at large as a dominant structure derived from colonialism and imperialism. Additionally, I refer to empiricism as the privileged approach deployed by the wchp subject to theoretically ground what experience entails.

capture-able by the privileges of empiricism, it is necessary to create alternative ways of speaking.¹³ I have been thinking through research methods from thinkers whose fields are different from the one I mainly work in: fine art. Some of these methods inhabit a space of liminality within academia: they are termed methods and methodologies, but they are not allowed to stand on their own as touchstones or enabling tools that will grant research validation. Yet, in enabling foundational propositions in research fields such as anthropology, ethnography, and historiography, methods such as amplification, critical fabulation, the subjunctive as writing method within science and speculative fiction, prove to be essential for the ground-breaking work they enable: an anthropology beyond the human, a narrative beyond what is recognised within colonial archives, and a mode of writing that emphasises possibility rather than validation.¹⁴ These methods are used to challenge the frameworks establishing borders of inclusion and exclusion, including in academia, derived from constructions of what it means to be Human.

Situating the problem in my own research I question:

How can methods and methodologies operating under a fine art framework help to bring into crisis white, cisgender, heteronormative and patriarchal supremacist forms of knowledge production and perpetuation?

Referring to white privilege in academia and academic discourse, Audre Lorde warned a long time ago that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”¹⁵ When white supremacy turns into “white fragility” in the maintenance of fixed definitions of academic

¹³ My understanding of “universal” and how I use it throughout this thesis derives from Denise Ferreira da Silva. In *Towards a Black Feminist Poethics*, da Silva speaks of universalised tools for scientific measurement in reference to the way science and philosophy construed the wchp subject as the ultimate symbol of cognitive superiority. I contextualise my position in relation to wchp supremacy in science and philosophy in chapter one. Denise Ferreira da Silva, “Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(lon) of Blackness Toward the End of the World,” *The Black Scholar* 44, no. 2 (June 2014): 81–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2014.11413690>.

¹⁴ In reference to Eduardo Kohn, Saidiya Hartman, and Samuel R. Delany, further developed in chapter one, on methods and methodologies.

¹⁵ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), 112.

production, it bears deeper consequences on what is considered knowledge, questions of belonging, and what is or what can be a research method.¹⁶

The question then becomes:

How does one make tangible the immeasurable and unpredictable without being averted and undercut by the tools still sustaining the master's house?

My research journey has a practice-led entry point, and specific literary companions were key for me to understand how to position my research in relation to broader questions of knowledge production and reproduction. The work of Sylvia Wynter and Zakiyyah Iman Jackson allowed me to set the premises from which to speak about the tendentious definitions of history and knowledge, to formulate a relationship with conducting a practice-led PhD research focusing on the endurance of cisgender and heteronormative structures, whilst exposing the institutionalised challenges faced when conducting inquiries on that which is denied validity: violence and oppression implemented by white, cisgender, heteronormative and patriarchal supremacist frameworks.

Later, I understood that the answer to my question are propositions put forward by the ways some art practices have the ability to materialise the affective structures implicated in the endurance of white, cisgender, and heteropatriarchal frameworks, because it is through the articulation of endurance and resistance, as well as the dismissal of these oppressive structures, that art practices further delineate social, political, educational, and cultural modes of existing otherwise.

The above was a pivotal moment in my research journey because there is a shift in logic when one is allowed to discuss affect, emotion, sensation in terms that can encompass embodied experience spliced with self-identification. Considering the ways in which “[t]hrough the

¹⁶ According to Robin DiAngelo, white fragility is nurtured by “how seldom we experience racial discomfort in a society we dominate, we haven’t had to build our racial stamina. Socialized into a deeply internalized sense of superiority that we either are unaware of or can never admit to ourselves, we become highly fragile in conversations about race.” Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 21.

concept of aesthetics, Western philosophy colonised aesthesis in the name of modernity,” it is possible to point at how logics following white and/or cisgender phenomenologies cannot encompass a totality of what embodied experience entails.¹⁷

Articulating feelings of tension is no easy task, it is different to feel something than it is to describe it, to make sense of the reasons behind what one is made to feel; the viscosity of affect conveyed by some of the artists and thinkers referenced throughout my thesis allowed me to read sensation, affect, and emotion in ways that I had no vocabulary to express. Xine Yao’s work on disaffection, especially on hierarchisations of feeling; N Katherine Hayles’ work on nonconscious cognition, specifically on the ways memory resurfaces through the body; and the way Tina Campt speaks *with* the *hapticality* of images, were of incomparable help to digest, to make sense of my own feelings and affective responses, as well as their relation to broader social, political, cultural, and educational structures.¹⁸

My practice-led artistic research explores the intangibilities of embodied/lived experience in tandem with the material realities they create. I follow a photographic inquiry into nonconscious (re)surfacing of memories in order to map the semiotic processes affecting my [past and present] identity formation. Through visual and spoken narratives, I share concrete confrontations with cisheteronormativities to articulate the injuries these confrontations inflict in my own body. I have termed the complexity of these confrontations material intangibilities, a term through which I expose the endurance of white, patriarchal, cisgendered, and

¹⁷ Walter Mignolo, “Decolonial Aisthesis and Other Options Related to Aesthetics,” in *Black Europe Body Politics*, eds. Alanna Lockward and Walter Mignolo, (Berlin: Kultursprünge e.V. im Ballhaus Naunynstrasse, 2012), 5-7.

“Being against something is also being for something” — opposing wchp is not an attack on white people [nor white philosophers], opposing wchp is going against Whiteness is an ideology derived from universal tools for scientific measurement. Ahmed, *Cultural*, 175.

¹⁸ Xine Yao, *Disaffected: The cultural politics of unfeeling in nineteenth-century America*, (Duke University Press: Durham, London, 2021); N Katherine Hayles, *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious* (Chicago — London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 49; Tina Campt, *A Black Gaze: Artists Changing How We See* (The MIT Press: Cambridge, London, 2019).

The word haptic changes meaning depending on the context of its use, a word that serves the purpose of speaking of sensorial experiences is tied to the way each subject goes through that experience. Thus, I refer to Campt’s hapticality because through her work I can understand the way she speaks with images can relate to the scars of long term endurance.

heteronormative impositions. As a consequence, the term material intangibilities enables asking:

What are some of the ways through which art based practices articulate how the immateriality of affect manifests itself on the body?

To do so, I sought to answer:

In what ways does *mis*-locating bodily narratives allows revisiting nonconscious semiosis of affect[s]?

– methods and methodologies

Fine art is the working methodology defining my research. I do not want to imply that some art practices are better than others, or that fine art is more capacious than other fields. The section above mirrors, in a way, what makes an artistic practice and research capacious and appropriate for me to inquire into material intangibilities; I re-visit memories through a photographic mapping that shapes the viscosity of affect tied to specific experiences, and through them I re-write, re-shape, respond to material and immaterial implications of enduring oppressive structures. *With* my practice I expose and shape some of the inflictions brought upon by social and political [supremacist] systems, whilst reclaiming what still stands despite these inflictions. The possibilities of working in fine art are similar to possibilities of working in other creative practices where the body can be exercised as medium and method. In fine art I can work *with* and *through* the body, exercising methods that emphasise the way my body manifests sensation in relation to experience. Considering Mignolo and Vázquez' relational analysis of aesthesis and aesthetics, I pose a challenge to ontologies privileging wchp, and reclaim through practice a self-defined experiencing of the world.¹⁹ In addressing the impositions of hierarchised affective structures, I share a subjective experience that is not arrested by the frameworks of normativity.

¹⁹ Transnational Decolonial Institute, "Decolonial Aesthesis (I)," *Transnational Decolonial Institute*, accessed: September 2018, <https://transnationaldecolonialinstitute.wordpress.com/decolonial-aesthetics/>.

I work mostly with moving image and photographic assemblages to convey speculative non-fiction narratives. I chose the term speculative *non-fiction*, instead of speculative writing, creative writing, auto-fiction, or other combinations the aforementioned words can form. Speculative non-fiction (snf) is more about claiming a different space than what the accuracy of naming the genre in such terms entails; snf is the term I decided to use after engaging with the work of Samuel R. Delany, Joanna Russ, and Saidiya Hartman. Their understanding of *speculative* is tied to the grammatical possibilities enabled when deploying the subjunctive as a methodological framework which, despite being used differently by each of them, allows highlighting possibility without being held back by fact based [archived] structures defining what is, or should be accounted for.

My angle is not exclusively about what is erased from history — although the erased past certainly defined and shaped our present. By staying close to the wide encompassing umbrella that speculative fiction can be, I focus on what certainly has happened, regardless of whether or not the occurrence I share is considered real or valid. Situating what certainly *has happened* in a world dominated by hierarchised relationalities, where “certainty” is dependent on to whom a given thing happened, I claim certain experiences as not fictional; they might be speculative in the sense that detail can be blurred, or there is no record of the happening itself. Thus, the term speculative non-fiction is what best serves to claim a space for what certainly has happened, but it is not acknowledged within measuring systems deciding on what counts and what doesn't. As Xine Yao eloquently puts it: “[u]niversal feeling is a ruse when only some feelings are privileged as true. So let us push beyond the claim that all feelings matter.”²⁰

In working with images of my own archive I could map resembling moments through the memories these images brought me. I focus on the childhood pictures that throw me into early adulthood through the sensations those images provoke; I then seek images from early

²⁰ The denial of facts is as dangerous as the denial of experiences for which there are no facts. These are not comparable, but the strategies are similar: claiming one's individual experience is a method used across all social strata. My argument and use of speculative non-fiction should not be confused with right wing supremacist lines of thought disguising, for example, hate speech with freedom of speech (Butler, 1999); I am amplifying what is not allowed within a structure of racialised and gendered supremacy. I do not stand with ideals of political neutrality in the name of equality, it is very clear to me that political neutrality only benefits the oppressor; I do not stand with diversity endeavours where “everyone is welcomed,” this is a deception to accommodate and justify hierarchies of governance in which embedded beliefs of superiority persist.

Yao, *Disaffected*, 210.

adulthood through which I can identify memories with similar sensations to the ones revealed in childhood images. This method allows me to develop visual narratives that amplify semantic and semiotic constructions and their interplays with wchp.

In my spoken and written narratives I develop Eduardo Kohn's amplification into a method to address and emphasise the consequences of enduring confrontations with normative structures from childhood to adulthood, it is a way to account for *effereces* tied to specific moments – regardless of factual accounts, or the lack of them.²¹ Concurrently, I *mis*-locate the origin of narrative, or the voice of narration, to point exactly at where and how this *efferece* of normativity is manifesting itself. Additionally, through the bibliographic choice of decentring white-western oriented thought, I elaborate on the possible ways in which one's socio-political agency might be affected by an absent non-hetero futurity. When I say collective, I refer to how one's affected behaviour is not a singular incident, it is embedded in a multiplicity of positions and relationalities, demanding thus accountability from all factors involved, or the acknowledgement that the subject is not to be understood individually, but rather in a *sociogenically* constructed way.²² I speak of an absent non-hetero futurity throughout my thesis; absence has different shapes in my work. I departed from Eduardo Kohn's phrasing of how, in the forest, what is absent in the present is indicative what will happen in the future, for example: an animal not being present means rain will come. In chapter four I return absence and hope being materialised in present: the absence of wchp in certain circles or spaces is, to me, a sign of hope in the present. Throughout my thesis I do not phrase absence as possibility; this understanding is only deepened in the last chapter and conclusion, where I started to think about utopia in relation to the absence of wchp.

– structure

In chapter one, *on methods and methodologies*, I follow some of the potential frictions of conducting research about that which is immaterial – affect, sensation, emotion. I address my understanding and use of amplification, critical fabulation, and the subjunctive as research

²¹ Kohn, *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology beyond the Human*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013, 62.

²² Wynter, *Towards*, 47.

methods. What these methods enable works in tandem with the exposure of the different ways in which definitions *plasticised* throughout modernity, *inventions* of contemporary medicine, and “scientific” classifications of what biologically constitutes the Human, all contribute to the maintenance of the master's house.²³ This chapter directly engages with the possibilities I found when reformulating and expanding on the ideas of Amber Jamilla Musser, Saidiya Hartman, Samuel Delany, and Eduardo Kohn. Their works enabled me to develop methods and processes to creatively confront hierarchised forms of knowledge production and reproduction.

In distinguishing fine arts from mainstream academia throughout my thesis, I expose how the *corroboration* of facts in relation to endurance and resistance to cisheteropatriarchy is irrelevant to develop arguments of what care, solidarity and equality entail. In situating cisheteropatriarchy as a universalised framework of normativity, violently deployed by some to perpetuate a hierarchised sense of humanity, I emphasise how lived experiences are not comparable, and cannot, therefore, be used to generate frameworks sustaining universalisations of normalcy. By defining the methods and methodologies used throughout my practice and research, I begin to shape possible actions and approaches to dismantle, or perhaps dismiss some of the structures sustaining the “master’s house.”

By focusing specifically on the immateriality of affect, and its material consequences, I understand how art based inquiries can regenerate what our bodies sense, but cannot make sense of.²⁴ I indicate how research methods deployed *through* fine art can provide embodied accounts of what enduring supremacist frameworks entails. In doing so, I explain my reference to injury with the adjective immaterial by foregrounding how these immaterialities manifest themselves in concrete and material ways. This first chapter equips the reader with an understanding of the methos and methodologies in practice from chapter two onwards.

²³ In order of reference: Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World*, (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 71-73; Paul B. Preciado, (2017) “Benno Premesela Lecture 2017 by Paul B. Preciado,” *Benno Premesela Lecture*, (Rotterdam: the Netherlands, 2 November), <https://vimeo.com/245019294>, minute 01:12:02; Wynter, *Towards*, 40-41; Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 112.

²⁴ Phrased after Karen Barad’s “Can we (re)generate what our bodies sense but cannot yet touch?” in “TransMaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (June 1, 2015): 387–422, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2843239>.

When reading chapters two to four it is highly recommended that the reader visits the moving image work I refer to; I remind the reader to visit the work, and where it can be found through footnotes. In chapter two, *A Faggot/Dyke Anthology — practice led research part I*, I explain the way revisiting early experiences is a mediating practice between consciousness [present] and nonconscious cognition [embodied memory]. Using an equation drafted through Amber Jamilla Musser's work, I investigate sensations felt [manifested] in moments of protest[ing] in relation to confrontations with cisheteronormativity. This process began with staging Sara Lucas' self-portraits, then moved into using images of my own archive to respond to Sara Lucas', and finally evolved into a photographic assemblage of adult and childhood responding to specific confrontations with wchp. This chapter centres the visual and spoken narrative titled *A Faggot/Dyke Anthology (Faggot/Dyke)*, which constitutes a journey of tracing back and pursuing the sensational affinity across memories of early adulthood experiences of protest, and some memories of my childhood.²⁵

Here, I put forward a photographic investigation by following images that instigate pre-adulthood memories, remembering[s] that tie — and are triggered by — experiences of street protest[ing] to questions of embodiment before I had the language to speak of their existence: ways of dealing with imposed cisheteronormativity. I weave Terrence Deacon's understanding of *form* via Eduardo Kohn, and into N. Katherine Hayles' nonconscious cognition, and formulate a hypothesis around what I will argue to function as nonconscious semiosis of affect.

In this chapter I give an account of the ways my practice informs the claims I make through my research; I expand on the way my methods function, the shifts and reorientation of focus these methods catalyse, and how the situated outcome of each work foregrounds a piece of the overall puzzle composing and shaping my research.

Chapter three, *Material intangibilities — practice-led research, part II*, is the most vulnerable chapter of my thesis, it titles my PhD research, and intends to show how injuries provoked by wchp are undeniably real. Here, I touch upon allegedly harmless habits, like the use of perfume, phrasings such as saying “hi guys,” or “how are you guys doing?,” to develop my argument around the reasons why I chose the term material intangibilities to speak of some of the inflictions shaped through patterns derived from wchp.

²⁵ *A Faggot/Dyke Anthology*, 2020, Available at: <https://marianaaboim.hotglue.me/?A>.

Aided by the work of Xine Yao in *Disaffected*, I point at how the way one responds, resists, and refuses offensive impositions is often weaponised, intentionally transformed to offset responsibility between injured and offender.²⁶ I further deepen how the long-term confrontation with these patterns in hierarchised relationalities leads to injuries that are at times invisible, such as headaches or muscle knots. Through my art practice I address the difficulties of working with the immateriality of affect, and I reveal my articulation of how the immateriality of affect manifests itself on my body. I give an account of how *mis*-location of narrative can contribute to articulating the viscosity with which some affective structures are manifested; in doing so, I amplify what is invisible, immeasurable, and allow for what is happening in the body to become materially tangible. By inquiring into some of the ways one embodies *form* — the production and reproduction of patterns, I heighten what is made imperceptible, institutionalised, and normalised by wchp.

I conclude this chapter with an analysis of Johanna Hedva's *A Decade of Sleeping*, the work through which I came to understand and define material intangibilities, as well as its relation to speculative non-fiction.

In Chapter four, *Patterns of resistance — practice led research part III*, I move towards further dissecting some of the patterns implicated in resistance to imposed standards of normativity. I reiterate the ways I use speculative non-fiction in my practice as a vehicle to surpass demands of *corroborability*, to surpass the constant dismissal regarding experiences that are not acknowledged by wchp through marginalisation and pathologisation.

Patterns of resistance brings together repurposing and readdressing images, *mis*-location of narrative, and amplification. I deepen the use of these methods to shape some of the answers to my research questions. I address tiredness in relation to long term endurance of normativity, in relation to having one's experiences dismissed, and one's responses pathologised; I speak of the ways injury and repair work hand in hand with resistance; and through the work of Linn da Quebrada, I give an example of a creative practice that I consider to collapse gendered epistemologies.

²⁶ Yao, *Disaffected*.

I weave Arthur Jafa's analysis on the way dub structures enable hyperawareness of loss with Tina Campt's description of still-moving-images; and through the work of Tanu Gago, I begin formulating the conclusions drawn through my work. *Penchantly gay* is the practice work I finish with. I transform penchant into *penchantly*, so as to reveal a different type of *form*, one that moves against wchp despite socially imposed mainstream normativities.

The attention given to the transformation in my own affective awareness, especially over the last four years, going through mappings of affinities across childhood and adulthood led me to conclude this practice-led PhD research with a work titled *Penchantly gay*. Through this series of archival photographic assemblages, I reveal paths towards [absent] non-hetero futurities being materialised in the present; I reiterate the way inflictions of normativities perpetuate hierarchies based on wchp; and through this reiteration I emphasise what must urgently be dismantled, whilst celebrating a queer body [still] standing.

In addition to the chapter structure above I provide a second abstract, a glossary of terms that serves as guide to my own position within the field of artistic research. I indicate my bibliographic choices of specific thinkers whose work dissects historical constructions shaping hierarchised relationalities. I do this by triangulating the indivisibility of phenomenology, art, and affect through some of the arguments foregrounded by the Transnational Decolonial Institute on colonisation of aesthetics through aesthetics; Sylvia Wynter and Zakiyyah Iman Jackson's mapping of the historical contexts through which racial contemporary hierarchies operate; and Denise Ferreira da Silva's work on *raw* materialism. I give an account of my understanding of *raw* in relation to solidarity in moments of protest[ing]; I explore da Silva's proposition of virtuality, and how virtuality helped me to understand my relation to protest.

This last section situates my approach to affect when addressing the privileged historicisation of phenomenology as the acknowledged philosophical approach defining what experience entails, as well as how I have learned to identify the way western centred phenomenologies fall short in their ability to account for experiences of those who fail a wchp canon. Here, I acknowledge the lineage shaping the way I understand inventions of gender as part of histories of enforced racial hierarchies; and I point at the indivisibility of affect, phenomenology and art so as to understand how to speak of endurance of wchp.

Chapter 1 – *On methods and methodologies*

Language conflates meaning, grounding its veracity through systems of inclusion and exclusion that depart from colonial constructions of what it means to be Human.²⁷ Paying attention to linguistic constructions is part of my work, I address them because of the way some constructions affect modes of address that implicate normalised forms of misrepresentation.²⁸

Partly building on Joan Scott's *Evidence of Experience*, Carlos Ulises Decena's chapter *Experiencing the Evidence* shares modes of feeling that cannot be captured by the "empirical" or fully comprehended within a western phenomenological approach.²⁹ Decena speaks of strategies used by queers to survive in a world that seems incompatible with their liveability; he speaks of a knowability that has no ground [or validity] if measured through wchp. Decena is trying to articulate a *sense*, something he describes through Gloria Anzaldúa as *la facultad*; a form of knowing that is stored in the body, and is manifested through the ways the body senses unsafety, fear, instability, or any form of anxiety. This ability to sense danger is the state of being alert developed by marginalised bodies due to their *knowability* of violent inflictions produced and sustained by wchp. According to Decena, this ability to *sense* defines how "[b]odies eccentric to normativity offer sites to trace capacities to experience the evidence," which asserts the reasoning regarding the ways *experiencing the evidence* cannot be articulated through systems of measurability that created the selected marginalisation of [some] experiences in the first place.³⁰

Building on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's chiasm, Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning recites the ways Anishinaabe philosophies live life through a *with-ness* that surpasses divisions embedded in phenomenology. In hypothesising how an individual is able to confer both an objective and subjective perspective, Merleau-Ponty speaks of chiasm through the example of one's hand

²⁷ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 48-49.

²⁸ I have read some of Mikhail Bakhtin's work on the diversification of language; I have read Tyler Bradway's *Queer Experimental Literature*, among few other works done under a linguistics umbrella. I decided not to engage with linguistics specifically, but rather engage with work that helped me to make sense of my own affective responses in relation to self-identity.

²⁹ Decena, *Circuits of the Sacred*, 57-80.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 64.

being able to feel through touch, as well as feeling through being touched; but, for him the mutual experience of touching and being touched was not possible to have at the same time.³¹ Manning counters Merleau-Ponty's chiasm, and claims that according to other than human ontologies formulated through *mnidoo-worlding* "consciousness emerges as a kind of possession by what is outside of self and simultaneously by what is internal as self-possession."³² Manning's argument resembles Fanon's double consciousness — the sense of having one's self-identity deprived, and substituted instead by the imposed identity of a subordinate other. There is an outside and inside co-constitutive of what experiencing the world entails. Manning's approach to chiasm can recite the divide of feeling one's identity, and yet not being recognised due to the imposition of patterns of normativity.

Flirting with Decena's working through *la facultad*, and Manning's reworking of a binary chiasm, I *mis*-name these tensions as a *gut feeling* of self-protection, mixed with freedom *for* being in the world. When self-protection becomes an embodied instinct, because of not being in line with externally imposed normativity, then incompatibility becomes the standard imposed onto non-normative ways of living. Freedom *for* being is resisting to constraining frameworks preventing one's right to live through anything other than what sustains white, cisgender, heteronormative, and patriarchal normality, engendering thus an antagonism of empirically experiencing a denied ontology which provokes an identity crisis in western phenomenology.

Working through the tension between what is self-identified and what is projected onto the self, Decena and Manning's arguments help me to further address some the difficulties of articulating how affect materialises itself differently in different bodies, what I later explore through material intangibilities.

In reference to speculative fiction (SF), Samuel Delany writes that the physically explainable is much more capacious in articulation than the personally observable, "for not only does it throw

³¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes*, ed. Claude Lefort, Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1968), 214-130-155, 215.

³² Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning, "Mnidoo-Worlding: Merleau-Ponty and Anishinaabe Philosophical Translations," PhD thesis, University of Western Ontario, 2017, <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/5171/>, 1 and 212. Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning, "Mnidoo-Worlding: Merleau-Ponty and Anishinaabe Philosophical Translations" (London, Canada, Western University, 2017), <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/517>.

us worlds away, it specifies how we got there.”³³ According to Delany, the personally observable can be explained through the physically explainable, and that does not happen the other way around. The physically explainable encompasses what could have happened, but for which there is no proof — if there were a style of agnostic fiction, this would be it! The subjunctive can expand on definitions of empirical experience by focusing on what can result from embodied understanding[s] that are not always explainable. Thinking about what the subjunctive in speculative fiction can do through Joanna Russ’ reading of Delany’s conceptualisation of the term, I focus on the tensions that arise within a writing that encompasses both what is possible and impossible, or, to use Russ’ words: a writing that encompasses both what is “neither possible nor impossible.”³⁴ Enduring wchp is neither possible nor impossible, it is not possible from the position of denied ontology attributed to marginalised bodies, and it is possible, because these experiences are concrete and real. I will continue this discussion and ground my argument in the chapter *material intangibilities*, where I present photographic investigations and moving image work that articulates some of the ways normativity manifests itself on the body.

I began to describe my narratives as speculative non-fiction, as to emphasise that there is absolutely nothing fictional about the ways normative impositions inflict distinct degrees of harm. Speculative engages with immeasurability, unpredictability, and yet, it can also be non-fictional in its engagement with concrete materialisations of affect.

— amplification

Social theories have grounded meaning through words, making them synonyms of what something represents. In *How Forests Think*, Eduardo Kohn dives into modes of representation, interpretation, and co-constitution of meaning among human and nonhuman selves, as means to break some of the barriers through which human exceptionalism is constructed.³⁵ Kohn

³³ Samuel R. Delany, *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*, Rev. ed (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), 12.

³⁴ Joanna Russ, *To Write like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 22.

³⁵ Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 7.

argues for an anthropology beyond the human, an approach that is encompassing enough to acknowledge that what constitutes the world is ontologically consequent of interactions of multiple species. According to Kohn, the commonality across human and nonhuman beings is the fact that all live through the production and interpretation of signs (semiosis), indicating how it is not possible to understand the world exclusively in fixed epistemological terms. Pursuing semiotic processes across species, Kohn describes distinct ways multiple beings perceive *one* same sign, explaining how their interpretations contribute to the co-constitution of meaning.³⁶ Different kinds of self[s] existing in and around the forest formulate semiotic interactions, which then results in situated aftereffects of processes through which meaning is generated.³⁷ When acknowledging that “we are not the only kind of we,” Kohn refers to an ever transforming aeon in which “[a]ll life is semiotic and all semiosis is alive. In important ways, then, life and thought are one and the same: life thinks; thoughts are alive.”³⁸

Entering the forest with the Runa people, Kohn argues that the complexity by which different species relate to the forest is amplified.³⁹ His argumentation is based on the way Quichua language can *amplify* by the way it *speaks* meaning[s]: its sound stresses aspects that require more than words to produce understanding[s] of what a word is referring to.⁴⁰ In order to understand these particularities, Kohn proposes amplification as a methodological strategy of analysis within his autoethnographic-anthropological research, enabling him to speak of what is unmediated through universalised languages and ways of making meaning. In more complex ways, amplification centres the ways the Runa try to comprehend specific aspects of the forest by observing other kinds of self[s]. These are ways of understanding and learning that

³⁶ Ibid, 9.

³⁷ I use self[s] instead of selves, it mirrors the existence of various self, rather than signifying them with one word that encompasses a group of selves.

³⁸ Ibid, 16. For amplification specifically see page 22 and 67.

³⁹ According to Kohn an example of how words mirror what they define is “*Tsupu*, or *tsupuuu^h*, as it is sometimes pronounced, with the final vowel dragged out and aspirated, refers to an entity as it makes contact with and then penetrates a body of water; think of a big stone heaved into a pond or the compact mass of a wounded peccary plunging into a river’s pool. *Tsupu* probably did not immediately conjure such an image (unless you speak lowland Ecuadorian Quichua). But what did you feel upon learning what it describes? Once I tell people what *tsupu* means, they often experience a sudden feel for its meaning: “Oh, of course, *tsupu!*,” 28.

⁴⁰ Runa is a community from Ávila, Ecuador, with whom Eduardo Kohn spent about two decades conducting research that led to *How Forests Think*.

demonstrate how relational forces that are not exclusively human reveal phenomena in the forest, making thus evident how the world is co-constituted through semiotic processes.⁴¹



Figure 2: *How are you guys doing?* digital collage, 2021

Following Kohn’s critique of universalised languages and ways of making meaning, I question “normalised” forms of address, such as saying “hi guys,” or asking “how are you guys doing?” I intended to amplify the blurred line between misgendering confusions projected onto me, and naïve embodiments of wchp behaviour that those common forms of address display. I was always particularly attentive to the frequent use of “hi guys,” because I *am* often thought to be a guy. I began to play with the titles of my work in a form of amplification that could refer to semiotic confusion regarding gender perception, forms of legibility, and representation.

⁴¹ It is important to note that *How Forests Think* is the result of nearly two decades of field research in Ávila, the relationalities in which Kohn was embedded cannot fully be understood without the embodied experience he underwent. Moreover, it is my understanding that his research is biased by his own positionality, his fascinations (such as with a tanager bird, pp 47-49), and by an experience that [I assume] the readers of that book did not have.

I understand amplification in the lines used by Johanna Hedva when construing their feeling of listening to Nine Inch Nails at the age of 13 or 14, and shouting the lyrics “I want to fuck you like an animal.”⁴² Describing an episode when they *had* to go to a sleepover, Hedva depicts being put in a position in which one is expected to enjoy, to have fun, to be healthy even, and yet having the sensation of rot and emptiness on the inside mirroring the wish to be anywhere else rather than where you are; feeling something akin to the antonym of stomach butterflies, a feeling to which Hedva found some relief *through* improperly being “a person lonely and young and singing to herself, leaning in to that bizarre world on the screen, with its spinning eggs and crucified monkey and apple-mouthed pig and split-open nautilus, the world that summoned something powerful and fundamental in me and told me that, although I felt like it, I was not world-less.”⁴³

Hedva's amplification exposes what imposed normative relationalities entail, to which I relate to being deprived of choice due to lacking words to articulate a precocious queerness, and the burdening fear imposed by normality. Similarly, in my writing I exercise amplification to distance myself from universal measurements due to their way of dealing with *corroborability* of argument; it is an attitude akin to believing in a *utopic* hopeful futurity: just because it is [or might] not [be] realistic to fight for social justice, it does not mean one will stop fighting for it. I use amplification as a method to address difficulties of articulation when facing suppression, discomfort, and instinctive resistance to patterns of normativity. In *Vampires*, I analyse the relation between believing in vampires and prepubescent pleasure;⁴⁴ through theories available [for children via *Once Upon a Time*] I could perfectly explain why vampires existed; I also found it perfectly reasonable to think that masturbation was good because it gave pleasure. Through amplification I inquire into the magnitude of some experiences I remember [and re-remember]; in *Vampires* I expose the confusion regarding punishment for pleasure, my consequent suspicion and lack of trust in adult behaviour, as well my way of assuming something “perfectly explainable,” like the existence of vampires, served to prove that I had no right to deduce what

⁴² Johanna Hedva, “They’re Really Close To My Body: A Hagiography of Nine Inch Nails and Their Resident Mystic Robin Finck,” no. 27 (March 2020), <https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/theyre-really-close-to-my-body/>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ After this paragraph would be a good moment to watch *Vampires*. In, This is tomorrow, “RCA | Entanglement: The Opera (a homage to Kurt Weill’s white cheese),” 20 Feb 2019, <https://youtu.be/BYLneFLulik?t=3477>, min.: 57:57.

was good or bad. Later, I return to merging amplification with *mis*-location, in pursuit of understanding and giving voice to some of the injuries inflicted through encounters with wchp.

– critical fabulation

In *Venus in Two Acts*, Saidiya Hartman revisits the archive of slavery in an attempt of getting closer “to a biography of the captured and the enslaved.”⁴⁵ Hartman seeks to uncover something other than the tendentious creations appointed by the west as what counts as History. In imagining another narrative, Hartman seeks the possible agency in narrative that would have allowed knowing otherwise the stories of Venus — and the girls Venus represents.

The attempt to rewrite a story that imagines what could have been is a paradox, Hartman is aware that that would be “a story predicated upon impossibility.”⁴⁶ She points at how telling Venus’ stories would either be romanticising, or would perpetuate the violence that the archive tells. Departing from a place of impossibility, Hartman stays with speculations of what could have been, whilst continuously addressing the restrictions and impossibilities of what she is doing. Through her writing process, Hartman exposes biased making[s] of history, her inquiry here is a continuously going *through* process that seeks to engage with something other than murderous and objectifying accounts composing the archives of slavery.⁴⁷

It is only after going through the process of writing, of being confronted with the impossibility of writing without replicating the violence present in the archive that Hartman realised the potential in flattening the discourse, as it can precisely contest the “authenticity” of [the fictions of] “History.”⁴⁸ She continues working with and against the archive in the exposure of its flaws, and it is in these revisiting[s] that something changes. The revisiting of the archive is a second act, a revisiting that frees itself from what the archive dictates, and gravitates towards the alternative

⁴⁵ Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe*, Volume 12, Number 2, no. 26 (June 2008): 1–14, 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 2.

⁴⁷ Hartman is referring to the “hundreds of thousands of other girls who share [Venus’] circumstances...”
Ibid.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 12.

that, despite unknown and unaccounted for, *could have been real*. “The outcome of this method is a “recombinant narrative,” which “loops the strands” of incommensurate accounts and which weaves present, past, and future in retelling the girl’s story and in narrating the time of slavery as our present.”⁴⁹ The past marks the present and conditions the future, and yet the resistance to acknowledge these *marks* persists. Hartman’s argument refuses to accept that what the archive tells is the *only* story. In refusing to narrate a romanticised story where violence is not the protagonist, Hartman ties her own refusal to the ways in which “intellectual disciplines” are still dismissive of the knowledge obliterated from the archives of their own creation.⁵⁰

“[T]he *history* of black counter-historical projects is one of failure, precisely because these accounts have never been able to install themselves as history, but rather are insurgent, disruptive narratives that are marginalized and derailed before they ever gain a footing.”⁵¹ Hartman’s way of doing theory entails an embodied experience with and through the archive: the engagement with a “history [that] engendered [her],” the knowledge of the other *marked* [her] existence.⁵² Contesting hierarchically imposed histories is contesting the knowledges permitted to exist as the only knowledges able to validate what are the grounded ways of doing theory. In contesting the veracity of what is being accounted for and what is not, Hartman exposes tendentious manipulations of what counts as history, and how lives have been made disposable its process.⁵³ Hartman states that Venus’ death was [still is] not enough to stop “other crimes,” she is a continuous reminder of the unachieved freedom in the aftermath of slavery, underlining that *We* are all accountable for her death until that freedom is real.⁵⁴

I circle back to the physically explainable when thinking about what creative practices can contribute to dismantling supremacist forms of knowledge. In her practice, visual artist Sandim Mendes attempts to re-create, re-imagine, re-visit what once was real, but for which there are

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 10.

⁵¹ Ibid, 13.

⁵² Ibid, 12.

⁵³ Ibid, 11.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 14.

no visual records. The processes of imagining, of listening [again] to oral accounts, and the retelling of situated knowledges through the way stories are shared across generations maintains entire histories alive. Much of Mendes' work engages with space-time crossings, she visits inherited stories through oral registers mixed with her own memories.



Figure 3: Sandim Mendes, *Ta bem um tempu ki*, 2017, courtesy of the artist

When surrounded by the installation *Ta bem um tempu ki*, 2017, one is absorbed by the voice of Sandim's mother telling a story that used to belong to Sandim's grandfather: a wondering around what the people from Cabo Verde might encounter in a seemingly dystopian future. Mendes' grandfather was a griot, a storyteller through whom much of Cabo Verde's genealogies were kept alive. In *Ta bem um tempu ki*, Mendes recreates a narrative that shares

a story that belonged to her grandfather, a narrative that helps to fill in some of the gaps left through the erosion of histories occurring without the work of a griot.⁵⁵

In conversation about her work, Sandim explains how histories from her own family archive reveal themselves through embodied experiences, leading her to state “I see images.”⁵⁶ Mendes travels through her ancestry, and it is upon return from these visits that she overcomes the paradoxical impossibility of creating an archive of immaterial components. Mendes’ practice puts forward “information that is unaccounted for, historically dismissed facts, and stories for which there are only oral accounts.”⁵⁷ It is what Saidiya Hartman describes as trying “to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling” due to demands for facts when following western doctrines in the making of *His-story*.⁵⁸ The histories Sandim Mendes writes through her practice convey visual possibilities of what could have been, what for her is physically explainable despite not personally observable to all.

The personally observable is used to claim empirical evidence by those defined as a “normal” subject, and *difference* is a category weaponised in definitions of normativity to enforce a hierarchy that places the “normal” subject at the top. The above creative practices emphasise the way lived experiences are not the same; they foreground the importance of acknowledging that *difference* is not comparable. Both Hartman and Mendes point at the urgency to address difference as universally inaccessible, whilst acknowledging difference as an imposed universality. Critical fabulations, as well as subjunctive accounts of what is physically explainable expose how proof is irrelevant for the corroboration of an event, because these approaches show the impossible as possibilities. These methods and what they enable highlight what has been made invisible, erased, and deprived of accountability throughout

⁵⁵ *Ta bem um tempu ki* is an installation composed of textile and sound. A sample of the sound piece can be found here: <https://www.sandimmendes.com/ta-bem-um-tempo-ki>.

⁵⁶ In conversation about her work, Sandim explains how histories from her own family archive reveal themselves through embodied experiences, leading her to state that she “sees images.” Information available in: Mariana Aboim, “(re)Making of Histories — Embodied Memories of a Verbal Archive in the Work of Sandim Mendes,” in *Atlantica: Contemporary art from Cabo-Verde, Guiné-Bissau & São Tomé e Príncipe and its Diasporas*, ed. César Schofield Cardoso (Lisboa: Hagar, 2021), 121.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 112.

⁵⁸ Hartman, “Venus,” 11.

inventions of history, which inevitably reinstates the question of how to speak of experience from the place of a denied ontology.

— undoing cisheteronormativity

In *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power and Masochism*, Amber Jamilla Musser argues that using sensation as an analytic within BDSM (bondage, discipline, dominance and submission, sadomasochism) allows understanding the ways in which individuals relate to one another through, and outside [dominant] power structures.⁵⁹ Musser provides an interpretation of sensation as exteriorised in the form of social, political and cultural agencies: “[i]f we conceive of experience as the narrative that consciousness imposes on a collection of sensations, sensation provides a way for us to explore corporeality without reifying identity.”⁶⁰ Experience is the output, the exteriorisation of what has been previously sensed. Sensation shapes behaviour, choice, taste — sensation is individually felt, and yet distinguishable through the ways in which it is exteriorised. I understand what Musser contends not as unidirectional, but rather as an entry point to analyse experience, and taking into account the context and characteristics marking a person.

Musser maps expressions of sensation through practices and definitions [or analysis] of masochism. Thinking through the work of Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, Leo Bersani and Lee Edelman, Musser reiterates that the freedom provided by S&M (sadism & masochism) is extended by thinking pleasure outside heteronormative conceptions: (heterosexual) reproduction and (genital) pleasure; opening thus possibilities to think of different forms for bodily relations.

Sensational Flesh provides a summary of Freud’s pathologisation of heterosexual S&M as the confusion between pleasure and pain. Musser underlines that what Freud considers disorientations of sensation in S&M is the way sexual practitioners’ lean towards non-normative modes of pleasure; which can simultaneously challenge sexual forms of agency, but can also

⁵⁹ Musser, *Sensational Flesh*, 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 1.

reproduce discriminatory power relations. The reinforcement of hierarchies could be the performing of patriarchal colonial oppression; and its critique could be the inversion of roles, as argued by Krafft-Ebing: enacting dispossession of agency as a way to seek pleasure. Musser points at the difficulty in speaking of subversion due to constant appropriations and mainstreaming[s] that commodify identity signifiers [which can also be exemplified through contemporary tokenisations of *queer*, neoliberalisation of the word *resilience*, or generalisations of embodied experience in the name of *empathy*]. Situating what is considered exceptional [unusual, not normal] “exposes the political potency of subversion and the assumptions and silences about bodies, race, and gender that undergird this exceptionalism.”⁶¹

Through reading Foucault, Musser looks at new alliances formed by bodies intentionally challenging normativity. She focuses on Foucault’s propositions of resistance via negations to reproduction, and the analytic of “pleasure and creativity against desire and violence.”⁶² Foucault intentionally situates S&M through questions of governmentality, in order to think alternatively about power — seeing S&M as a space where it could be possible to surpass stereotypes around gay male sexual practices as reproducing power structures.

Musser’s interest in Lee Edelman’s ruptures of time lies in the refusal of its linearity in relation to what is prescribed by white cisgender heteronormativity. Edelman’s death drive is built around the idea that queerness disrupts normativity by placing itself outside reproduction. It is seen as an interruption of time, a refusal to the future and an instance in which [Human] continuation ceases to exist. Musser’s work in *Sensational Flesh*, but in *Sensual Excess* as well, is one that posits sexualities and sexual relationalities outside heteronormative structures as key to understand how individual situatedness[es] reveal ways of relating through, and outside [dominant] power structures.⁶³ As such, for Musser, the space between reification and derangement allows for semantic [and, following Kohn, semiotic] transmogrification [or, Jackson’s plasticity], reinserting understanding[s] of “radical,” “embodiment,” and “care” that

⁶¹ Musser, *Sensational Flesh*, 4.

⁶² *Ibid*, 11.

⁶³ Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance*, Sexual Cultures (New York: New York University, 2018).

pose continuous resistance to dominating frameworks hindering past, present, and future forms of justice and equality.⁶⁴

“Jouissance, the queer, homosexual desire, and stasis lie exterior to the folds of liberal subjectivity,” and yet, when sexuality is prioritised as the main marker of difference, other layers of identity are forgotten.⁶⁵ Musser contends that to start from identity markers reinforces difference without the embodied experience of difference itself. The lack of an intersectional approach to S&M makes Musser gravitate towards sensation as that which allows valuing how bodies have been made to feel differently through histories, politics, social status; focusing on sensation allows conceptualising difference as fluid and transformative processes indivisible from what shapes relations.

— empathetic reading

Empathetic reading is a practice and methodology Musser develops from Gilles Deleuze’s intensive reading; a process through which Deleuze tries to analyse sensations involved in reading practices, where the reader is a mediating agent between the text [or performance] and the context the reader is in. In Musser’s terms, the closeness of the reader and the text is marked by the way the reader’s context and embodied experience triggers an empathic sensation through the text; it is through empathy that the reader relates to what is being exteriorised in a text or performance, marking thus a closeness between the reader and the author.

Looking into histories of embodied knowledge through Elisabeth Freeman, Musser wants to highlight how the materiality of the body is crucial for the formulation and sharing of knowledge. Thinking about the materiality through which bodies apprehend, experience, and therefore formulate knowledge, Musser gravitates to thinking about sensation as key to understand knowledge beyond language. Through empathetic reading, Musser seeks to practice a

⁶⁴ Jackson uses the term *plasticity* to speak of the way blackness has been equated to being animal, being beast, being overly sexual, manipulated by whiteness so as to sustain the image of its invented negative other. For more see Abstract II, page 126.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 17.

methodology for analysis and interpretation that departs from the physicality of the flesh, focusing on affect and sensation within S&M practices, such as forms of arousal triggered by “the smell of a whip and the texture of a corset.”⁶⁶ By thinking about corporeality through the flesh, Musser contends, it is possible to focus on the social conditions that determine how bodies are perceived and defined differently. The risks of centring the flesh in an analysis of embodiment have to do with the ways in which flesh has been manipulated through power structures, so as to build hierarchies of difference. Acknowledging feminist and queer scholarship, Musser reiterates how the way different bodies relate to power, how different bodies experience power [but also knowledge] cannot be dissociated from the way “class, race, gender presentation, and sexuality (among other variables) [is] coproductive of identities.”⁶⁷

Analysing the way desire is manifested requires focusing on non-linguistic expressions that provoke sensation, questioning what triggers arousal, and forms of pleasure. In this way, according to Musser, it is possible to discern individuals by their *sensations*, *affects*, and *experiences*, rather than through class, race, gender, or sexuality. Musser’s analysis of masochism identifies multiple forms of relationality through which it is possible to map sensational affinities. As a mode of analysis and methodology, Musser argues, empathetic reading allows distinguishing how sensation emerges, how it exists (in texts or performances), and how it enables reading difference through sensations revealed in S&M practices.

In doing so, “[b]y placing flesh and difference at the center of knowledge production and circulation, it opens alternate modes of understanding circuits of power. This work centers sensation to look at how people experience power and subordination in a variety of disciplinary situations.”⁶⁸ It is not a matter of dismissing markers of identity, but a matter of departing from the aforementioned embodied and non-linguistic aspects of experience.

Following Musser’s assertion that sensation is processed by consciousness, which then marks one’s experience, then consciousness, based on a collection of sensations, shapes the ways

⁶⁶ Musser, *Sensational Flesh*, 21.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 30.

one experiences the world. How one is *made to feel* affects one's way of experiencing the world. If experience is the *efferece* of a sensational process, I would further suggest that social and political forms of agency are also *effereces* of a sensational process, but a process that is not necessarily operating at the level of consciousness — it can be an instinctive act, but it can also be what I call a nonconscious exteriorisation of embodied experience.

In order to understand Musser's propositions and modes of analysis I tried to visualise how her suggestion would operate: looking at expressions of desire in S&M allows thinking sensation as that which identifies the ways individuals relate to one another within, and outside power structures.

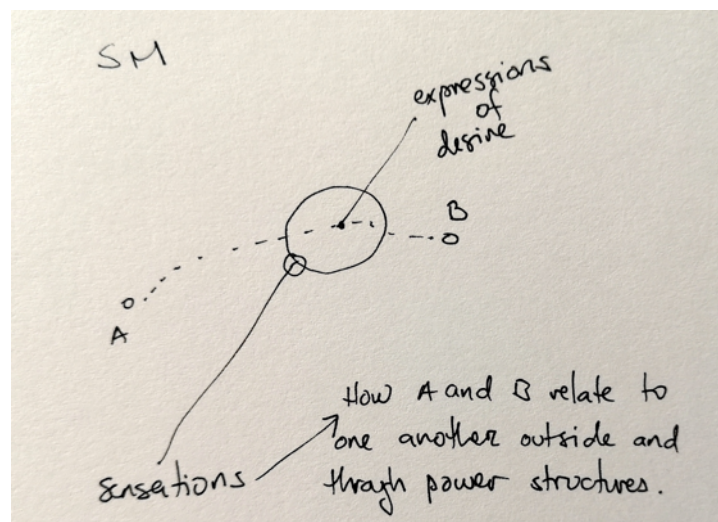


Figure 4: Musser's equation – draft, 2020

Musser's work is a way of analysing multiplicity [within sexual practices], and through these analyses engage with forms of relatability that sit outside, and therefore disrupt, hinder, and do not submit to imposed [wchp] power structures. This sort of mapping propelled a visualisation of moments of protesting in the attempt to shape what I was inquiring into: moments of *raw*

relationality [potential gestures of solidarity] in moments of resistance that undo cisheteronormativity. In other words, I am thinking of forms of relationality that break hierarchic relations sustained within wchp dynamics.

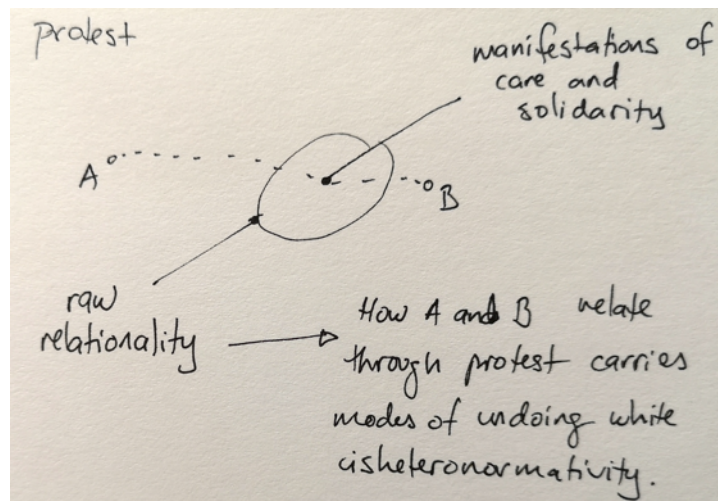


Figure 5: Musser's equation applied to protest – draft, 2020

*None of these lines are unidirectional.

When still centring protest in my research, empathetic reading was useful to emphasise the way embodied experiences are not comparable, only relational. The focus was not on the comparison of difference as means to understand responses to protest [to resist], or to question why each person was resisting; rather, the focus was on how the cohabiting [co-protesting] of different positionalities was not an impediment in what was envisioned as futurity.

Musser's analysis allows me to understand protest and resistance in ways different than through [contemporary approaches to] political theory. Hypotheses such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's chains of equivalence, which address how potential assemblies of "otherness" in protest or resistance can overcome a predominant ideology, fall short because of the lenses through which the situation is being analysed; chains of equivalence looks at the

way hegemony marks different groups who are made vulnerable versus a normalised majority, claiming that it is their shared vulnerability is what forms allyship.⁶⁹ Similarly, Judith Butler terms *answerability* as the condition of being ready to answer a call, where “ready” entails having been marked by a certain degree of vulnerability, and thus being stimulated to act [to protest, to resist] — to answer.⁷⁰ Despite Butler implying that it is possible that this readiness is not something one is always consciously aware of, I am uncertain whether degrees of vulnerability are a requirement.⁷¹ If by vulnerability one understands the indivisible ways we are all implicated in structures that maintain unequal power relations, I would concur with Butler. However, the requirements underlining *answerability*, as well as the shared vulnerability within chains of equivalence, are not imperative triggers to act in solidarity *with*. I say this because, to me, each individual’s layers of sensation, the *raw* relationalities, and the way triggers inciting an act towards freedom *for* being operate in part at a nonconscious level.

In order to inquire into that which is denied its existence it is imperative to accept projects of impossibility. Here, I am referring specifically to the impossibility of measurement. Those who have been part of protest and resistance to oppressive power structures [based on wchp] know that tension, joyous or anguishing, can fill the air in what would be a scientific paradox due to its complete impossibility: air filled with joy. The immateriality of emotion, agglomerations of sensation, cannot be measured in material density, making it thus impossible to calculate how it fills a space or a place. Yet, the embodied experience of inhabiting such ground proves the impossible otherwise. This impossibility of measurement in terms of material density is one of the reasons leading me to term the injuries resulting from confrontations with wchp as material intangibilities.

Empathetic reading looks at sensation as the marker of difference, the agency is on sensation [and by extent on its manifestation], these are materialisations of that which is immeasurable, they are unreachable by dominant knowledge systems, and that is precisely what allows surpassing the shortcomings of relying on the word empathy: the assumption that it is possible

⁶⁹ Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, (London: Verso, 2001), 127 - 134.

⁷⁰ Judith Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 112.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 110.

to know what an other's experiences actually entail.⁷² Such impossibility highlights *difference* as *inaccessible*, incomparable, and only acknowledgeable as potential and possibility in a reality freed from wchp.

Engaging with the privileges of the telling of Histories propels an engagement with the plurality of otherwise stories of protest[ing] without falling into their objectification, it is a way of accounting for the multiple ontologies denied in the making and maintenance of wchp. Following Amber Jamilla Musser's analyses of expressions of desire, it is possible to rethink bodies and experiences through, and outside cisheteronormative frameworks, and it was through the equation proposed via Musser's work that I began mapping affective responses in relation to moments of protest[ing].

— shift

Staying with Musser's argument that "[b]y theorizing sensation we acquire a way to understand structures at a level beyond the discursive," I state that "theorising" does not mean that there is a formula applicable to make sensations universally tangible.⁷³ This is not a substitution to what has been historically inquired as phenomenology, ontology, or simply modern philosophy at large, centring the experience of a white, cisgender and male subject.

Engaging with Musser's work allowed me to think through sensation when analysing experience, resistance, and endurance in relation to wchp. Through her methodology, I began

⁷² Musser warns about the challenges of empathy through Saidiya Hartman. Empathy serves as an excuse to dislocate the attention regarding who is feeling what through the assumption that it is possible to know what an other's experiences actually entail. If in listening to what the other is going through, the listener keeps emphasising and expanding on how they *know* what it feels like to go through such thing, then the discussion reverts to whose experience counts the most. Musser, *Sensational Flesh*, 99-100.

[The] effort to counteract the commonplace callousness to black suffering requires that the white body be positioned in the place of the black body in order to make this suffering visible and intelligible. Yet, if this violence can become palpable and indignation can be fully aroused only through the masochistic fantasy, then it becomes clear that empathy is double-edged, for in making the other's suffering one's own, this suffering is occluded by the other's obliteration.

Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, Race and American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19.

⁷³ Musser, *Sensational Flesh*, 24.

analysing memories of protest[ing]s, as well as the sensations they catalysed; I began bridging memories of protest to broader questions related to my own experience. I used visual and written narratives to explore moments of resistance to imposed normativities, which point at long term resistance *to* and endurance *of* wchp. Some of the mappings of sensation[s] across these memories and moments of protest[ing] are in the works *another type of raw*, *Throat*, *Taşak afar*.⁷⁴ I then continued exploring what was triggering these resurfacing[s] in cross-temporal dialogues such as the ones in *Phone call* and *Vampires*.⁷⁵ These are narratives that consist of confrontations previous to my experiences with street activism, they retell nonconscious remembering[s] that surfaced whilst attempting to compose accounts of protest[ing].

Revisiting early experiences became a mediating practice between consciousness [present] and nonconscious cognition [embodied memory]. I developed spoken and written narratives using speculative fiction and non-fictional accounts out of which I draw a theoretical hypothesis sustaining possible ways nonconscious cognition — the affective triggering[s] of embodied memory [or knowledge] — can influence later responses that one might not be able to make sense of.

Throughout this chapter I have deepened the articulation of my methodological deployment, focusing on the ways affective structures beyond language meet at the juncture of sensation and embodied [lived] experience. I gave an account of the reasons why I chose to follow methods and methodologies from fields other than fine art: it is due to their highlighting of how moving outside of western thought — language, method, and philosophy — is imperative for the development of non-supremacist relationalities. Additionally, working with the methods and terms proposed by Eduardo Kohn, Saidiya Hartman, and Samuel Delany, I could surpass some of the constrictions preventing articulations of affect that fall outside wchp normative structures. Kohn's amplification enables an approach to surpass potential demands of proof to account for one's experience as "real." The semiotic component of exercising amplification through visual and spoken narratives challenges wchp structures trying to maintain hierarchised

⁷⁴ For *another type of raw*, 2019, and *Throat*, 2020, please see pages 169 and 170 of Apendix one; for *Taşak afar*, 2020, please use the following link: <https://vimeo.com/527904106/bc82a5e8ee?share=copy>.

⁷⁵ For *Phone call*, 2020, please see page 171-174 of Apendix one; for *Vampires*, 2019, please use the following link: <https://youtu.be/BYLneFLulik?t=3477>.

approaches to the sharing of experience. Hartman's work in *Venus in Two Acts* thinks through modes of writing that expose tendentious narratives and inventions throughout history; she challenges how these historical accounts are still inflicting the present. Thinking about amplification and Hartman's writing methodology together with some of the statements Delany makes about speculative fiction, I began exercising theoretical approaches and hypothesis from my own practice-based methodology.

When previously focusing on sensations felt during moments of protest[ing], I kept being thrown back to earlier memories, mostly of confrontations with, and impositions of cisheteronormativities. Moments of protest and resistance share something in the way sensation is *affered* and processed, these sensations then re-emerge through embodied memory.

This chapter foregrounds my methodological toolkit, so as to enable the reader to understand how I exercise my practice in relation to what I seek to inquire. I focus on amplifying my own remembering[s] through my practice, projecting what is to me the physically explainable, narratives that are speculative, and not fiction. I amplify the physically explainable relating to the way my body senses, using my personal experience to expose the concrete reality of violence inflicted by wchp. In centring my practice as the ground through which I formulate my hypothesis, I emphasise how the lack of "verifiable" facts does not deem something unreal; and I articulate how arts-based methods and methodologies have the capacity to articulate layers of oppression beyond phenomenological reasoning.

Chapter 2 – A Faggot/Dyke Anthology, practice-led research, part I

– resurfacing of memories through the body

When engaging with Kathy Acker’s relationship to bodybuilding, N. Katherine Hayles distinguishes consciousness and nonconscious cognition through the way these functioning systems deal with narrative. Whereas consciousness deals with stories through the semantic understanding that builds narratives, nonconscious cognition works through a cause-consequence of bodily sequences.⁷⁶ Bodybuilding works through patterns of pushing, breaking, and recuperating muscles; when the muscle reaches the point of breaking it stops, preventing the exercise from continuing. In Hayles’ hypothesis, the way nonconscious cognition manifests itself asserts that “the body’s language, we can conclude, is not toward verbal meaning, but toward reliable narrative constructions, temporal sequences, yes, causal sequences yes, but not language aimed toward meaning.”⁷⁷ Referring to the work of Lawrence Barsalou and his experiments on the relation between consciousness and nonconscious cognition, Hayles explains that “when consciousness wants to know something it runs a simulation drawing on nonconscious memory of what that experience was actually like, in order to apply it to an abstract concept.”⁷⁸ Hayles gives the concrete example of a piano player being asked whether or not they were the author of the song playing on a recording: the piano player has to run a “simulation” with their fingers in order to understand if they were the one playing it or not. So, in reaching back to sensory inputs, nonconscious cognition “serves as a conduit between consciousness and the affectual structures that originated from nonconscious cognition in the first place.”⁷⁹

Although scientific studies on the brain and consciousness are not in my scope of inquiry, Hayles’ work enabled me to seek a mapping to try to make sense of my own memories.

⁷⁶ N Katherine Hayles, “‘Nonconscious Cognition’ and Kathy Acker’s ‘Language of the Body,’” *ICA Institute of Contemporary Arts*, 1 May 2019, available at: <https://www.ica.art/learning/nonconscious-cognition-and-kathy-acker-s-language-of-the-body>.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Without dismissing the fact that memory can be quite tendentious, the narratives I develop through mapping affective responses associated with images and memories does not seek an ultimate revelation in the form of a “true story.” I am, however, trying to organise sensations provoked through affective responses within specific memories. When thinking of moments of protesting, my body identified a sameness in the afference of sensation, saying that I had been through that before. In trying to rationally remember specific moments of protesting, my body was reaching affective experiences in some sort of nonconscious process, revealing a relational proximity of past sensations. The further I tried to map these sensations, the more sensational relationalities emerged — sensation provoked by affect [provoked by embodied memory]. I started to understand that the discomfort incited by several ways of not fitting in a sometimes cisgender, sometimes heteronormative canon, contain a similar afference to being in street protests. In the same way, the efferent responses of these remembering[s] entail an ongoing resistance as the consequent response to the same constraining frameworks; I will later discuss ongoing resistance in relation to long term endurance of wchp. At this juncture the common elements are resistance and cisheteropatriarchy — the response to the latter via the first. The responses that undo, contest, and resist cisheteropatriarchy underline a space of multiplicity, of multiple subject positions sitting outside normalising formats and frameworks. In researching these responses through my practice I understood that being in the space where these normalising frameworks are in place differently, such as spaces of protest[ing], has a similar embodied sensation to childhood experiences:

- rethinking the smell of teargas reminded me of smelling acetone at the age of three, having as commonality not being able to breathe. This remembering surfaced when writing *another type of raw* and *Throat*.
- picturing the attacks, the running away[s], the screaming and chanting sends me back to multiple space-times entailing physical and/or verbal abuses toward myself and/or others on the basis of homophobia and transphobia. Further explored in *Faggot/Dyke*, *wtfayla*, gif work, and *Taşak afar*.



Figure 6: *A Faggot/Dyke Anthology* (2020), digital photograph/video still, 2021

A Faggot/Dyke Anthology is a moving image work composed with photographs from my own archive, it is a narrative piece where I describe memories from the age of seven to 35. My concern was to find out when was the moment I first became consciously aware of the way people in my surroundings [strangers] projected onto me their own confusion regarding my sex. On the 28th of May, 2020, I was confronted three times with what I embody: my comfort with who I am, and the passer-by[s] ignorance and curiosity towards what I am. The date is important in order to specify the time required for my methods of composition, processing, accepting, until I could finally understand and share the work. On May 28 I grabbed an A0 page – hardly fitting and thus spilling over my kitchen table, where I chose to write my remembering[s]. I spent the month after trying to piece and puzzle dates and geographies, clothing articles and haircuts, street names and company, in order to be as accurate as possible in my composition, and as to reflect what had happened and when.

At the end of July, when I went to Portugal to visit my family, I looked at as many family albums as possible, and scanned the images that could help clarifying my potentially tendentious memories – the pictures in the video are from the day when the stories I’m telling took place. It was only by mid-September that I typed the A0 page. It was horrifying. The stories were painful to read, they contained too many curse words, and it felt like it was of poor writing quality for a PhD artwork. The editing process was long, the audio required several takes, and the tone changed as *Faggot/Dyke* gained shape. Its first draft was ready in early December 2020, an acceptable to share version was ready mid-January 2021, and the final [so far] version was ready by mid-March. I thought ten months was too long to make a 13 minute video, but then I realised I was just being conditioned by the same patterns of measurability that I contest throughout my work.⁸⁰

A Faggot/Dyke Anthology (Faggot/Dyke) is a tracing back in order to understand the reasons why memories associated with moments of protest[ing] triggered other memories from my childhood and early adulthood. The practice work enabled exploring multiple aspects of being perceived by others in a period when I did not have the words to articulate my own identity. During the production of *Faggot/Dyke* I encountered several memories along the way, following

⁸⁰ Now would be a good moment to visit the work, available at: <https://vimeo.com/688102015?share=copy>.

the trail of these memories allowed me to understand that the endurance of cisheteronormativity had begun long before I knew the meaning of the word's components.

As I mentioned earlier, I find it particularly curious that despite identifying as a cisgender woman who is a lesbian, I don't recall being called a dyke in a cursing way, but I lost count of the times I was called a faggot. In spring and summer, I am confronted with homophobic and transphobic remarks on a daily basis — *I don't know what happens in autumn and winter, but in spring and summer people stare more*. This made me want to understand possible gendered [visual] patterns and stereotypes leading to people's confusion regarding the way I look. I began remaking Sarah Lucas' self-portraits, as a way to address what it might mean to not be identified in a binary system in the 2020's.⁸¹



Figure 7: *Self-portrait with knickers* (1999) / *Self-portrait with tomatoes and herbs* (2020), digital collage, 2020

⁸¹ A selection of remakes can be found on pages 140-147 of appendix one.

In the recent retrospect exhibition at Tate Britain, Sara Lucas' body of work is given prominence, acknowledging the great impact of the once young British artist.⁸² It was curious to visit Lucas' exhibition in parallel to Women in Revolt, where artists like Jill Posener, Rosy Martin, and Del LaGrace Volcano explicitly explore imagery associated with lesbian and queer life, but whose work I only came to know much later.⁸³ When reading Lucas' claim that *Eating a banana* series was taken just because it could *become* something highlights a distinction of positionality, where my intention [now] of inquiring gendered semiotic projections is at odds with what was once upon a time a visual influence.⁸⁴ Lucas is a reference of the past, the way her work evolved, even her late self-portraits are not conceptually nor materially appealing to me. The reason why I chose Sarah Lucas when doing remakes and not any other artist is, in short, because she was the only artist I could identify with during my undergraduate years. Lucas is relevant because she was my icon, she was one of the only female artists I had been introduced to, and was, therefore, one of the only artists I could identify with during my undergraduate years. She transmitted an attitude of not giving a fuck, owning the fact that she can look like that — which to me meant looking cool and badass — and be an artist. Perhaps more importantly, speaking of stereotypes, I thought she was a lesbian. This raises broader questions of representation and identification; in early 2000's LGBTQ+ representation was still very poor, which led me to relate to Sarah Lucas, in part, due to a stereotypical projection of what a lesbian could look like.

Although I don't relate to Lucas' background, there are some overlapping experiences of being demanded to fulfil social inventions on what sex and gender is expected to be. However, through my own working methodology, the tracing backs and attempts to temporally locate the when and how of cisgendered confrontations led me to Lucas due to the relation between my coming into the articulation of a homosexual identity, what I was taught during my undergraduate, and my past gendered visual literacy.

Whereas *Faggot/Dyke* shares specific narratives associated with each image, the remakes of Sarah Lucas sought a contemporary approach to sex and gender expected representation. I

⁸² Dominique Heyse-Moore and Amy Emmerson Martin, *Sarah Lucas: Happy Gas*, Tate, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/sarah-lucas>.

⁸³ Art, Activism and the Women's movement in the UK 1970–1990, Tate, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/women-in-revolt/exhibition-guide>.

⁸⁴ Dominique Heyse-Moore, ed., *Sarah Lucas: Happy Gas*, (London: Tate, 2023), 190.

staged some of the remakes based on what I was wearing and how I looked like in days when some of the confrontations took place; these are from the spring and summer of 2020.⁸⁵

However, I did not want to stage my own androgyny, or how I may not be perceived within a cisgender binary. I wanted to inquire into what made others confused with my sex, and not perform sex and gender ambiguity myself, because I am not “performing” when I dress the way I dress, nor when I make decisions about my look. So, I focused on creating remakes using pictures that were taken by friends, pictures taken in days of, or close to the same type of confrontations I experience. In a way, these repurposed images document how I looked in days when people felt free to ask if I am a man or a woman, or in case of children if I am a boy or a girl.



Figure 8: *Ask First* (2011) // *SELF-PORTRAIT #6* (1993), digital collage, 2021

⁸⁵ This was the first summer of Covid-19, it also happened to be one of the warmest spring and summer I remember having in the Netherlands. Due to the loose gathering restrictions “implemented” by the Dutch government it was common to spend time outside in parks, and since it was warm enough the dress code was minimal.

In consulting my own photographic archive I found other images, attached to other stories, containing other related affects, all of which are contributing pieces to the patterns of sensation I have been mapping. I include childhood pictures in some of the remakes; the childhood pictures carry the ambiguity of my sex and gender within a binary system, but at an age when it seems less confrontational, or perhaps simply at an age when one is less confronted by the passer-by.



Figure 9: *Divine* (1991) // *Just Woke Up* (1986), digital collage, 2021

Going back and forth with these memories propelled the use of *remake* as method that whet remembering[s] different from those carried in each picture, it is an imagery sowing process through which sensations are mapped and analysed through affective relations — I had felt something in my adulthood that resembled what I had felt in my childhood, the embodied, visceral feeling was the “same.” This further helped me to unpack what I began developing

through previously written texts: I had been describing sensations *whose origins I did not know* — *how can flesh be sucked into and apart, toward opposite directions?*⁸⁶

The triggers of memories I experience when trying to make sense of other memories incite sensations that project me into a time different from the one I am trying to understand; the sensations tied to a memory trigger remembering[s] of moments in which I felt that similar sensory responses. My short written pieces are experiments that use memory as a vehicle to find nonconsciously propelled responses. My photographic inquiries engender resembling transformative moments, working with childhood pictures throws me into early adulthood through sensation. I identify a connection between what I felt in moments years apart, something propelling what I understand as Denise Ferreira da Silva's virtuality — transversability: space-time intersections and crossings; a cut of/in space-time linearity out of which a traversability (bodily) occurs; transubstantiality, bodily transformations that are possible due to multiple existences/existing[s] — across space-time, across kin and kind. Following da Silva's argument, virtuality surpasses the limitations of "the world as we know it," or what is considered "reality" as shaped by colonial sciences and historicisms.⁸⁷ The possibility of going beyond "reality" in space-time crossings allowed me to think about the ways in which affect might operate at the level of the nonconscious. The re-visiting[s] of memory through image [photographs] led me to begin defining nonconscious semiosis of affect, the production and reproduction of patterns, and how the remembering of sensations is tied to affective experiences archived in the body. I return to nonconscious semiosis of affect later in this chapter.

⁸⁶ Excerpt from *another type of raw*.

⁸⁷ da Silva, "Toward," 93-94.



Figure 10: *Triptych* (1992), digital collage, 2021



Figure 11: *At least now I know what to do with my hair* (2021), 2021

In reliving, revisiting, re-experiencing, my focus shifted from the relation of personal experiences and engagement with protest, to the way ongoing [long-term] resistance[s] to oppressive structures [cisheteropatriarchy] manifests itself on the body.

My photographic inquiry developed into responses from adulthood to childhood, using a visual assemblage communicating the violence catalysed by binary imposition, control, and confusion. The pictures of adulthood that respond to pictures of childhood are not a *protest* to childhood, but rather the contesting of a situation — what I was made to feel or do, before having the language to understand the reasons of my discontent, and before having the ability to articulate that.

This is less about a perpetual form of protest and more about the way my level of articulation changed in tandem with the awareness of how I was made to feel. The ability to respond to exteriorly incited discomfort became an act of resistance to something that is anything but new: white, cisgender, heteronormative patriarchy. The fact that this is nothing new points at its urgency: resistance needs repeating, because things are still a fucking problem.

Reusing images that respond to childhood pictures emphasises a later adult knowledge or ability to analyse and understand my own childhood queerness. To better articulate my visual responses I created a series of gifs that later evolved into lenticular prints. At first, Sarah Lucas was still present; perhaps her presence underlines not knowing how violent it was back then [in the 90's], whilst confirming that it is [still] very violent now [in 2020s]. Sarah Lucas' self-portraits are a visual companion in the same way that Joanna Russ' writing is. Russ' *On Strike Against God* reveals a contrasting process of dealing with language, whilst finding a language to communicate experiences. Russ is inappropriate, her work represents moments of saturation that would easily be criminalised if said out loud:

“You are strange animals you women intellectuals. Tell me: what’s it like to be a woman?

I took my rifle from behind my chair and shot him dead. "It's like that," I said. No, of course I didn't.”⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Joanna Russ, *On Strike Against God*, (Trumansburg: Crossing Press, 1985), 6.

The passer-by is a demanding, offending, and violent audience, one who comfortably points at how “we” are not ok, confidently stating that *that* is not how a woman *be*. Through my gif work I sought a tempo that could mirror these inflictions occurring in unexpected clashes with passers-by. The constant flash, the speed, the way one image responds to another underlines a reflexive reaction to an unexpected assessment from a stranger, a reaction which can be aggressive or dismissive of what the stranger is saying. The gifs can stare back without being fully capturable, they provide a response through previous experiences, look into the face of viewer as if I am facing someone who is attempting to identify me within a binary system. And, just as in real life, sometimes my responses are gentle and educational, sometimes they are aggressive.⁸⁹

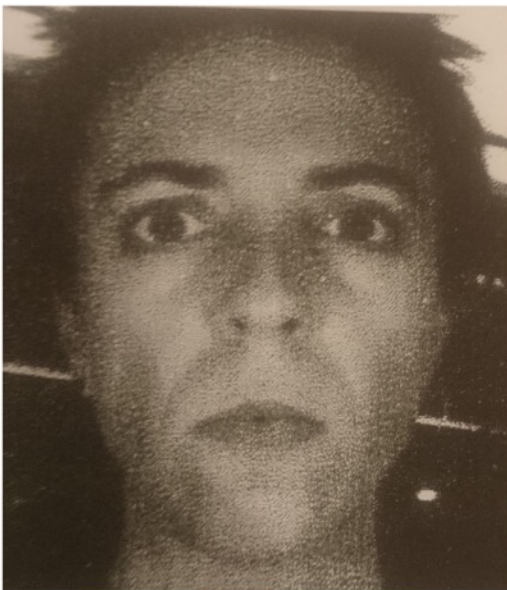


Figure 12: wtf (2019), animated gif, 2021



Figure 13: *Comfort* (1991?), animated gif, 2021

⁸⁹ Gif work should be seen online for better efficacy; the work is available here: <https://marianaaboim.hotglue.me/gifs>.

The gifs pose questions of embodiment before I had the language to speak of their existence: ways of dealing with, and enduring of, imposed cisheteronormativity. The use of childhood and early adulthood images provides me with the space to think *now* what it felt like to not have words in situations of discomfort. Concurrently, the gifs have a tempo and engagement with past confrontations in which I wish I could have said “why don’t you go fuck yourself!?”; a feeling I revisit with the work *Where the fuck are you looking at?* Gifs can be easily adjusted, which allowed me to speculate on the possibilities conveyed through the speed and sharpness of flickering images.

In this very late [2023] review of my work I can confidently say that the ideal scenario to display the gif work would be an outdoor projection, but this comes with its own limitations and problems of accessibility because flickering images can trigger photosensitive people into seizure. Idealising the gif projected outdoors has to do with the level of engagement I seek with the audience. There is something generated through the non-pausability of a flickering image, a confrontation that plays with the traces left in the passing of one image to the other, an incommensurable aftereffect that fucks with the identifiability of what is within a gif.

I tried to explore this non-pausability, non-identifyability of what composes a gif by materialising them into a lenticular prints. Lenticular prints work differently than a gif due to its physicality — it is an object containing both or all images within it, they require movement from the viewer to be activated, and are thus pausable when the viewer decides to stop. The tempo of gifs and the tempo of viewing a lenticular print have their own functionality in researching different tones of narrative in relation to the memories they are attached to. They exercise these differences in tone by seeking how to communicate the different tones of response when being analysed, confronted, or policed.



Figure 14 (left): *Wtf* (1987/2019), Lenticular print, 2022

Figure 1 (right): *That's what comfort looks like* (1990/2020), lenticular print, 2022

The photographic investigations above enabled two aspects that resurface in later work: one is the formal and material articulation of different tones through specific rhythm of moving image work; and the other is the development catalysed by following my own memory triggers. The latter foregrounds affective associations, some tying experiences of protest[ing] to childhood, some underlining a growing awareness of restraints imposed by cisheteropatriarchy, and some focusing on the embodied sensation these experiences entail.

Drawing on the work of Amber Jamilla Musser, I began to map the possible relation across sensations tied to memories of my childhood, early adulthood, and “now.” The implications of each situation are not interchangeable, comparable, nor consequentially similar. Nevertheless, I identified a similarity of sensation in early experiences of gendered binary impositions and moments of protest[ing], as well as a similarity of sensation when thinking of childhood and adult resistance to normalising frameworks. Understanding childhood introduction to gender normativity in relation to adult protest led me to inquire into the embodied consequences of long-term endurance of cisheteropatriarchy. Long term endurance is resistance, which can

overlap with definitions of protest[ing]; I restate that protest is not simply about the moment in which the noun turns into a verb, it entails the agglomeration of sensations and emotions throughout space[s] and time[s].

In order to expand on the mapping of sensations I weave Terrence Deacon's understanding of *form* via Eduardo Kohn into N Katherine Hayles' nonconscious cognition for what I argue to function as nonconscious semiosis of affect.

— nonconscious semiosis of affect

Returning to *How Forests Think*, the “beyond” in Kohn's *anthropology beyond the human* entails an approach to immateriality that is not attached to tangibility, providing situated relationalities regarding modes of communication *with* that delineate how embodiments of knowledge are formed. Kohn speaks about the way Runa people communicate with human, other than human, living, and non-living creatures, so as to explain how their communication is part and parcel of what shapes future unfolding[s]. Semiosis is intrinsic to the way the living beings survive [evolve] through repetition, which for Kohn is inseparable from how different living species' adaptation leads to the embodiment of a learned habit into knowledge.⁹⁰ Some of the changes marked in fauna and flora's adaptability are accounted for in fields like biosemiotics or biological anthropology, which then consequently tie them to specific measuring systems that term and ground them “evolutionary.”⁹¹ What is interesting to me, however, is the way in which Kohn creates his own thinking framework through his autoethnographic experience. The way some of these experiences are described expresses his interest in unpredictable phenomena, which is then reflected in inquiries on cross species synergy in attempt to understand specific occurrences. The way different species collaborate, and here collaboration is the observance of one another in order to learn what others might be able to sensorily apprehend, allows for symbiotic learning: each part shares what they learn

⁹⁰ Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 59.

⁹¹ Sally Lau et al., *Genomic Evidence for West Antarctic Ice Sheet Collapse during the Last Interglacial Period*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1101/2023.01.29.525778>.

through their unique sensory experiencing[s] of the forest.⁹² Kohn's account of collaborative thought to understand patterns in nature is bound to modes of thinking and living that are not singular, or rather, they do not belong to one singular self. The co-creation of thought is indivisible from life itself, which is particularly interesting to situate thought — life, embodied experience — as an activating agent propelled by the nonconscious.

The possibility of accounting for the concrete impact of immaterial factors is, for me, foundational to term material intangibilities, it enables me to shape tensions, microaggressions, and other aspects that are imperceptible, incomprehensible, and invisible for many. For many, not all. The immateriality of emotion, agglomerations of sensation, cannot be measured in material density, making it thus impossible to calculate how something that is immaterial has material consequences. Yet, the embodied experience of protesting and resisting proves the impossible otherwise. A concrete example of protest[ing] is the way tension can be joyous or anguishing, it fills the air in what would be a scientific paradox due to its complete impossibility: air filled with joy.

The definition of *form* Kohn uses is particularly useful to work with: *form* “refer[s] to a strange but nonetheless worldly process of pattern production and propagation, a process Deacon (2006, 2012) characterizes as “morphodynamic” — one whose peculiar generative logic necessarily comes to permeate living beings (human and nonhuman) as they harness it.”⁹³ Deacon's concept of the morphodynamic is specific to patterns generated in nature. I understand morphodynamic as having the same transformative capacities of virtuality — transversality, traversality and transubstantiality — as delineated by Denise Ferreira da Silva. da Silva's virtuality allows thinking nonlinear temporal crossings in relation to embodied experiences, or experiencing[s], and transformations. Thus, I am thinking of *form* as a “worldly process of ~~pattern~~ production and propagation (...) — one whose peculiar generative[ness] ~~logic~~ necessarily comes to permeate living beings (human and nonhuman).”⁹⁴

⁹² Here I am thinking specifically of Kohn's description of the way different species observe one another to try to understand when the leafcutter ants will take flight. Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 78-81.

⁹³ Ibid, 20.

⁹⁴ Ibid, ~~strikethrough~~ mine.

Kohn understands *form* as being embedded in, being formed by and through, as consequent of the ever transforming multiple [empirical] experiences co-constituting The Forest. If the ways in which *form* travels, spreads, diffuses in its efferently multiple and afferently unpredictable ways, as processes propelled and absorbed nonconsciously, as a richness “lack[ing] the tangible otherness of a standard ethnographic object,” I would then argue that *form* can be understood as its antonym definition: that which encompasses shapelessness.⁹⁵ The shapeless characteristics of form allow thinking of affect as both material and immaterial: it is immaterial in its invisible spreading, unmeasurable assimilation, and unpredictable affect[ings], and yet it is material in its very concrete impacts. If the ways in which *form* travels, spreads, diffuses in its efferently multiple and afferently unpredictable ways, as processes propelled and absorbed nonconsciously, and if one would think about sexual orientation, for example, as a [worldly process of ~~pattern~~ pattern production and propagation] pattern, as *form*, as abstract as it may be, diffusing through bodies, and pause:

Think about the process of coming out, let’s say coming out to your parents. Then think about coming out as heterosexual, which to be clear is not a thing. Coming out as heterosexual is *not* a thing! At least I don’t know anyone who went to their parents or friends saying *hey... [long pause...] I have something to tell you... [another long pause...] I’m heterosexual.*

The fact that not coming out as heterosexual is not a thing, but rather an embedded and embodied pattern of behaviour that I consider to be a nonconscious afference of *form* – a shapeless affective flow, both material and immaterial: it is immaterial in its invisible spreading, unmeasurable assimilation, and unpredictable affect[ings], and yet it is material in its very concrete impacts.

I circle back to N Katherine Hayles description of how nonconscious cognition makes deductions through the sensory: it understands what comes from repetition, having the ability to feedback sensations based on what those repeating[s] might imply. Not so differently, *form*’s efficacy results from the past effecting the present, a mode of adapting to the conditions in which oneself[s] exists. To complicate this fractious, yet seemingly feasible ways *form* can

⁹⁵ Ibid.

operate, Kohn suggests that “form’s effortless efficacy” is also tied to the ways the future affects what occurs in the present.⁹⁶ In simple terms, past and present endeavours to achieve food, survival, informed by unknowable amounts of “previous wrong ‘guesses’” inevitably shaped a certain kind of adaptation, of habit-creation, influencing how living beings (human and non-human) “evolve,” make decisions, and predictions on the best ways to act.⁹⁷ Arguably then, conscious and nonconscious manifestations of patterns can expose the ways embedded and embodied white cisheteropatriarchal frameworks are indoctrinated and exteriorised.

The ways *form* creates meaning through patterns, to my understanding, is not exclusively based on wrong guesses, it is also based on correct guesses. Correct guesses are a way to sustain supremacy, governance, they are the repetition of frameworks that succeeded in maintaining hierarchies in place.⁹⁸

~Making a guess on how to react/behave in the present is a mediation of signs that allow interpreting the future — interpreting a possible future is the way that future affects the present.

Being semiotic entails always having a foot (“or paw”) in the future~⁹⁹

Working with my own archive and analysing sensations across childhood, adulthood, and moments of protesting, I recall a form of *raw* relationality, something that is expressed when working towards freedom *for* being as such. These expressions of sensation I am calling *raw* relationality undo white-cis-heteronormativity, they are embodiments derived from the material possibilities of dismissing oppressive structures; this undoing is not just the embodiment of antonyms of what is defined as “normal” — the persistence to exist as such is not simply a

⁹⁶ Ibid, 160.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 77.

⁹⁸ On page 121 the reader can find a second abstract, a section in which I contextualised my position, so as to give an account of the thinking frameworks I align my research with. This section is a direct engagement with thinkers who have pointed at the ways in which *correct* guesses have been reproducing strategies of control in the name of white [cis-hetero] supremacy.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 194.

brattery against patriarchy — I am referring to a putting-into-practice more just and egalitarian relationalities.

These are remnants of thinking of protest, and the shared and cohabiting agencies within it. However, forms of resistance are part of a collaborative endeavour towards, to fight *for*, and an intent to reach a reality in which one can simply exist *as such*. This desire is based on an absent futurity that is being fought for in the present. My hypothesis considers Kohn's assertion that "life is semiotic," the construction of meaning is a process of engagement *with* that has its own life — some aspects of semiosis have been manipulated, and some have always gravitated towards a resistance of that manipulation. In this chapter, in looking at the way memory resurfaces through affective nonconscious triggers, I am arguing that the way affect and semiotic processes correlate might reveal memories stored in the body. In other words, the interpretation of signs that enables one's perception [production of meaning] is embedded, embodied, and rooted through nonconscious processing of affective structures. The manipulation of semiosis is what Mignolo describes as the colonisation of aesthesis through aesthetics; and resisting that manipulation is, to me, driven by a freedom *for* being. The images associated with normativity, semiotically manipulated through an aesthetic canon, have been nonconsciously processed and are effered [to my experience] in the format of gender policing, and through the normalisation of patterns such as not coming out as heterosexual.



Figure 16: *Go Figure!* (1990), digital collage, 2020



Figure 17: *Untitled — No words* (1989/2020), digital collage, 2021

Go Figure! and *Untitled — No words* expose the different degrees embodied and embedded patterns of normativity can be manifested by looking at these images. The above works play with gender stereotypes in their different degrees of legibility depending on who the viewer is; these are exercises that reinforce binary legibility, and yet they are a disruption to that same legibility due to their ambiguity of gendered interpretation. *Go Figure!* is neither a boy nor a girl, and if the viewer becomes certain that the child is either one or the other, then the viewer has to accept that there is also either a boy dressed as a girl, or a girl dressed as a boy. In playing with specific gender stereotypes, *girl* in a dress, a boy in blue, and the queer 30+ years later, I am confronting the inability of the passer-by to simply let go of the need to demand that people are placeable within a binary understanding of sex and gender.

This visual gender and sex role-play, manipulating a stereotype of how a man or a woman looks like are evident in Rosy Martin's *Transforming the suit – What does a lesbian look like* series; in various self-identifying personas of Claude Cahun; and in the navigated performativity of gendered spaces Oreet Ashery carried out as Marcus Fisher. Although these artists have intentionally manipulated markers of gendered identities through their own staged and embodied performativity of a male appearance, with my work I immerse myself in experiences of being misgendered. I am mapping some of the social patterns formulating binary lenses

feeding gender policing, and the *knowing of*, the learning *how to* deal with being policed by strangers. I am working with questions of visibility and representation based on my own experiences. My intention here is to amplify my experiences with nonconscious affective responses of strangers projecting an immediate necessity to gender who is in the picture. Perhaps the work states the obvious pink and blue connotations to those who cannot move beyond it; perhaps the obvious colour binarism is a simple confusion: *No words! Go figure!*

In *The queering of photography: A generative encounter*, Åsa Johannesson works towards exposing a binary legibility within photography by highlighting the ways in which photographic capturability and heteronormative representation are intertwined.¹⁰⁰ She foregrounds a hypothesis on becoming queer through distinct light used in the process of photographing, she argues for a queering of photography by deploying a methodology that grants a self-identified queer identity through a carefully delineated *posing for* the camera. According to Johannesson the “ongoing negotiation of the pose against the constitution of a photographic portrait, the photograph was not left to simply record but was allowed an agentially active role.”¹⁰¹ In doing so, she argues, the photograph surpasses binary parameters that confine the identity of the portrayed.

Whereas Åsa Johannesson transforms forms of legibility from a methodological standpoint, positioning the agency on the photograph itself as that which determines a form of queerness, in my work I focus on an image that was already queer due to a binary eye inevitably [mis]gendering the person being photographed. There is a distinction between work done to disrupt gendered binary stereotypes (Jill Posener, Del La Grace Volcano, Oreet Ashery), and work done post 2000s (Tano Gago, Wu Tsang, boychild) that disrupts forms of legibility without the aspect of posing ‘as’ or performing ‘as’. Due to scope of inquiry and time constraints I will further delve into these histories and contributions to disruption after concluding this PhD.

The visual work developed hand in hand with the writing of this chapter increasingly required attending to the viscosity of affect and sensation due to distinct impacts of unknowability: my growing awareness of the reasons why I am misgendered, and the consistent ignorant readings projected onto me. Letting cross temporal memories and sensations simmer eventually led me

¹⁰⁰ Åsa Johannesson, “The Queering of Photography: A Generative Encounter,” PhD thesis, Royal College of Art, 2019, <https://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/4271/>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 51.

to think of long term endurance of, and resistance to wchp. Consequently, long term endurance is tied to what I began to describe as *material intangibilities*: something uncapturable [for many], without clear “external” legibility, and that yet has very material, embodied consequences. Working *through*, but also *on*, and also *with* material intangibilities entails the implementation of a methodology focused on what is physically explainable, rather than personally observable — a capacious characteristic of the subjunctive Samuel Delany points at within works of speculative fiction.

In order to dissect concrete materialisations of affect pertaining the experiences I revisited, I began to further *mis*-locate narratives through my body, an attempt that first started with *another type of raw*. *Mis*-location is attentive to physicality in ways that are not held back by observability as requirement to prove an affective response “real,” which allowed me to comprehend, and further communicate the way distinct layers of oppression function through the implementation of wchp. What I exercised in terms of tempo and tone through gifs and lenticular prints resurfaces in the moving image work discussed in the next chapter, where I deploy *mis*-location as a method to discuss the way the immateriality of specific inflictions materialises itself on the body. In terms of practice-led methods and methodologies, this is, to me, how creative practices articulate concrete realities of what it means to endure impositions of normativity. By further seeking some of the ways *mis*-locating bodily narratives allows revisiting nonconscious semiosis of affect[s], I propose how the latter operates through *forms* infiltrating living beings [human specifically]. I question how nonconscious production of patterns lead to material intangibilities in the endurance of cisheteropatriarchy.

Chapter 3: Material intangibilities — practice-led research, part II

In my work, memory is a vehicle fuelled by sensations, some of which deriving from the nonconscious, which then allows exploring patterns of feeling *common* in distinct remembering[s]. Articulating the relation between desires to *act* due to discomfort — a discomfort inflicted upon me for being who and how I am — requires amplifying aspects of visceral feeling, of being poisoned, descriptions that do not make sense, but that allow exposing what *is* or *was* felt. The amplification of the uncomfortable and disturbing is conveyed through visual essays shaped by my own memories. Most recently [2021], I have been exploring specific types of distress that remain invisible due to their “immateriality,” like my video work *the knots on my back*, which underlines some consequences of enduring institutionalised prejudices. These physical manifestations of tension due to conflict with wchp can lead to the development of muscle knots, which then might provoke the ripping and scarring of muscle tissue; other consequences are being perceived as angry, negative, or apprehensive. My association to the latter is tied to experiences of being expected to educate others who behave injuriously.

I have been touching upon some of these moments of confrontation, most prominently in *Faggot/Dyke*, but also in the collage *Untitled — no words*, and in *How are you guys doing?* I noticed that my tone has changed, I am more drawn to amplifying the exposure of the different ways through which confronting the offender might be manipulated into one’s own pathologising. Claiming the right to be angry was never taken with open arms, let alone when being angry exposes the injurious side as guilty.

In *Disaffected: The Cultural Politics of Unfeeling*, Xine Yao demonstrates how sympathy was constructed throughout colonial strategies to sustain white/western supremacy over non-white/western others. Yao weaves literary examples to point at how the lack of sympathy of a subordinate other towards their white/western master is equated to the inability to feel:

Sympathy, much like the present workings of affect studies in the academy, has operated as a strategy of engulfment to subordinate non-Western taxonomies and paradigms of affect, emotion, and feeling as mere variations if not to outright invalidate them beyond the threshold of recognition as feeling. In this sense,

*sympathy functions as the fundamental condition of affective intelligibility for the spectrum of feelings in all degrees of expressiveness and intensities.*¹⁰²

Yao ties definitions of feeling to scientific inventions shaping racism, construing how politics of recognition still derive from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which prevented all Chinese immigrants from entering the USA; 14th, 15th amendments, granting black men the right of citizenship and to vote in 1868, as well as their revocation; and the 19th amendment, which granted white women the right to vote.¹⁰³

Yao refers to the inability of recognition of that which does not fall under western constructions of sentimentality, what she names *unfeeling*. In simple terms: if one does not sympathise, the consequence is not receiving sympathy. Yao formulates a relation between *unfeeling* and disaffection, centring *unfeeling* as self-protection, and emphasising the ramifications this *unfeeling* has on the vilification of the subject it is characterising due to its potential towards resisting normalising impositions.¹⁰⁴

Being angry is devalued and reversed through institutionalised and normalised hierarchies. Disaffection is having one's feelings unrecognised, but it is also the refusal to be affected by homogenised definitions of feeling, centring the potential of *unfeeling* as that which can break the balance intended by western governance. To rebel is to be disaffected, and to refuse sympathy towards white ignorance is to rebel. But, when one rebels, when one refuses and breaks the stability of specific systems of governance one becomes the symbol of instability, an obstruction to balance, peacefulness, and quiet. Some of my work emerged by focusing on this particular tension: the anxiety felt when projected with expectations of educating heteronormative ignorance, the anger felt when being received with confusion when exposing

¹⁰² Yao, *Disaffected*, 14.

¹⁰³ Even though this is a US context, these particular points are tied to colonial expansion and imperial ruling, being therefore indissociable from the ways western supremacy has been constructed throughout the global north as well.

Ibid, 24-26, 136-137.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 31.

white ignorance; the embodied tensions invisibly materialising due to long term endurance of, and refusal to be complicit in white cisheteropatriarchal governance.¹⁰⁵

My position and situation are different from Yao's, but addressing the weaponisation of affect to marginalise those who are unable to agree with oppressive governing structures of wchp is common. What I speak of is the refusal to engage with, to accept, to listen to supremacist ignorance disguised as naive tolerance. For instance: the idea within demands of social justice uttering "all voices are welcomed," where "all" camouflages affinities with hate speech, and when "all voices" simply cannot exist in spaces that are meant to foster equality; this is factual, not an opinion that can be negotiated, because hate speech is a form of oppression through which "all" are not accepted.

The expectation of sympathy Yao refers to is useful to speak of demands of compassion, or demands of negotiation in conversations; kind of "I understand you, but you don't understand me." I am referring to small scale interactions, or becoming a problem when pointing at a problem; all in all it is yet another derivative of colonial and imperial entitlement in the form of white fragility. Being called out for being aggressive is very common, or called out for not understanding, for not listening to, when at the end what one is refusing to engage with is the overt prejudice being externalised by someone.

Material intangibilities is a way to speak of the difficulties brought upon one's body when openly opposing [my] oneself to situated oppressive and prejudiced occurrences; it particularly seeks to flesh out the ways "sympathy is the fundamental mode of apprehending affects, feelings, and emotions—and deeming them legitimate," pointing at how by not sympathising [with the offender], one is seen as incapable of feeling.¹⁰⁶

So how can an art practice materialise the affective structures implicated in the endurance of white, cisgender, and heteronormative structures, further delineating how the destruction of these structures leads towards sociopolitical modes of existing otherwise?

¹⁰⁵ For more on the endurance of, and refusal of being complicit in white heteropatriarchal governance see Sara Ahmed's extensive work on emotional labour, specifically: *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (emphasis on second edition's afterword, 2014), *On being included* (2012), and *Complaint!* (2021).

¹⁰⁶ Yao, *Disaffected*, 13.

The knots on my back accounts for some of these embodied manifestations, invisible and yet with very concrete material effects. This is a one-shot film made in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, where I live and work. The camera travels from beginning to end without pause, and from the exact same place, simply turning around and slowly focusing on two artist quotes on building facades. The first one is “I have to change to stay the same,” from Willem de Kooning; the sentence was made into a neon art piece by Jan van Munster, and placed on one of the entrances of the Willem de Kooning [art] Academy (WdKA). The second sentence is “everything of value is defenceless,” from painter Lucebert, executed by artist Toni Burgering, and placed on the top of the office building of an insurance company called DUPI Group.¹⁰⁷



Figure 18: *The knots on my back*, video still, 2022¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Website of DUPI Group insurance company: <https://dupi.com/what-we-do/>; Information about these quotes can be found here: <https://www.bkor.nl/en/beelden/zonder-titel-61/>; <https://misacor.nl/alles-van-waarde-is-weerloos/>.

¹⁰⁸ If the reader has not yet seen the work *the knots on my back*, now it is a good moment to do so. Work available at: <https://marianaaboim.hotglue.me/?the>.

I see these two quotes on a weekly basis, but they are not the only quotes put on building facades in Rotterdam, according to Wikipedia, just across the street from the above-mentioned location, the city's library displays the following quote from Erasmus: "All the world is my fatherland."¹⁰⁹

The quote from Willem de Kooning has been object of scrutiny at least since I started working there in 2015. The main critique being to the way the academy is managed, as it allows for the marginalisation of students and staff to appear as natural, as something inevitable, and that is not possible to *change*. When I say marginalisation, I am referring to curricula that perpetuates white male supremacy, and working contracts that leave mostly women and people of colour in precarious positions. The institutional critiques towards the WdKA are akin to what Sara Ahmed has researched, addressed, and exposed with her work: tokenism, inability to confront privileges in order to address inequality, and an overall *white innocence* to institutional changes mirroring how "the more things change, the more they stay the same."¹¹⁰

This work explores how my nonconscious makes meaning through my body, by describing the affective process one goes through. I describe what is happening in one's body when it tenses, creating a narrative by reading descriptions on how the body develops muscle knots. These descriptions can be found in all sorts of health websites, from Mayo Clinic to medical news today; parts of this video were written using information from Harvard Health Publishing.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ "Lucebert," *Wikipedia Foundation*, last modified July 19, 2023, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucebert>.

¹¹⁰ The proverb "the more things change, the more they stay the same" was written by Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr, published in monthly journal *Les Guêpes*, January 1849. It's meaning refers to:

1. Turbulent changes do not affect reality on a deeper level other than to cement the status quo.
2. A change of heart must accompany experience before lasting change occurs.

"Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr," *Wikipedia Foundation*, last modified August 10, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Baptiste_Alphonse_Karr.

¹¹¹ Rachel Nall, "How to Treat Muscle Knots," updated January 5, 2023, Accessed November , 2021, <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/166186#prevention>; Harvard Health, "Understanding the Stress Response," July 6, 2020, Accessed November 2021, <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/understanding-the-stress-response>; "Myofascial Pain Syndrome - Symptoms and Causes - Mayo Clinic," Mayo Clinic, February 11, 2022, Accessed November 2021, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/myofascial-pain-syndrome/symptoms-causes/syc-20375444>.

I describe these affective and embodied processes while giving focus to the artwork displayed on those buildings; I emphasise the consequences, the embodied repercussions of enduring constant confrontations with oppressive structures put in place to sustain governance through white-western heteropatriarchal ideals. To work against these ideals, whether that work entails exposing racist and sexist behaviours passively occurring under institutional eyes, or having the endurance to deal with random exposures of one's non-normativeness [as if we didn't know], has consequences that are not tangible, not visible, not perceptible at a universal level.

Getting back to "I understand you, but you don't understand me," or even better "I sympathise with you, but..."; if the injured one does not accept the "but," then there is no agreement, even if that same "but" nullifies, dismisses, and ignores the injured one's pain. There is a smooth and organic way through which affective hierarchies are practiced and maintained, reinforcing whose "feelings" matter the most. As Yao refers to, sympathy is tied to an enforced complex of superiority marked by whose "knowability" matters the most, which is then used to sustain hierarchical relationalities. Take for example the cases when one questions an entity for not fulfilling part of a contract, or for not delivering a service that was agreed upon or paid for; the fact that the questioning party *needs* that service leaves the entity in power in advantage, which [sadly] more often than not results in forms similar to gaslighting, mansplaining, or other forms of manipulation to point at how the customer or contracting party has misunderstood the agreement. These situations lead to whoever is dependent *on* someone else to fall back for fear of repercussions or for lack of emotional energy.

The smoothness [entitlement] with which relational hierarchies are practiced is, to me, akin to tree branches dancing to the wind, an organicity also comparable the way tension and anxiety spreads and settles in one's body. The gentle delivery of entitled superiority transposes injuries that are, at times, invisible, intangible, and therefore unaccounted for. With *the knots on my back* I wanted to play with a tempo and rhythm that could mirror the consequences of an almost *affective bullying* catalysed by the disbalance within institutional relations. The translation of that affective response to emotional manipulation into the visual language of *knots* is a play with the potential cliché poetic of naked tree branches dancing in the wind, alluding to a certain normalisation of hierarchy. But even though this language was effective in *knots*, it was not sufficient to articulate how those invisible, intangible, and unaccounted for injuries can be brutally violent. This led me to seek a distinct tempo, a rhythm through which I

could amplify anger and discomfort, which is how *Where the fuck are you looking at?! (Wtfayla)* emerged.¹¹²



Figure 19: *Where the fuck are you looking at?! (1985)*, photograph/video still, 2022

In *Wtfayla?! I* explore a tempo that is not possible to explore in writing only. The rhythm affects differently due to the emphasis put in each sentence, and how that mirrors the type of situation I might have been in. Can I even say “wtfayla?!” Even though this short piece comes across as a joke, a “funny” work, it is in fact more of a desire. I wish I could say *Where the fuck are you looking at?! more often*, but I can’t, because the consequences of it might be threatening to me, they might lead to problems “bigger” than having to endure someone else being offensive. In

¹¹² In order to fully engage with the next paragraphs it is important to see or hear the work: <https://vimeo.com/676235378?share=copy>.

the same way that previous gif work and lenticular prints sought to exercise distinct tempos that are part of affective responses in confrontations with *wchp*, *knots* and *wtfayla?!?* have a different function in their engagement with different enforced dominances.

Wtfayla?!? expresses what Xine Yao calls *unfeeling*, a refusal to be affected by the certainty with which cisheteronormativity imposes itself upon me. Here, I refuse to be made uncomfortable by normative-ignorant gazes, and thus I say *Where The Fuck Are You Looking At?!?* — which concurrently amplifies how the possibilities of living beyond these oppressive structures inevitably lead to more equal relationalities.

The moving image work I described engage with the causes and triggers of what injures my own body, unfolding different rhythms to communicate different material intangibilities. The effects and depths of injury have a certain incommunicability in common. In *knots*, using a medical jargon allows me to address this incommunicability in a way that exposes the ridicule of non-acceptance that certain “minor” gestures can profoundly injure some people. Whereas in *Wtfayla?!?* I shaped a space where I am allowed to be tired of explaining, a space where I can simply say fuck you in multiple ways, and say take it or leave it in terms of who understands or gets offended by the work.

In January 2022 I co-organised an exhibition in collaboration with project space Available & The Rat in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. This exhibition and series of events took place from 28 January to 20 February of 2022, and displayed works by Fyn [Sarafina] Paulina Bonita, Cannach MacBride, and me.¹¹³ In trying to understand how to play with a form of space occupation that entailed an almost public art format, the exhibition was design so that it could only be seen from the street. Despite there having been previous exhibitions during Covid-19 pandemic at Available & The Rat, this was the first fully curated so as to be possible to see the artwork entirely from the street. During the day the front window contained two gifs by Fyn Paulina Bonita on the side windows, a poster with research material from Cannach MacBride’s film, and three lenticular prints of mine; and films were screened on scheduled days at night.

¹¹³ Event’s information and documentation can be found at: <https://availableandtherat.com/2022-ee.php>.



Figure 20: “enduring encounters”, screening of *the knots on my back* 2022

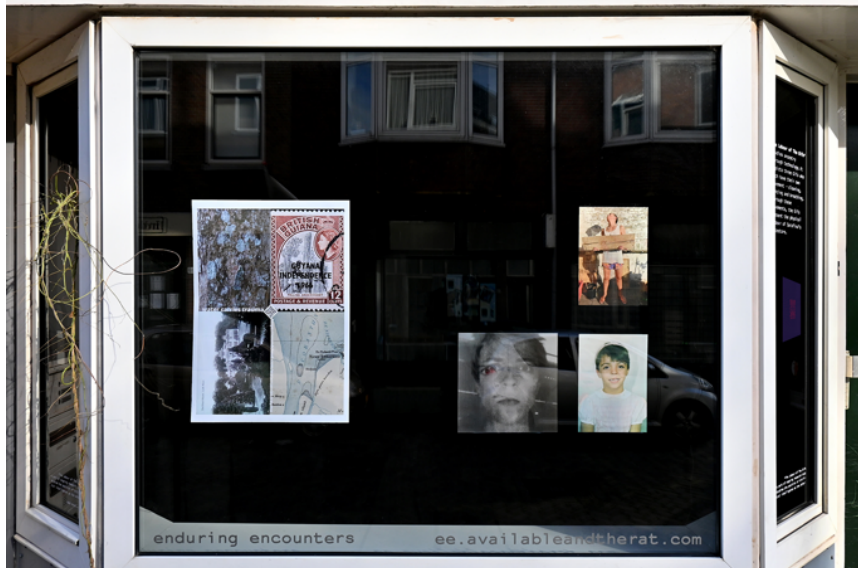


Figure 21: “enduring encounters”, 2022

Available & The Rat is located on a residential street in Rotterdam south, in an area with many other art/artists run spaces. The screenings were attended by children and adult neighbours, and art related individuals [some neighbours, some not]. Although this provided a perfect opportunity to understand and explore this space of confrontation, and how to claim the right to ask, in a way, *how dare you*, or in other words: Where the fuck are you looking at?! I am not sure how to articulate my discomfort I felt when screening my work; perhaps the discomfort came from me being present, witnessing my own anger and discomfort as viewer and narrator.

I clearly have an affinity with work that articulates the anger and frustration caused by impositions, confrontations, or attacks catalysed due to white-cis-hetero-patriarchy. At first I could relate the most to descriptions found in written format, like the above example, or the example I previously used of Joana Russ pulling a rifle in response to a cisheteromale comfortable ignorant utterance. Perhaps my affinity comes from an almost unfiltered punch [or punk] reaction that is so real, and yet so suppressed due to the way reacting to wchp is perceived as unacceptable. This, however, doesn't not mean that having my moving image work screened in public fulfils a desire to project back onto the passersby what is projected onto me. It will take some time for me to understand how to explain this hesitancy, perhaps because of knowing that confronting [or sometimes simply responding] to that which injures my own body is not necessarily a welcomed pattern of behaviour.

In their 2018 performative lecture at Moving Together: Activism, Art and Education/A week with Angela Davis, Joy Mariama Smith provided a series of why questions that are more than familiar to those who do not fit a wchp embodiment.¹¹⁴ Accompanied by their moving image work composed of online found imagery, Joy asks:

*why do I have to explain myself to you,
why do you think I'm angry all the time,
why do you think you can touch me without asking,
why do you get to have all the fun,
why can't we talk about white supremacy.*¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Joy Mariama Smith in "ANGELA DAVIS | Public Dialogue: Radical Solidarity and Intergenerational Coalitions," *Research Center For Material Culture*, 13 May 2018, available at: <https://youtu.be/WRNDTAyHDiQ?feature=shared&t=3598>.

¹¹⁵ These are only some of the questions included in the performance.

Speaking specifically of what a non-white body encounters in an environment impregnated with white supremacist ideologies, Joy's questions expose the disparity, almost antagonist, experience of those who are confronted, and those who are comfortably free to manifest their white innocence and ignorance. This lecture took place at World Museum, Amsterdam, which is the cultural institution in the Netherlands that most strongly confronts, retells, and explicitly addresses Dutch colonial histories and their impact on current forms of sociality. In addition, this was a lecture taking place on the highlight day of a weekly event that had Angela Davis as *the* keynote speaker. Thinking about Joy's lecture in relation to where it is being delivered, and how a performance in a specific site of knowledge production can pose the kind of confrontational questions that destabilise social and political supremacist agendas, whilst exposing supremacist intentionalities as tangible and undeniably real.

There is a strength in spelling out exactly the *how* of confrontations, which is certainly why I am influenced by visual artists whose work is intertwined with text. In 2019 I invited Joy Mariama Smith to take part in *There's No Going Back*, a conference I organised at the Willem de Kooning Academy. This conference had Jack Halberstam, Aminata Cairo, and Sruti Bala as keynote speakers, the audience was different from the one in *Moving Together* — the latter was composed by people involved in social justice, and the first was majorly attended by students and staff members with different degrees of knowledge *on* and intentions regarding diversity and inclusion within education. Joy performed the same lecture, and it was clear that this spelling out of questions derived from [mostly] experiences of being racialised had a different impact, a different recognisability from the audience. The duration of the lecture, the having to stay with, and to listen to *why can't we talk about white supremacy* or *why do you think I'm angry all the time*, resonates differently. In the anfitheater, where the lecture took place, some identified with the questions Joy asks, and some could not even understand what did the work mean. The power of being able to ask directly these why questions, in one of the settings where these same questions are dismissed, is a push through, it is the empowerment validating one's right to confront that which causes injury.

I don't want to say that the message was more efficient in one location rather than at another, or that the impact was more meaningful: this is not about how the audience is made to feel or made to change, this is about claiming the right to voice these questions as part and parcel of what embodied experiences entail.

Joy's lecture performance and the screening of my moving image work generated spaces of discomfort between the viewer or passerby, this has to do with distinct points of identification with what is being addressed, or how the questions being asked might be perceived differently depending on who is engaging with the work. Both works also give a sense of validation through the acknowledgement and recognition of that which might be perceived as minor aggressions, making them visible, making them tangible.

Oppression impacts differently each singular body, hearing "hi guys" or reading artist quotes that can be perceived [tendentiously, yes] as implying specific modes of hierarchical power are different experiences. However, central to my work is the exploring of how different types of injury are attached to the ways *form* operates at an embodied level. Perhaps the question should not be how some art practices materialise the affective structures implicated in the endurance of white, cisgender, and heteronormative structures, further delineating how the destruction of these structures leads towards sociopolitical modes of existing otherwise. Perhaps the question is how much one can endure exposing the violence of oppressive confrontations, whilst being pathologised and continuously dismissed.

— body parts

Thinking about the body through social constructions, political statements, and positionalities, points at the ways in which the dismissal of normativities seems to lead to more egalitarian relationalities. I use my own body to articulate inflictions brought upon me through cisheteronormativities; I do this side by side with thinkers whose work makes evident that when the body is pathologised, not taken seriously, and that same body still deems [or dares] to point at that which creates harm... then it is the grand beginning of a shit show.

In the last section of *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, Mel Chen speaks of different forms of bodily contamination in relation to the level of attention paid to whose bodies are considered at risk, diagnosed, capitalised, and pathologised.¹¹⁶ Chen

¹¹⁶ Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

addresses the racialisation of lead's contaminating properties, focusing on the "‘lead panic’ in the United States in 2007 regarding potentially toxic toys associated with Chinese manufacture."¹¹⁷ Chen points at how it is always the image of a white boy who appears when speaking of the potential risk of lead in toys, dismissing any potential threat to other children, underscoring the image of white patriarchy, and perpetuating racist discourses against China — Chinese production, descent, and involvement. Following this thread, Chen gives an account of how toxicity is understood in relation to the body that is being addressed. As defined in dictionaries, toxic means poisonous, unwell, debilitated, which is crucial to understand the implications of "queer subjects [being] in many ways treated as toxic assets, participating in the flow of capital as a new niche market, yet also threatening to dismantle marriage or infiltrate the military, and thus potentially damaging the very economic and moral stability of the [U.S.A.] nation."¹¹⁸ I want to emphasise this understanding of queers' toxicity to encompass the common reactions many queers face when crossing paths with cisgender heteronormative ignorance. Queers are treated as toxic, generating a reaction of repulse and violence, often accompanied by the offenders' comfort in uttering their own opinions about what they think of us.¹¹⁹

Questioning "what happens when queers become intoxicated?" Chen speaks of their own embodied experience of living with the diagnosis of "‘multiple chemical sensitivity’ and ‘heavy metal poisoning.’"¹²⁰ Chen speaks from the body, as the body, *mis*-locating the narrative to express what it entails to go through a crisis of toxicity where the body develops a momentary relation with what is considered non-animate. They contend that "[i]n such a toxic period, anyone or anything that I manage to feel any kind of connection with, whether it's my cat or a

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 159.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 198.

¹¹⁹ What queer encompasses and what it can do is broader than my research scope. In this section I must, however, mention that my understanding of queer toxicity, or queers' toxicity, encompasses the ways bodies pose a threat to normativity. Queer, to me, does not equate to homosexuality; but rather is a non-normative way of living and being in the world that overlaps with sex and loving practices that are not heterosexual.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 197-198.

chair or a friend or a plant or a stranger or my partner, I think they are, and remember they are, all the same ontological thing.”¹²¹

Despite my crush on the writing methodology used throughout the last chapter of *Animacies* — *Following Mercurial Affect*, for the purpose of my own research, I focus on the space given to the experiences of “individuated property-assignment [where saying] ‘I am highly sensitive’ furthers the fiction of my dependence as against others’ independence.”¹²² In my own experience with perfume, and why I find the use of perfume violent, I find particularly difficult to tell someone that their use of perfume will leave me with hours of headache. This difficulty has to do with the way [queer] bodies are pathologised, because a queer’s right to point at the ways *our* bodies are being injured is obliterated by the inability of those who benefit from wchp to consider the queer body equal to their own.¹²³ There is no way to achieve the right to exist as *such* without questioning and displeasing those who comfortably sit under normativity, and this will always come at the costs of being considered excessive, melodramatic, and certainly intolerant.

— tone

I want to look at what endurance does without having to give space to the ways affective structures of non-[cishetero] normative bodies have been either dismissed or erased; I want to talk about being angry without having to side-note how *my* anger has been pathologised just to demonstrate yet again that I know exactly what shapes my resistance. The scars inflicted by oppressive structures can overlap with trauma, and it is not my intention to neglect that. However, I don’t engage with studies of trauma in my research, partly because in my practice-led research trauma is not the protagonist. My central point of focus is on the endurance of

¹²¹ Ibid, 202.

¹²² Ibid, 199.

¹²³ Dr. Veronica Ivy foregrounds an extensive mapping of how body differentiation is selectively manipulated in sports, in order to ban trans women from competing. Ivy demonstrates through hormonal measurements that not only trans people have no advantage over cisgender people, but that hormonal restrictions are only invoked when preventing women to compete, and not men. Veronica Ivy, and Aryn Conrad, “Including Trans Women Athletes in Competitive Sport: Analyzing the Science, Law, and Principles and Policies of Fairness in Competition,” *Philosophical Topics* 46, no. 2 (2018): 103–40. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26927952>. 111, 137-138.

cisheteropatriarchal frameworks, and the intangible ways this endurance materialises on the body.

I want to complicate ways of addressing allegedly harmless habits, like the use of perfume, starring, or saying “hi guys”; I do this in a different manner than when speaking of *the knots on my back*. In *Perfume*, I don’t describe perfume’s toxicities or what they can do to my head [and other heads too], I focus on the escape view and speak with [the video was made for someone] as if the person I am communicating with knows, or can assume, what I mean when I say that “there are too many people with perfume, it’s horrible.”¹²⁴ I don’t want to focus on what it would entail to communicate with someone whose perfume causes a headache, especially if they are a stranger. Claiming the right to not explain at all times why an utterance or a habit is offensive is a necessity to preserve my own well-being. The moments [spaces] in which one does not need to explain one’s own injuries exist, these are the spaces I will later refer to as where a non-hetero futurity manifests itself in the present.

In trying to challenge what is considered harmful and what is not, I *mis*-located my narratives further, I played with what I felt whilst trying to understand the physiological reasoning behind it. In *knots*, I found a way of speaking from the body using information found in medical literary journals; the narrative through “science” plays with the veracity of the knots gaining shape, whilst having a visual companion alluding to the organicity with which wchp is uttered in entitled [natural] ways. *Mis*-location of narrative scrutinises my own physiological responses in situated moments of tension — inhaling teargas, stomach cramps, muscle tension. There is rarely a threshold which I can consciously follow, like my neck slowly tensing until I cannot turn anymore. *Mis* dash location, not dis-location. *Mis*-location is an intentionally *mis*-situated narrative. I play with narrative in these terms to complicate the physical reality that is only felt by the person on whose body an infliction of wchp is manifested; I *mis*-locate the narrative to amplify that my tensed muscle knots are not personally observable, but they are certainly physically explainable.

¹²⁴ *Perfume* was originally made as a video message to a friend. Video can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/653990156/f4c4e9deb8>.

Speaking of the body in these terms is not intended to create any mind body binary, nor a plural vocalisation of the body. *Mis*-location is a method to speak of what my body or my head senses because that is where the visceral feel is located: if I say my stomach hurts, it is because that is where pain is located; if I say tension on my back, it is because I feel the tension located there. As a method, *mis*-locating the agency of narration situates the point of pain, tension, anxiety; it allows for what is invisibly felt to become focal, concrete, and therefore more materially tangible.

Whereas *knots* conveys the operational smoothness of supremacist frameworks, *wtfayla!?* refuses to be passive. In the latter I amplify confrontations with normativity through repetitive stares back into the camera, reinforcing a position of refusal to be condescended about my own position. These moving image works deploy amplification and *mis*-location as a methods through which I can allow for injuries to speak, and in doing so they gain shape, they become tangible, undeniable.

These methods contribute to my understanding of nonconscious semiosis of affect: the production of meaning through patterns and repetitions that are nonconsciously processed, as well as the affective processes indivisible from the way one embodies meaning. The way I use these terms in my research — nonconscious semiosis of affect, *raw* relationality, absent non-hetero futurity — are not an attempt to create an epistemological paradigm shift; my intention here is to delineate how in my practice I deploy fine arts as methodology, generating, adapting, and creating methods by thinking with fields other than fine art, attending to aspects that are imperceptible, immaterial, and consequently undervalued. I speculate on the potential way the nonconscious deals *with* and processes the ways *meaning* is imposed, inflicted, and embedded/embodied. To put it differently, I am looking at the potential ways the repetition of certain patterns [*form*] affects embodied experience. When exploring the outcomes, the expressive act [verb] through which this process occurs, I call them nonconscious afferences of *form* (example of not coming out as heterosexual); as a thing, as a noun under which the meaning of this process can be termed, I call it nonconscious semiosis of affect.

— material intangibilities

Johanna Hedva's reading of *A Decade of Sleeping* is a door to a singular world, it is the sharing of travels and encounters happening in sync with rest and stillness.¹²⁵ In reading this essay, Hedva affirms what is written; they tell us, the audience, that what we are listening to *is* real; the information coming through their voice holds the essence of how things *are* during lengthy moments of "inactivity"; their voice is an embrace one can melt into, it is a *being circled by* an other's senses through spoken [read] narrative.¹²⁶

It is curious that as a child they were afraid of falling asleep, and as an adult they live, they work, they exist in their dreams. They say that in sleep "I am then who I most am ever and I will not give that up for anything."¹²⁷ To say "I am ~~then~~ [in dreams] who I most am ever" implies existing in the most faithful way to oneself;¹²⁸ yet, it is existing in the conditions that are acknowledged the least in some of western cultures, because existing in our dreams is not considered reality. When one dreams, the dreams exist [allegedly] on one's own and thus cannot be corroborated, it's just a dream. It's something that happens. Nobody can access it, allegedly. Sounds familiar.

To say that existing in our dreams is the most faithful way to what we *actually* are equals to existing outside of our conditioned reality. The violence Hedva speaks of when waking up, the violence of having to face the day, the violence of sitting at the desk, points at the violence of existing in a world that is not made for our own — as Kara Keeling emphasises when adding to Audre Lorde: "we were never meant to survive *as such*."¹²⁹

According to Hedva, in dreams bodies can exist in multiple "as such" human and non-human possibilities. I argue that Hedva's *dreams* are material intangibilities: a paradox of realities

¹²⁵ Johanna Hedva, "A Decade of Sleeping (Reading/Artist Talk/Q&A)," YouTube Video, 23:07, *Symposium: Healing/Arts: Health Activism, Creative Practice, & the Medical Humanities, 2020*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fs1wzw2ZdZk>.

¹²⁶ For circlusion please see: <http://www.maskmagazine.com/the-mommy-issue/sex/circlusion>.

¹²⁷ Hedva, "A Decade of Sleeping."

¹²⁸ Ibid, strikethrough mine.

¹²⁹ Kara Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures*, (New York University Press: New York, 2019), ix.

inaccessible to some is connected [or perhaps connectable] to the way affective structures have very material consequences. Let me develop this thought a bit further.

There is an interesting overlap in the adjectives used to characterise what dreams are not with those used to describe what is materially intangible, especially when considering the commentary of those who do not undergo certain affective confrontations. The antonym of dream is reality, factual, certainty; these are aspects usually lacking when it comes to the *corroborability* of first hand, singularly experienced, violent confrontations.¹³⁰ I let myself play with this overlap of descriptions — it is a productive speculation into the paradox of an inaccessibility that I find close to the way affective structures are materialised on the body. Using a linguistic play, I contrast the accessibility of dreams in Johanna Hedva’s piece with that which is materially [in]tangible, highlighting the dismissal of systems of accountability when measured in relation to who is allowed to be injured and who is not.¹³¹

In the Foreword of the 2015 edition of *The Gilda Stories*, Jewelle Gomez describes the night when she wrote the first section of what would become her novel. Jewelle went to a phone booth to call a friend; as she was speaking with her friend two men passing by “started telling [her] in lewd detail what sex acts they would like to perform on [her].”¹³² Jewelle told her friend to hold the line, and furiously screamed at the men; the men told her she was “crazy,” and went away. Speaking of the viscosity of affect requires speaking of the different ways through which one is viciously inflicted. Yet, exposing the latter is not acknowledged due to dominating

¹³⁰ Existing in dreams is not materially communicable, one’s embodied experience in a dream is not transferable, what one experiences is not physically tangible for another in the way that it is [very real] for the one who lived the dream. In this sense, dreams can be material intangibilities in ways not different from how an individual/personal embodied account of what it entails to be confronted with oppression might also be intangible for those who were not confronted.

¹³¹ Exercises around the emergence of knowledges through imaginaries that sit outside *corroborable* realities are not new. Think of Aimé Césaire’s *Poetry and Knowledge* propositions, suggesting how excessive judgement and reasoning hinder creative [poetic] contributions to knowledge at large. Think of Ursula K. Leguin’s *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, and how focusing exclusively on the “end goal/product” prevents learning from the process through which something is accomplished. Here, thinking with Hedva’s creative practice, I want to articulate yet another imaginary that permits coming closer to the knowability of material intangibilities.

¹³² Jewelle Gomez, *The Gilda Stories*, First City Light edition (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2016), XI.

hierarchies implicit in the former —being unsympathetic towards the reasons why your oppressor is abusing you will define you as incapable of feeling.¹³³

The fury that these harassing moments provokes is something that many have felt; in the same way that those who have responded to the harassment have received counter reactions affirming that we can only be mentally ill. The anger and frustration felt in these situations is something that only oneself can account for, no one can understand this unless they had felt it themselves. The frustration and rage Gomez describes feeling after that particular moment is familiar to me [I'm sure I'm not the only one]; she wanted to hit them, with anything possible or available. The horror of wanting to hit someone, to hurt someone, to feel the wish to do such thing is something essential to share. As scary as it may be for the listener/reader, I can assure you that wanting to hurt someone is not necessarily a pleasant experience! Not acknowledging anger, frustration, pain, and fury as outputs of being confronted with white-cis-hetero-patriarchy is pure depreciation of those who live in constant oppression by, and resistance towards those same confrontations.

These are material intangibilities: something that is immaterial, and yet has very material consequences. Intangibility is not universal — *A Decade of Sleeping* is not for all to understand; in the same way that resistance to white, cisgender, heteronormative patriarchy is difficult to accept by those who benefit the most from it.

Hedva's *Sleeping* collapses attempts to universalise real versus not real binary, their dreams are as real as the possibility to exist in an absent non-hetero futurity. They speak of their own experience without trying to equate it to other's pain, without comparing nor claiming different experiences or pathologies.¹³⁴ The language used in this piece is not presumptuously inaccessible, it feels rather close, making it thus possible to relate to the narrative [but I'm

¹³³ Yao, *Disaffected*, 15.

¹³⁴ Here I'm thinking of Paul Preciado saying "I am a migrant in my own body," at the Parliament of Bodies in Athens during Documenta 14, whilst unaware of how offensive that was to migrants who have crossed the Mediterranean. A critique of Preciado's understanding of "migrant body" can be read in: Crispin Long, "Boundary Issues," in *Book Forum — Culture*, July 30, 2020, available at: <https://www.bookforum.com/culture/in-an-apartment-on-uranus-paul-preciado-undermines-geopolitical-technological-and-gender-binaries-24118>.

possibly being tendentious here]. The distinctions I identify when listening *to* and when reading *A Decade of Sleeping* emphasise how narratives work and impact differently.

For Hedva “[t]here is always the body — its radical permeability, dependency, and consociation — but the task is to eclipse it, to nebulize it, and how to cope when this inevitably fails.”¹³⁵ I suggest that affect can catalyse unquestionable, at times unreasonable, comprehension (or support); and the articulation of how distinct structures impact oneself through art practices (whether moving image — composed of writing, sound, and visuals — or other, rather than theory only) enables different semiotic (affective) processes that are closer to the complexity of sensation (embodied experience).

practice re-writes, re-responds:

Affect can catalyse unquestionable, ~~at times unreasonable, comprehension (or support);~~ and articulating how distinct structures impact oneself through fine art ~~(whether moving image — composed of writing, sound, visual — or other, rather than theory only)~~ enables different semiotic (affective) processes that are closer to the complexity of ~~sensation (embodied experience).~~

Practice re-writes, re-shapes, re-ponds — from spondere: to pledge; to pledge also means to bargain, re-bargain is to redefine [re-negotiate], to re-use, to re-purpose. By repurposing quotes, reshaping them through editing, and visually working with them I formulate strategies to challenge systems of knowledge that are unable to encompass that experience is not universally applicable nor tangible. When speaking of the work of Saidiya Hartman, I stated that it is as important to acknowledge that difference is not comparable as it is to acknowledge difference itself. Let me develop this thought a bit further. Thinking about the way difference has become a buzz word when addressing diversity and inclusion within educational or cultural institutions (for example); in these contexts, difference is characterised as a positive commonality across social strata. All fine logic, and not new. But while all of these positive approaches to difference sound great, they leave unaddressed the way difference is

¹³⁵ Hedva, *Minerva*, 167.

hierarchised, which can be made evident when intersectionally analysing forms of governance [or who exercises dominance over whom]. Difference is an imposition; it is an imposed universality. When I say that there cannot be a formula through which it is possible to understand at an embodied level what each person's different experiences entail, I am reiterating that difference is not accessible in a standardised and universal way. The urgency in phrasing difference as an *imposed* universality lies on the fact that the acknowledgment of difference serves little purpose when it does not actively work against hierarchised relationalities, against constructs which happen to be derived from white, cisgender, heteronormative, and patriarchal frameworks.

Going back and forth across my memory collection is inherent to my creative process — it is a method of production constantly used within my practice. Thus, repurposing became part of my methodological approach when formulating theoretical claims through visual work. I transform quotes, I use them as titles, sometimes as a way of creating visual speculative non-fictional narratives because I can articulate now, as an adult, what I could not make sense of as a child. In relation to *Vampires* I wrote the following disclaimer: *This is a story based on a dialogue that never happened. The story is informed by real facts. The ones conversing are memories from the years 1990, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2018, and narrated by/in 2019. Some information is accurate, some morphed through time.*¹³⁶

Threading *form*, repurposing, and *snf*, I reveal transformations occurring through the processes of repetition, remembering, reclaiming. I have been using *form* to speak of patterns of behaviour reflecting complexes of superiority descent of colonial and imperial inventions of modernity. My concern with the shapelessness of *form* has to do with what I have been calling minor, micro, small, but also innocent and ignorant utterances; and this concern reflects the way embodied and embedded forms of prejudice and inequality lead to discrepant perceptions and approaches to what injures one's body. It is through weaving repetitions, *mis*-locations, and amplifications in spoken narratives exercised in correspondence with distinct rhythms of moving image that I can come closer to what is happening in my own body when dealing with impositions perpetrated by *wchp*'s supremacy.

¹³⁶ *Vampires*, 2019, <https://youtu.be/BYLneFLulik?t=3477>.

Returning to the following question: if these oppressive realities are not new — if problems are normalised, embedded, embodied, perceivable [only] for some — how does one make tangible the immeasurable and unpredictable without being averted and undercut by the tools still sustaining the master’s house?

This question has to do with non-acknowledgement, non-recognition, and the blunt dismissal of that which does not yield to wchp ruling; since lack of acknowledgement of inflictions of wchp makes some of its consequences invisible, the only option is to persist in resisting. Ultimately, the project of hierarchisation defining who is allowed to “experience” has always been tied to a political project of governance, and this can be seen throughout histories of gender, colonial conquer, and more recently through social media and sensationalist news sources.¹³⁷ Thus, the more strategies and attempts to challenge *his* house, the closer we come to bringing it into collapse. I have been developing methods to articulate how nonconscious afferences of *form* — *the production and reproduction of patterns* — occur at an individual and in collective [*sociogenically* constructed] ways. In part, my strategy looks at ways to dismantle requirements of validity that allow deeming aspects of experience “real.” I respond to the above question with what I learn from creative practices that allow surpassing systems of measurement by moving beyond the discursive. When making my non-fictive muscle knots visible, I articulate the physicality of inflictions in a different *form*, one which is capacious enough to reinsert invisibilised injuries as constituent of the long term struggle for survival and liveability.

¹³⁷ “Recall it was the threat posed by unions of labourers, enslaved and indentured, that inspired the creation of ‘race’ in the first place in places like colonial Barbados and Virginia.” Emma Dabiri, *What White People Can Do Next: From Allyship to Coalition* (London: Penguin Books, 2021), 80; Paul B. Preciado refers to the invention of female sex to create a binary and exclude intersex babies from normality. Paul B. Preciado, “Benno Premesela Lecture 2017 by Paul B. Preciado,” Nieuwe Instituut, 2017, Vimeo, 2:06:39, <https://vimeo.com/245019294>; Miqdaad Versi on the consistency of social media’s misrepresentation of British Muslims: Samanth Subramanian, “One man’s (very polite) fight against media Islamophobia,” *The Guardian*, October 18, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/oct/18/miqdaad-versi-very-polite-fight-against-british-media-islamophobia>.



Figure 22: *"It's been a long time ~~since the last~~ [in ongoing] revolutions and the faggots and their friends are still not free."* (1987), digitalised photograph, 2021¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Titled after Larry Mitchell, *The Faggots & Their Friends between Revolutions* (Ithaca: Calamus Books, 1977), 9, strikethrough mine.

Chapter 4 – Patterns of resistance – practice-led research, part III

– speculative, but not really

Speculative fiction is a wondering about, a wandering around *with* imagination in order to picture scenarios other than what is defined by “reality.” Speculative non-fiction, to my understanding and use, holds onto possibilities attached to these same “other than” what is defined by reality, collapsing systems of validation sustaining that only the factual can be acknowledged and accounted for.

I told my dad I had a horrible dream last night. I was rushing home, which in my dream was the house where he lives, I had to climb to get there, and as I was climbing, I stepped on a snake with my hand, in a sharp movement the snake bit me in the face, I called my dad for help, and I woke up.

When I told my dad about this, he told me that the day before he had seen a beautiful large snake, but he could not photograph it because he had forgotten his phone at home. He went home to get the phone and went back, but the snake was not there anymore.

Notes of a dream, 2022

There is a space of liminality between speculation and certainty, there is information that despite lack of *corroborability* is true, and it is this space that non-fiction can emphasise. In *History Haunts The Body* (2020), visual and performance artist Ashanti Harris uses her own body as a research tool to speculate on the lived experiences of four Guyanese women who lived in Scotland in 18th and 19th centuries — Doll Thomas, Elizabeth Junor, Susanne Kerr, and Elizabeth Swain Bannister.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Ashanti Harris, “History Haunts the Body,” Transcript, 2020, Accessed: April 2022, available at: <https://graphicalhouse-gras.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/transcript-ashanti-harris-history-haun-euki.pdf>.

Attempting to have an embodied understanding of what it meant for these Guyanese women to live in Scotland, and in a way, recreating archival accounts of these women's paths, Ashanti walks the potential roads they may have walked, allowing for a sense of proximity to their bodies.¹⁴⁰ Cannach MacBride describes part of Ashanti Harris' [walked] research process as a method that relives what happened, asserting that there is no speculation in this process, because "you know that she went from work to her home," even if there is no record of it.¹⁴¹ This is precisely what speculative non-fiction can do: speaking of what certainly has happened despite lack of documentation, it can be used to articulate accounts tendentiously dismissed for lack of *corroborability*.

Speculative *non-fiction* emphasises multiple tensions between known and unknown, felt by some and not all — it is akin to the space proposed by queer and decolonial practitioners when underlining the multiple ways through which being outside mainstream [oppressive] normative frameworks holds transformative potential through its non-recognition. Kara Keeling states that the potential of queer temporalities lie on the ways *queer* is dismissed in "efforts to anchor the future to the knowable present..."¹⁴² Keeling points that it is precisely through being unaccounted for that relationalities outside normative frameworks thrive, strategise, and can continue threatening normative forms of knowledge production.

A way of coping with what denies endeavours to surpass the hierarchisation of knowledge systems is to stay close to, to hold hands with utterances that do not require pages of context, scoping, mapping, and to basically prove again and again that *your* imposition and *my* marginalisation are real. Holding hands with fiction in my work allows me to communicate in a tone that is faithful to my own reactions. Thus, I stay close to the realities imperceptible and perhaps unacceptable to the same research context I find myself in, and reaffirm:

¹⁴⁰ The Common Guild, "Ashanti Harris – 'History Haunts the Body'," July 1, 2020, Accessed: April 2022, available at: <https://thecommonguild.org.uk/programme/ashanti-harris-history-haunts-the-body>.

¹⁴¹ Available & The Rat, host, "Episode 10: Cannach MacBride & Ashanti Harris," Mixcloud (podcast), February 2022, Accessed: February 2022, available at: <https://www.mixcloud.com/availableandtherat/ep10-cannach-macbride-ashanti-harris/>.

¹⁴² Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures*, 19-20.

I know, knowledge: another process, finally no different, in its over-all form, from the one called stupidity. Information is not taken into the human organism so much as it is created from the strong association of external and internal perceptions. These associations are called knowledge, insight, belief, understanding, belligerence, pig-headedness, stupidity. (Only social use determines which associations are knowledge and which are not.)¹⁴³

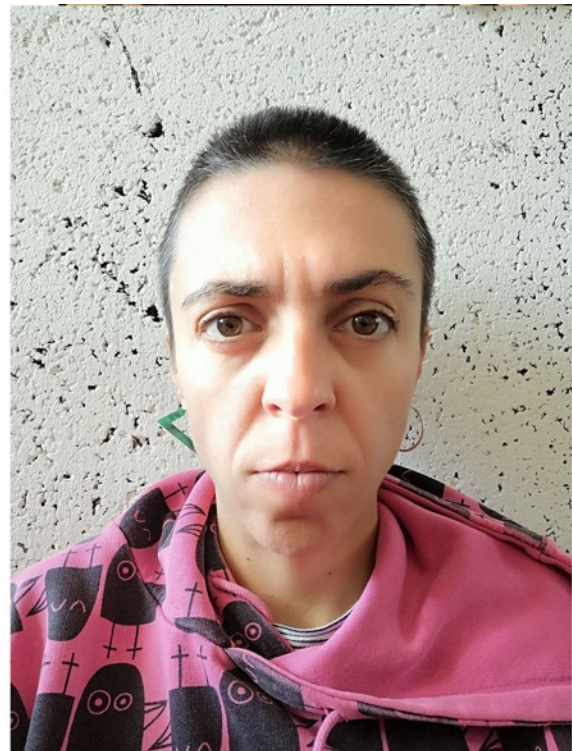


Figure 23 (left): *Knowledge with beauty filter zero*, digital photograph, 2021

Figure 24 (right): *Knowledge with beauty filter 10*, digital photograph, 2021

¹⁴³ Samuel Delany, *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand*, (United States: Bantam Books, 1984), 32.

The re-implicated in doing something again shares meaning with what I have been arguing as *form* — the production and reproduction of patterns. Arguably, *form* also shares meaning with the repetitious ways non-western forms of knowledge and relationalities have been minimised and dismissed. However, when addressing the not-newness of prejudicial patterns I do not seek to align shared meanings behind these words. Yes, *resistance needs repeating*, but resistance is inherently shapeshifting despite the problems not being new. When addressing the possible relation between repurposing as a method, and repetition as a pattern of resistance, I focus on what certainly has happened despite lack of documentation. Speculative non-fiction can overlap with Saidiya Hartman's *critical fabulation*, it can confront the grammars sustaining what composes a "valid" experience, which is addressed by Sylvia Wynter in *Towards the Sociogenic Principle* as well, and it is a method to expand on realities unrecognised by white cishetero patriarchy.

In my practice, by repurposing images of my childhood I point at the continuous resistance implicated in surviving long term endurance of supremacist and hierarchised relationalities. Repurposing also paves the way to speak of how tiredness occupies a spacious portion of my research, and how the arguments I have been foregrounding through my practice articulate multiple confrontations that enabled my state.

The [my] rhythm of [being] tiredness is developed through repetition, through repeated confrontations with wchp, or *form* — the production and reproduction of patterns.

Tiredness has a rhythm, and that rhythm affects how I conduct my days, how I handle my interactions; tiredness has concrete consequences, these consequences are as real as the non-fiction reality of *the knots on my back*. The duration, repetition, and rhythm associated with tiredness allows me to begin formulating an answer to one of my research questions:

What are some of the ways through which art based practices articulate how the immateriality of affect manifests itself on the body?

– tiredness

As I head towards formulating some sort of conclusion, I identify an increasing tiredness in adult experiences that was not present in childhood. The endurance of, and resistance against wchp is tiring, which will certainly come across as obvious for some of my readers/audience, emphasising therefore the necessity to deal with this paradox of what is obvious, and yet invisible, the non-acknowledgement of material intangibilities.

The tone in my practice has changed due to the incorporation of this tiredness; the visual play is different despite the focus staying on the endurance of confrontations, and on the dismissal of invisible pain. The visual play has to do with editing choices, following the rhythm that speaks of my energy, paying attention to where subtitles break, where the image stops, what time of day the audio is recorded; these accompany the origin of the narrative: there are different kinds of “I.” The spaces composed in *knots* and *perfume* allude to a certain immateriality associated with the calmness and ease with which tension spreads through the body; and it is through the space in these images that a play with and between words allows coming closer to what is happening in the body, in my own body, in relation to a certain experience. Concurrently, the different “I” in each narrative is related to different roles I am willing to, and emotionally capable of taking. In *Patterns*, 2023, I give into tiredness, generating space to expose exasperating and triggering moments, unpacking real-time accounts of post-confrontational outbursts, whilst seeking to articulate the tension between rest and disquiet.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Now is a good moment to pause and see *Patterns*, 2023, available at: <https://vimeo.com/821962997?share=copy>.

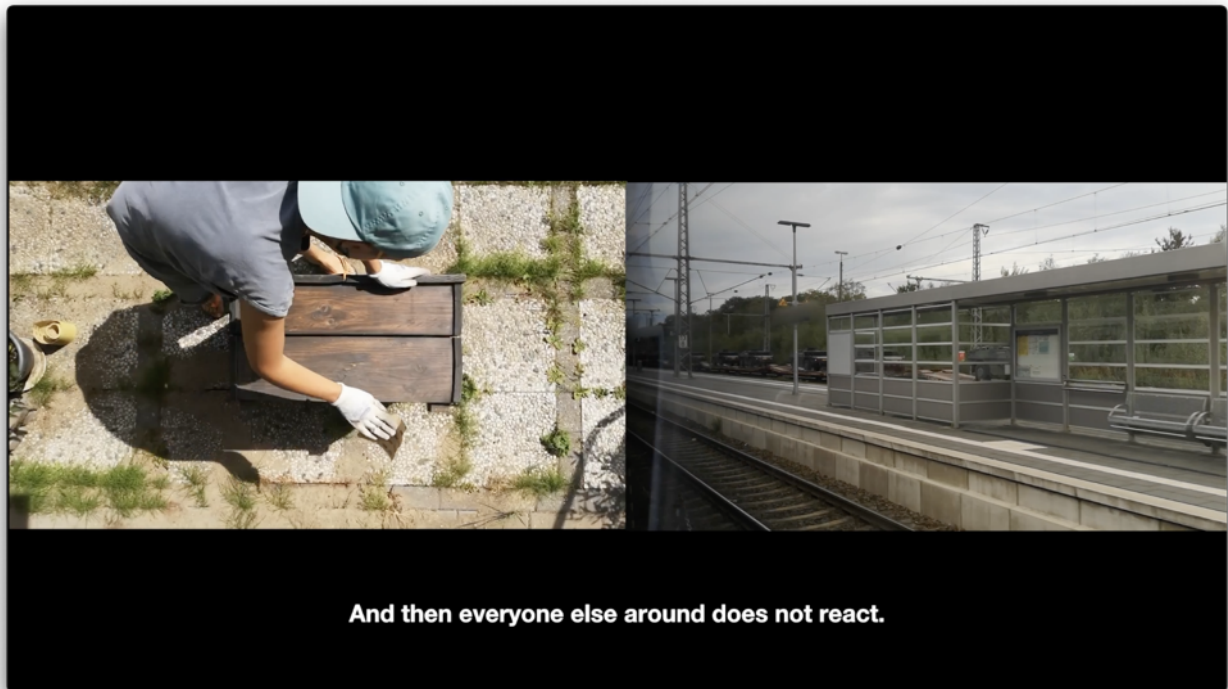


Figure 25: *Patterns*, video still, 2023

Patterns is a two channel video that works through repetitious encounters with white cisheteronormativity. Here, I focus on some of the learned habits of my own body when sensing the approach of, and dealing with hostile situations; I point at the way normativity pathologises that which [those whom] do not submit to its standards; and I confront the allegedly ignorant, yet presumptuously condescending attitudes enabling the continuous injury of certain bodies. Insistent stubbornness of wchp opens the wound further, it pinches the muscle knots with heinous insistence, never dissipating, and suggesting threats to anything that might become a challenge to its comfortable ruling. After all, strategies of intimidation are not new either. Recovering, however, is beyond ways to balance injury and repair — resistance to supremacist intentionality is continuous — making thus healing an ongoing process that is part and parcel of surviving normativity.

The format of this video retains reuse, reorienting, and repurposing in assemblage production of moving and still image, and it is through those approaches that I simulate real time confrontations, and reorient the focus point throughout the video. But it is in the positioning, sequence, and rhythm that an almost live tempo of coming in contact with what catalyses one's affective response can occur, allowing for the viscosity of affect to be amplified beyond the screen. The almost gentleness with which injuries manifest themselves, slowly spreading from the beginning of an interaction until a peak of pain, anxiety, anger. In working with this tempo I noted the similarity of rhythm between injury and the easiness with which those benefiting from normativity exercise their privilege, entitled [invented] superiority, and white ignorance [or fragility]. It is all very organic, smooth, as if the most normal and expected sequence [pattern].

Patterns further points at the constant expectation to be complicit with, to silently endure the behaviour of those who perpetuate unequal power relations. These expectations put the responsibility on those who have to endure normality, rather than underlining that learning mechanisms for those inflicting harm are imperative. The offended needs to get used to white and cishetero ignorance, the offender needs to acknowledge their ignorance and not necessarily do anything else [basically it is all a waste of time and energy]. The silent perpetuity of these gestures, what I call propagation of *form* throughout my research, are “small” utterances, “small” manifestations that lead to very material consequences, and as I have already shown, can easily be traced back to supremacist strategies and intentionalities.

The visual language in *knots* guides the viewer in a tempo that alludes to the normalised ways through which hierarchical dynamics take place. *Patterns* follows a similar temporality, but with the added layer that conveys a form of recovery, asking for an engagement from the audience to sit with the duration of repair, a maintenance taking place simultaneous to [injurious] detriment.

In the section *body parts* of my previous chapter, I opened a door to question how much it is worth to complain when knowing that you will be pathologised for doing so. The disproportionate cause/effect ingrained in confrontations where the easiness with which what is said during an interaction can be misunderstood is not possible to know beforehand — remember that difference is incomparable, not universally accessible. When non-normative bodies are pathologised, their freedom to express discomfort, to be angry, to point at the ways one's body is being injured, this possibility to express injury is obliterated and dismissed by

those benefiting from normativity and its dominance. I restate that there is no way to achieve the right to exist *as such* without questioning and displeasing those who comfortably sit under normativity; and it seems to me that this will always come at the cost of being considered excessive, melodramatic, intolerant, and at times ill.

I speak of tiredness because it is tied to violence, a kind of violence that has been normalised, institutionalised, taken for granted. Being tired due to constant confrontation is being tired from resisting and protesting wchp in all its inflictions. Violence is present, violence is still and always present. I think of it because I see it every day. I think of violence because it is tangible, I feel it, and it does not go away.



Figure 26: *Patterns*, video still, 2023

When I say that I identify an *increasing* tiredness in adult experiences that was not present in childhood, I do not want to stigmatise an adult vs child experience [I refuse even to risk creating that psychoanalytical wet dream!]. The possibility of a joyous queer childhood can be related to being oblivious of normativities because there has not been continuous resistance. The accumulation of experience in adulthood, being able to articulate and contextualise the characteristics around identity *may* lead to tiredness, but adulthood can also own a loud joyousness despite the ways queer adults are pathologised.

My inquiry around material intangibilities includes space for joy. Joy is part of the constant repair of the aforementioned violence, but that is not why I speak of it. I don't want to speak of joy as the antidote of violence, I want to focus on joy *despite* violence; joy exposes the way life is so much better without white cisheteropatriarchy's impositions.

I identified an increasing tiredness. I have also identified and increasing comfort through the works of those who are actively contributing to "bring up the end of [parts of] the world as we know it."¹⁴⁵

— epistemic disobedience / epistemological destruction

The paradigm shift implemented through trans sexual politics, especially black trans sexual politics, is to me the undoing of epistemologies so urgently required to dismantle the kind of constraining structures hindering social justice. When performance artist, actress, and activist Linn da Quebrada utters "I am a cisgender woman with one breast and a penis," she is committing the kind of epistemic disobedience that undoes gender related epistemology.¹⁴⁶ Linn goes beyond the reclaiming of words like queer or faggot, because she is contesting what was biologically invented as signifiers of what sex and gender should embody. Claiming to be a cisgender woman, Linn intentionally misuses the term cisgender, she stretches the capacity of an already invented term derived from normative constructions, she is bringing into crisis sex and gender epistemes by making clear that the individual is the one deciding which categories

¹⁴⁵ Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Speculative Planning," May 7, 2015. Video File. Accessed: October 21, 2018, <https://archive.newmuseum.org/videos/10210>.

¹⁴⁶ Claudia Priscilla and Kiko Goifman, *Tranny Fag*, film (Brasil: Válvula Produções, 2018).

they want to use.

Looking into the ways art based inquiries can regenerate what our bodies sense, but cannot (yet) make sense of, Linn demonstrates what art can do when not submitting to dominant and hierarchised epistemologies. Concurrently, she makes evident that not being able to make sense of derives from oppressive and normalising structures that prevent one's possibility to articulate one's own body in faithful ways to one's own identity.⁸ This is intangible mainly to the white-cis-hetero body, or to the body passing as such. Linn claims ownership to the right of terming her own body, she demonstrates through practice what living in one's own terms look like:

<i>Vou te confessar</i>	I'm gonna confess to you
<i>Que às vezes nem eu me aguento</i>	Thing is, sometimes even I can't stand myself
<i>Pra ser tão viado assim</i>	To be so queer
<i>Precisa ter muito mais</i>	You need much more
<i>Muito talento</i>	Much talent ¹⁴⁷

Undoing epistemology requires new terms decided by those who embody them, as Linn claims, "vai ter que enviadecer," "you'll have to *faggotise* yourself." *Faggotise* did not exist as a verb, so Linn created it in order to say "you need to be a bit more fag."¹⁴⁸ These semantic transformations are not as easy to do in English as they are in Portuguese [or in Turkish], where grammatical structures can be applied and easily identified as the transformation of a noun or adjective into a verb, or vice versa. This is not about creating a hierarchy on which language is more flexible, this is about being able to adapt certain terms when following an academic structure without having one's written material perceived as having typos or linguistic ignorances.

¹⁴⁷ Linn da Quebrada, "Talento," track 1 on *Pajubá*, Linn da Quebrada records, 2017, digital album.

¹⁴⁸ To *faggotize* could also signify "to queer." Although viado or bixa — faggot — can be used among close friends when talking to each other, it is also a derogative term used specifically to curse "male" gays.

Linn confronts the imposed binary inventions used to sustain cisnormativity. She is the scream to all forms of assault created by white-cis-hetero-patriarchy to maintain governance over all bodies:

<i>Ela tem cara de mulher</i>	She has the face of a woman
<i>Ela tem corpo de mulher</i>	She has the body of a woman
<i>Ela tem jeito</i>	She has the manners
<i>Tem bunda</i>	She has the ass
<i>Tem peito</i>	She has the breasts
<i>E o pau de mulher!</i>	And the cock of a woman! ¹⁴⁹

The unapologetic exposure of what is being denied and what is being embraced in Linn da Quebrada's work undoes [to me] oppressive epistemic structures by reinventing and reclaiming language in the terms she deems necessary. Linn articulates non-binary embodiments, celebrates her blackness, and she paves a contribution for the destruction of racialised and gendered normativities.

I had phrased my research question as:

How can methods and methodologies operating under a fine art framework help to bring into crisis white, cisgender, heteronormative and patriarchal supremacist forms of knowledge production and perpetuation?

Nevertheless, the answer this question are propositions put forward by the ways some art practices have the ability to materialise the affective structures implicated in the endurance of white, cisgender, and heteropatriarchal frameworks, because it is through the articulation of

¹⁴⁹ Linn da Quebrada, *Mulher*, Linn da Quebrada records, 2017, single.

endurance and resistance, as well as the dismissal and destruction of wchp that art practices further delineate social, political, educational, and cultural modes of existing otherwise.

Understanding the potential materialisations of futurities in which wchp does not have the power to perpetuate its normalised inflictions and impositions requires engaging with the work of artists and thinkers that contribute to the articulation of what is implicated with material intangibilities. Earlier I spoke of Johana Hedva's ability to describe experience in ways that collapse questions of *corroborability* through the materialisation of that which is immaterial [i.e. dreams]. Here, I claim that Linn's work utters nonconscious afferences of *form* that encompass the destruction of normativities, which foregrounds a direct relation between the destruction of oppressive white cisheteropatriarchy. The destruction of normativities can be intentional, and it can be an embodied afference of *form*, disregard[ings] of semiotic manipulations of normativity, which to me are the ultimate gestures towards a *hopeful* futurity.

— patterns of resistance

Throughout this thesis I have indicated the necessity to go beyond western centred phenomenologies in order to speak of experience, and to claim the right to self-identification without ties to wchp. To speak of patterns of resistance requires acknowledging the work of artists and thinkers whose ability to address the intangibilities of lived experience breaks referents fluent in formulations of what constitutes [western] knowledge. The work referenced in this chapter has a relation to tempo as that which shapes the way the audience experiences the work. Thinking about tempo relates to rhythms and structures of persistence, of persistent resistance in relation to endurance, and how the body contains and processes the affective implications of what it resists and endures.

Unpacking the way music influences his work, Arthur Jafa explains how black music directly speaks of the experiencing and formation of being and becoming black[ened] in America. Jafa proposes that "once you question what black music engenders then you require a formal

analysis,” further explaining that, historically, western notational systems never had the ability to account for what is happening in black music.¹⁵⁰

In analysing the rhythmic relation of black music and social experiences of black Americans, Jafa describes how the formal structure of dub music alludes to materialisations of absence: “what that structure does is that it makes you hyper aware of the things that are no longer there.”¹⁵¹ In a dub structure, when all instruments playing cease and only one element persists, it makes the listener more conscious of what is absent. Jafa ties this absence to the loss that uncountable amounts of black Americans have endured over the centuries; losses for which there is no account of how those lost went missing, “you know nothing good happened,” but there is no exact knowledge on what.¹⁵² So, a dub structure plays this sense of missing through rupture, loss of all instruments, and then their return, which Jafa claims to be a sort of “repair of that emptiness and their absence.”¹⁵³

Intangibility refers to the way affective structures are not universally perceptible, but singularly felt; they are not measurable nor standardised; they are materially intangible due to non-universal perceptibility, and yet the way these affective structures bear very material consequences must be acknowledged. Arthur Jafa foregrounds a transformative analysis that shapes material intangibilities, formulating how that which is materially intangible due to an absence of concrete measurability [found-ability almost] is articulated in music patterns.

— what is the hyper awareness of a still-moving-image?

The advances made *with* art practices that attend to the material/immaterial paradox of affective structures tied to experience are perhaps most notably written [verbal, linguistic] by Tina Campt. In her latest book, *A Black Gaze*, Tina Campt applies the *wording* she has been

¹⁵⁰ Arthur Jafa, “In Your Face: Interview - Arthur Jafa,” *SHOWstudio*, November 24, 2017, video, 53:13, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAk0dk0IAWw>.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

developing in relation to the way black artists communicate the embodied lived experience in late 20th and 21st century.¹⁵⁴

Campt termed “still-moving-images” as “images that hover between still and moving images; animated still images, slowed or stilled images in motion or visual renderings that blur the distinctions between these multiple genres; images that require the labour of feeling with or through them.”¹⁵⁵ Similarly to Jafa, Campt calls for attention to the affective implications of absence, not of the instruments that were present, but the absence of words in silent still-moving-image work. In verse six of *A Black Gaze, Adjacency and the Poethics of Care*, Campt engages with Luke Willis Thomson’s *autoprotrait*, 2017, and *Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries*, 2016; both works encompass still-moving-image portraits of people who lost a family member to police brutality. Through Thomson’s work, Campt explains how still-moving-images allows for focus to operate differently; different as in, for example, the attempt to focus on the information being delivered to us when reading a book, watching a movie, trying to perform a task and paying heed to what that task requires throughout the moments in which it is being performed. The difference of a silent still-moving-image is that it allows for the focus to gravitate towards what the image is conveying through its silence. Reflecting on what this absence can imply, Campt thinks *with* what the images ask from the audience, a process which requires adjacency: “the reparative work of transforming proximity into accountability; the labour of positioning oneself in relation to another in ways that revalue and redress complex histories of dispossession.”¹⁵⁶

The hyper awareness enabled through a still-moving-image underlines the possibilities of affective experiences generated through art practices in ways that a written description cannot access. I have been weaving in and out of this constant conflict of writing about the immateriality of sensation, to mirror something that is immaterial *despite* its material consequences. I have been pointing at possible ways of conveying the material consequences of endurance through Delany’s relation to speculation, Saidiya Hartman’s *critical fabulation*, the

¹⁵⁴ Campt, *A Black Gaze*.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 210.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 171.

articulation of *the knots on my back*, and now through the way Tina Campt writes by speaking with images.

Staying with the idea that when everything drops but *one* element, and the hyperawareness of what is gone or lost becomes more prominent, I keep thinking about the hyperfocus on what still stands. Taking the hyperfocus into a central point, the presence of what still stands serves as a reminder that, despite all efforts of wchp to control that and those who do not comply to its enforced-invented supremacy, there is still a presence saying “I am here,” I am here *despite* all your efforts to make it otherwise. Although this is implied in Campt’s description of Thomson’s *autoportrait* and *Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries*, it is in Tanu Gago’s *Apparatus* that I came to understand the possibilities of staying with the one remaining element on screen.¹⁵⁷

Apparatus provides distinct representations of masculinity and queerness, blurring stereotypes around body visibility in relation to intersectional layers of identity. Gago’s visual language plays with mirroring of silhouettes, illumination and shade, colour and contrast whilst exposing through the accompanying recordings colonial inventions around indigenous bodies. The changes of setting in which Gago centres one single individual amplify through still-moving-image portraits the silent communication of what it entails to live through gendered projections, whilst trying to remain faithful to one’s own living terms. When engaging with the portraits in *Apparatus* through Arthur Jafa’s dub analogy, focusing specifically on that one element that remain, Tanu Gago shows what still stands despite what has been lost and endured.

My intention to point at what still stands is not to create a positive vs negative lens through which a method of analysis can be used [I find quite irritating the idea of “just look at the positive side,” as if there is an either or]. Still standing does not negate what one endures in order to stand, and that is made evident in the way the portraits in *Apparatus* are conveyed through a tempo, a rhythm through which it is possible to understand the portrayed’s possible endurance and resistance, as well as their standing despite wchp. The portraits in *Apparatus* allow for a transformative moment to occur, because in the potential *hapticality* of those images

¹⁵⁷ Tanu Gago, director, *Apparatus*, September 1, 2018, FAFSWAG, 19:00, video, 2018.

– implying an “I am still here, *despite*” – it is possible to envision the possibilities within the absence of white cisheteropatriarchy.¹⁵⁸

– *penchantly gay*

Staying in contact with the aforementioned work allowed me to understand what I had been doing with some of the photos of my own archive. My way of conducting research through practice has been rather intuitive, and I did not always understand what I was doing when scanning and editing childhood pictures. I had to feel and stay with other material intangibilities before being able to understand my own, before understanding what *my* images can do. The work concluding this practice-led research period is *Penchantly gay*: an absent non-hetero futurity materialised in the present.

¹⁵⁸ “Haptic images: images that touch and move us not simply though what we see; affective images we respond to viscerally; images that solicit multiple sensory responses.” Camp, *A Black Gaze*, 193.

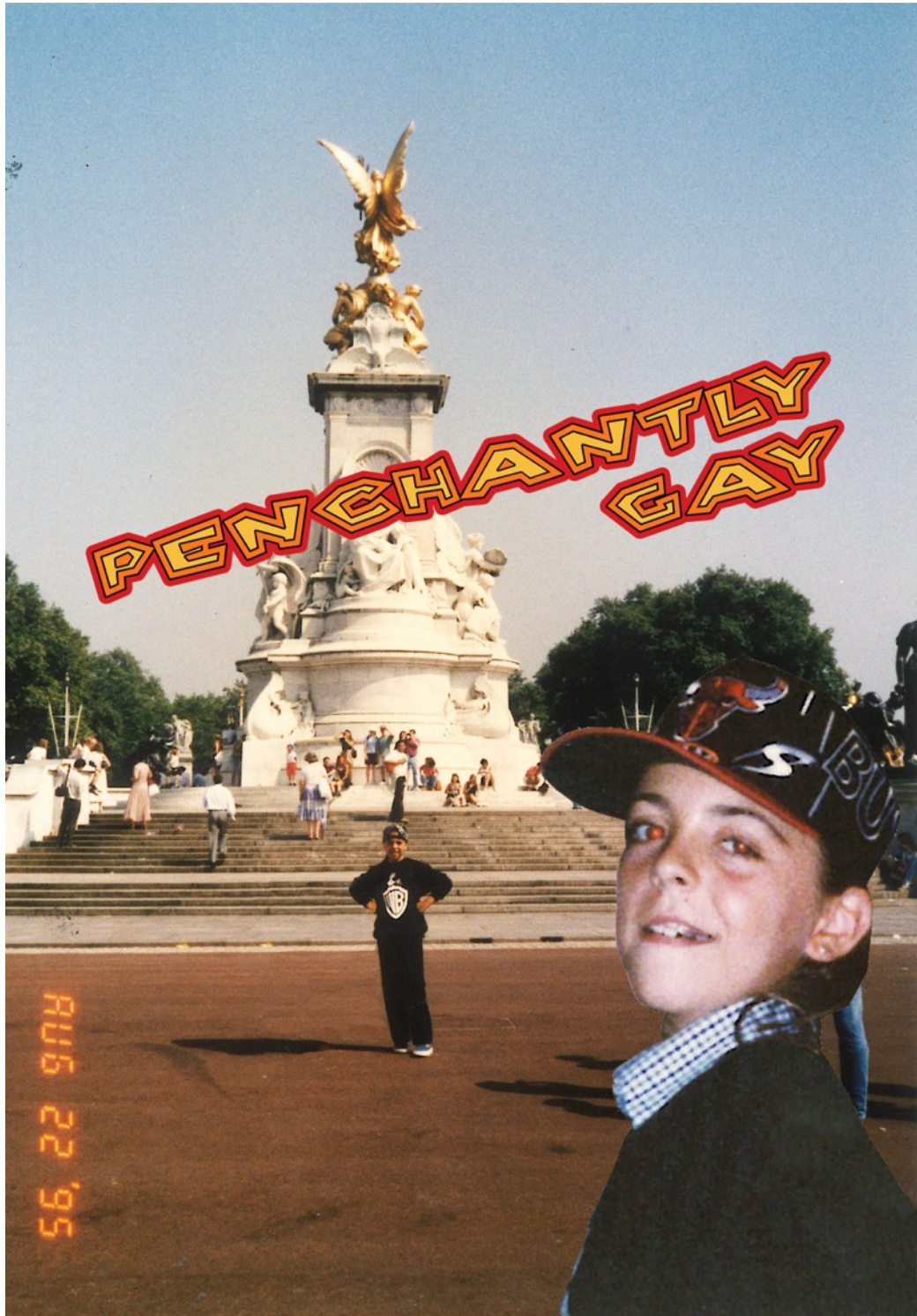


Figure 27: *Penchantly gay* — *Bulls I* (1995), digital collage, 2023

The wording absent non-hetero futurity intersects work I engaged with throughout my research. Absence has a friction with the present, it projects what is *not* there through the desire of having something in a now temporality. Absence also refers to non-existence based on one's own embodiment, as if one is cutting through, leaving traces that are not identifiable; a non-identification that in my case is not fitting in a gendered binary system of perception. I have been thinking through the way Eduardo Kohn describes *absent future*: how interpretations of the present [what is happening *now*] affect assumptions about a potential future: a hint of what might be possible based on what the present represents.¹⁵⁹ These hints of possibility are foundational in José Muñoz' *Cruising Utopia*, where he articulates queerness as a mode of desiring something other than what is made possible in the present.¹⁶⁰ Muñoz feels [felt] *queerness* present and absent, its existence is felt through intentions of going beyond the limitations of the present, and yet its *beyondness* makes queerness still absent.¹⁶¹

In Frottage, Keguro Macharia writes that “hetero-kinship is consistently reinforced as a capacious category that manages all difference.”¹⁶² Working through the frictions and possibilities between queer studies and African diaspora scholarship, Macharia situates hetero-reproduction, hetero-kinship, and hereto-futurity as terms that capture the way normativity is projected into readings of diaspora. These associations with heterosexual normativity are used in “Frottage [to track] the uneven traces of dispersal and scattering associated with diaspora, attempting to arrest the heteronormative inevitability that would conflate dispersal with hetero-futurity.”¹⁶³

Subscribing to Macharia's proposition, I use non-hetero futurity to speak of moments whence normativity is or was not imposed; I point at childhood moments that visually display a challenge to heteronormative expectations, and I argue that these moments display an absent non-hetero futurity being materialised in the present. My usage of *non-* focuses more on the

¹⁵⁹ Kohn, *How Forests Think*, 77 and 217.

¹⁶⁰ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 41.

¹⁶² Macharia, *Frottage*, 11.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 12.

possibilities latent in absence than on conflict and denial through the use of this prefix, although conflicts and refusals are certainly part of my research. In other words, non-hetero futurity is not the binary opposition arrested by heteronormativity, it is the multiplicity of possibilities that can be manifested when normativity is dismissed, denied, or destroyed — absent. The destruction of normativities are materialisations of absent non-hetero futurities, scratching ~~absence~~ into presence, and materialising the future in the now.

Looking at my childhood pictures and clearly identifying a gay child is a joyous confrontation. I love the fact that I wanted to be topless, wear button up shirts, and baseball caps [Bulls], even though I could sense that my choice was not [socially] accepted; being in that space of liminality marked by not yet understanding the constructs implicated in my identity, but still trying to make it work despite being constantly misgendered. The *Penchantly gay* images can put forward cross temporal realities of non-hetero presents without having to go through a pre- or post- identity formation assessments in relation to pathologised descriptions derived from cisheteronormativity. This series triggers a cross temporal *hapticity*, to use Tina Campt's words, they encompass *virtuality*, as described by Denise Ferreira da Silva, and it is through these processes that I am able to understand how these images convey nonconscious semiotic affective responses viscerally opposing an automated embodiment of [cishetero]normativity. In *Penchantly gay* I frame a utopic future, a future that is possible due to the absence of normativity.

I have proposed how the way *form* is transferred through the repetition of patterns, which is easily found in western behaviours taken for granted as normal, such as not having to come out as heterosexual. *Penchantly gay* shapes a nonconscious semiotic response that does not yield to cisheteropatriarchy, they are unapologetically gay images, not giving a fuck, a literal toast — in your face happiness — that collapse gender constructs.

When I speak of my penchantly gayness as a child, I do not intend to create an adult tiredness vs a childhood joy or playfulness, nor to address the cliché naivety associated with childhood — this is not simply about the pleasure of being gay. It is not because of the potential lack of joy that I contest that which prevents it from happening [supremacist normativity], it is because, as I have been addressing, normativity perpetuates inequality through the imposition of a universalised supremacist ideology.



Figure 28: *Penchantly gay* — *Cheers* (1992), digital collage, 2023

The non-hetero futurity I see associated with childhood is not enabled simply by joy or playfulness, it is enabled by the possibility of not yielding to heteronormative ruling. In *A Faggot/Dyke Anthology, Where the fuck are you looking at!?* and in several of my photographic inquiries I addressed some of the difficulties of looking gay, boyish, tomboyish, little butch, little dyke [my adjectives based on memories]. *Penchantly gay* has a different intention; when thinking about it through what Jafa describes in relation to a dub structure, if everything is gone and I only have that image[s], I see a joyous child just saying cheers; I can see myself thinking I look really cool with a baseball cap, thinking I had some sort of swag, super dyke swag I must say, and loving it. If all the elements drop when looking at these pictures, I don't have to think about the kind of normatives that were not in place, or think about how my parents allowed me to wear what I wanted [since I was six]. I don't need to go over this beaten argument again about the way normativity inflicts sex/gender formations, or what it means to be looked at by strangers... I appreciate the fact that, despite it being difficult [*Faggot/Dyke*], I was still insistently gay: I enjoyed my style and insisted on it. I am stereotyping myself by saying that I looked like a tomboy or like a little dyke; I do this not to reinscribe myself into pathologised categories. I do this because now, as an adult, I can articulate that I looked like all of those stereotypes, and despite their connotations and implications, I thought I looked very cool.

In going back [again] to childhood images and memories, going back to when I had no words to articulate my non-*heteroness*, I understand [now] an unapologetic attitude that was dismissing what was prescribed to me. My nonconscious semiotic response was confidently beyond gender, embodying the identity markers I had not yet been introduced to nor denied. The non-linearity latent in *Penchantly gay* is shaped through time-crossings and overlapping realities made evident by my way of conducting research — following memory triggers, reusing archival imagery, cropping the image, emphasising, amplifying; this non-linearity, both in terms of time and research methodology, led me to claim the *Penchantly gay* images as portraits of a non-hetero futurity being manifested in the present, showing what happens when cisheteronormativities are not imposed, when they are ignored, dismissed, absent. This work is a celebration *to* [my] childhood queerness, turning thus *penchant* into an adverb, going beyond a tendency and into the reclaiming of an identity that is *insistently* [*penchantly*] gay.

— publicly, and *penchantly gay*

The virtuality that enabled claiming a past statement as a wanted future in the present discloses questions of visibility, equating the absence of imposed normativity to the engendering of joy. I say visibility because of the way some joys are not shared by all people; similarly to the still-moving images that show what still stands, I want to project a joy that is unbearably tangible for cisheteronormativity; a joy that encompasses the complicated position of not having words to articulate one's own identity, but at peace of mind in simply being who I was.

Retrospectively thinking through rhythm and tempo in relation to my gif work pointed at the need to further inquire how the flashing of an image serves as interruption of legibility, potentially bringing into crisis analysis incapable of moving beyond binary lenses. Following the belated conclusion that an ideal scenario to display *Go Figure!* would be in large scale and in public, I worked on making *Penchantly gay* a public art project. The two *penchantly gay* images in the previous section were on display in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, from September 25 until October 1 using publicity frames allocated to advertisement.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ This was a self-initiated project with financial support from Art Office Rotterdam, and it consisted of fifty posters spread through the city. Simultaneously, I had a one month exhibition and artist talk at CultureHub, Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Documentation of both projects can be found in pages 154-167 of Appendix one.



Figure 29: *Penchantly gay* posters, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2023

Making *Penchantly gay* public puts forward a loud amplification of refusal, the kind of loud visibility that would require conducting an entire other research on questions of representation, one which could not be detached from racist markers of visibility [tangibility]: how white people usually only refer to skin colour when describing someone who is not white; how gender equality is ok, so long as it stays within a binary referent, and so long as managerial positions remain in the hands of normativity; how queer individuals are tolerated, so long as they assimilate and are not too present. Etcetera, etcetera. Thus, saying “I want to project a joy that is unbearably tangible for cisheteronormativity” should not be confused with “I want to project a [childhood queer] joy *because* it is unbearably tangible for cisheteronormativity.”

In re-inscribing childhood images in public, I am rewriting *Penchantly gay* from an absent non-hetero futurity being materialised in the present, to an absent non-hetero futurity being

~~materialised in the present.~~ The seven and ten year old looking at the passer-by in the face display a joyously queer toast, or smirk; they say “I am good like that,” I am good despite the mainstream heteronormative stare. There is a difference in delivery of *Penchantly gay* and the work in enduring encounters; the moving image work shown in public contained a narrative of confrontation, but *Penchantly gay* proposes different forms disruption through the stillness of a poster and its potential legibility. Perhaps this is what I want the viewer to experience when seeing these posters in public: the comfort of a queer child, *despite* the oppression of those who inflict normativity. Moreover, thinking about rhythm and tempo, if a gif provokes confusion, making the question *is it a boy or a girl* impossible [or at least hard] to answer, then *Penchantly gay* does not even allow for a binary question to be formulated. *Penchantly gay* is *fucking with grammars* of representation, deploying a format of advertisement without an end product, and subconsciously staying in public [or not] as a different type of *form*.

A note ahead of conclusion

“We are living in an absolute perfect, constructed utopia right now, it’s just not our utopia, it is not my utopia, but we are living in the utopia of the one percent [1%].”¹⁶⁵

I ended this PhD angry and exhausted, and I could not say that. I could not mention the tiredness and anger because it is not suitable for postgraduate research to speak freely about the way being involved with high education institutions strips you from yourself more than what it gives you to grow. Learning how to bow to institutional demands and to the ways power is exercised on you while conducting work on the way supremacist relationalities operate is no easy task. I wish I knew this was going to be the case, and I hope never to be in this position again. Admittedly, the most important realisation, lesson, and disappointment throughout this research is the ongoing confrontation with how the master’s house does not give a royal fuck about the injuries it causes.

I had a hard time trying to understand how I could write a conclusion without claiming any contribution to knowledge. I did not want to claim any contribution as mine alone, because wchp’s supremacy is nothing new, and I thought it was important therefore to say that what I am arguing is *not* new. This research, the hypothesis it proposes, the speculations it makes, and the spaces it carves is a contribution to the ongoing struggle for survival and liveability. When I say contribution, I am referring to the collective endeavour of dismantling wchp as the indivisible complex that it is. My understanding of collectivity here has to do with the way different practitioners, be it through visual or written practices, share a goal of dismantling supremacist relationalities. In pursuing words to articulate a positioning which splices joy and anger I found a different type of emotion, an energy that is paired with the hopes and pains of inhabiting a moment many have fought for, and knowing that after more will continue seeking.¹⁶⁶ This energy is the purpose found through a space and time scattered companionship in seeking a utopia that is not confined to wchp.

¹⁶⁵ Ama Josephine B. Johnstone, “An Image of Tomorrow: Reading Rotimi Fani-Kayode through the Potentiality of Intimate Ecologies,” SoAH Research Presents: REPRESENTATION, Royal College of Art, London, UK, February 17, 2021.

¹⁶⁶ The next long term research I will focus on will be on visual disruption of supremacist relationalities by breaking normative forms of legibility.

Conclusion

““Man” is the canon of a failed metaphysics.”¹⁶⁷

My practice-led research inquires into the ways cisheteronormativity manifests itself on the body. My concern when conducting such research encompasses a critique to the way western philosophy has been constraining what constitutes knowledge, which I have addressed in relation to the way experience — the ontologically and epistemologically defined, empirically verified, phenomenologically understood, and aesthetically representable — cannot be observed through eyes confined to wchp. I situate my work in relation to thinkers who have been giving evidence of strategies inventing hierarchies around what it means to be Human. I have tried to exercise a fine art methodology freed from the way art has been instrumentalised in colonial definitions of intellectual superiority, whilst attending to the immateriality of affect in ways that could challenge supremacist forms of knowledge perpetuity. I did this by providing different articulations of the ways through which affect materialises itself on the body, substantiating embodied experiences of invisibilised injuries inflicted through wchp. I have confronted some of the normalised forms of oppression operating through organised hierarchal relationalities, pointing thus at how these forms of oppression are not new.

Through my methodological deployment, I have conducted a practice-led research that exposes and contests forms of *corroborability* of experience in relation to universalised systems of measurement. I did this first by arguing how experiences privileging the wchp subject define legibility in ontological terms; secondly, I exemplify how experiences outside wchp representation are not recognised, and are therefore outcasted from empiricism; and third, by demonstrating the veracity of experiences deemed illegible from a wchp standpoint, I reiterate how the physically explainable surpasses the personally observable. In following questions of *corroborability*, I articulate a broader critique to the knowledge [research] structures that engender the hierarchical and oppressive frameworks I work against. I also formulate a critique to what is accounted for as “real” in relation whose experience is at stake.

¹⁶⁷ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 12.

Endurance and resistance are consistently present in what I have been inquiring into. I developed the term material intangibilities, highlighting injuries that are invisible due to the way they manifest themselves on the body. I worked with my own body as the ground of my research, articulating injury and repair, damage and pain; I build on amplification, *mis*-location, and speculative non-fiction as methods, which allows me to articulate some of the violences I experience from wchp. I have made *tangible* some less perceptible injurious components of a wider project of oppression; and in doing so, I tie resistance and long term endurance of wchp, and to a lifelong project for survival of normativity.

The answers to my research questions are done through practice: they are *doings* rather than *thinkings*. The rhythm and the motion through which I convey cisheteronormativity manifesting itself on my body requires witnessing injurious acts. I give evidence of injury by speaking from the body, as the body, *mis*-locating the narrative so as to guide the reader or audience through the afferences derived from moments of confrontation with wchp. The different tempos reflect distinct degrees of intentionality: sometimes the aggressor is being ignorant, sometimes they are exercising their embodied entitlement and sense of superiority, and sometimes the inflictions of harm are simply intentional. In exercising distinct durations in my still and moving image work I allow for my injuries to speak, to gain shape, to become tangible, and in doing so I foreground some of the ways through which art based practices articulate how the immateriality of affect manifests itself on the body.

The creative practices I engaged with throughout this thesis helped me to understand the socio-political complexity of working with that which is dismissed: the empirical experience of oppression from a place of denied ontology. However, it is not my intention to imply that *some* art practices speak of the immateriality of affect *better* than others. This is not a competition, it is a collaborative endeavour that attends to the articulation of affective structures in order to create something more than just surviving and enduring wchp. Acknowledging this collaborative endeavour, I want to point at the impossibility of claiming any contribution to knowledge as mine alone. A contribution to plural self-identifications composing resistance to oppression is a political project, because phenomenological accounts of oppression are dismissed through the sustenance of tools that enable a normalised relationality privileging the wchp subject. So far, I don't think there is a way to make tangible the immeasurable and

unpredictable without being averted and undercut by the tools still sustaining the master's house, only collaborative attempts to do so.

Acknowledging the latter inability revealed two aspects of inquiry in relation to what I came to describe as nonconscious semiosis of affect: the production of meaning through patterns and repetitions that are nonconsciously processed, and the affective processes indivisible from the way one embodies meaning. The first has to do with the way patterns of normativity are nonconsciously perpetuated through normalised relational dynamics, such as saying "hi guys" to a group of people in which no one identifies as male, not having to come out when identifying as heterosexual, or exerting entitled superiority through gender policing. The second has to do with nonconscious semiotic affective responses viscerally opposing impositions of normativity.

I emphasise a *doing* to answer my questions because the articulation of my arguments through practice foregrounds the way I exercise my methodology as a contribution to knowledge. It is through a [my] creative practice that I exemplify how methods and methodologies operating under a fine art framework help bringing into crisis white, cisgender, heteronormative and patriarchal supremacist forms of knowledge production and perpetuation.

In articulating endurance and resistance, as well as what happens when oppressive structures are destroyed, dismantled, or dismissed, I put forward alternatives to western-established perceptions of embodiment. In providing a form of representation that challenges nonconscious semiotic processes of legibility beyond a gendered binary, I delineate social, political, educational, and cultural modes of existing otherwise.

My proposal with this practice-led PhD research amplifies that the dismissal of wchp being the only way to reach more egalitarian relationalities is not a new claim; however, repeating needs doing, because things are still a problem! How I deal with this in my research is by working through the intangibilities of embodied/lived experience in tandem with the very material realities they create; I deploy methods that allow me to work with the viscosity of affect on practice-based approaches to what it can mean to draw theories *with* fine art [rather than *about* fine art].

The contribution I put forward with this research derives from tracing the affective structures implicated in the endurance of wchp. In prioritising invisibilised injuries, I expose embodied and embedded forms of normality allowed to operate as tools of wchp. *The knots on my back* and *Patterns* clarify the sometimes ignorant, sometimes heinous, thinking limitations sustaining the master's house. Pointing at injurious behavioural patterns, the knots, the headaches, the mental distress these patterns create *is* a threat to wchp's comfort.

Despite the contributions creative practices foreground, questions of *corroborability* are still limiting the acknowledgement of hypothesis and propositions formulated through fine art. Disruption, however, has a different kind of traction, and therefore, a different kind of acknowledgement. With disruption I want to gesture towards a different kind of contribution, one that is part of a slower process of dismantling wchp supremacy through forms of illegibility projected onto future nonconscious semiosis of affects. The enforced representation of being a faggot[dyke] is the forced projection of one's inconvenience.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, claiming to be a faggot/dyke, rather than being called one, is also being inconvenient, and a reclaimed identification of unfeeling towards cisheteropatriarchy. Looking into the relation between queer normativity, assimilation, tolerance, and the inconvenience "minor" gestures can provoke allows me to think of frictions that have the potential of disturbing cisheteropatriarchy. This is something I consider inquiring further into, after completing this PhD.

I have been guiding the reader/viewer through socially defining processes shaping one's identity. I am pointing at the possibilities inherent to the absence of wchp by formulating realities that are not capturable through normative forms of legibility. Concurrently, I have worked with my own body as medium and method, foregrounding a biographic representation through practice that brings into crisis what has been imposed through white, cisgender, heteronormative and patriarchal supremacy. I think again about making [my] queer childhood visible, of being joyous and in public; and through being *penchantly gay* I propose a different type of *form*, not one that derives from the reproduction of patterns — colonisation of aesthesis and manipulation of semiosis — but precisely from the dismissal of those patterns.

¹⁶⁸ Lauren Gail Berlant, *On the Inconvenience of Other People*, Writing Matters! (Durham London: Duke University Press, 2022), 3.

Abstract II – the master’s tools will not dismantle the master’s ways of thinking

*What we observe is a self-replicating system that realizes itself through sustaining biocentric categories. Description is not liberation. If we are committed to anticolonial thought, our starting point must be one of disobedient relationality that always questions, and thus is not beholden to, normative academic logics.*¹⁶⁹

– positionality

Fine art occupies a space of liminality within what is considered research, it is established as an *academy*, and its ornamental presence in academia is bait to an almost promise of belonging. So how can one research what the body endures, from an empirically unacknowledged position, and through fine art, a field by which the west invented its cultural supremacy?

Considering the indivisibility of colonialism and the development of modernity, Anibal Quijano termed *colonial matrix of power* the complex through which Europe invented racial hierarchies to claim their cultural and knowledge supremacy.¹⁷⁰ Drawing on Quijano’s work, the Transnational Decolonial Institute (TDI) has been pursuing a project of *decoloniality* that focuses on exposing the intersections through which the *colonial matrix of power* is still operating in the present.¹⁷¹ The TDI has been doing work that seeks liberation from colonial and imperial repercussions on knowledge at large, and in aesthetics in particular; they do this through the pursuit of practices that emphasise, give value, acknowledgement, and expand on ways of

¹⁶⁹ Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories*, (Durham-London: Duke University Press, 2021), 45.

¹⁷⁰ Even though there are scholars who have investigated pre-colonial extractions of labour and the racial hierarchies tied to them, my concern involves the ways through which normativity was shaped in a globalised way, which derives from a colonial imposition of white-western-christian as the canon of normativity.

For more on pre-colonial extractions of labour see Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2020).

¹⁷¹ The Transnational Decolonial Institute is formed by Alanna Lockward, Rolando Vázquez, Teresa María Díaz Nerio, Marina Grzinic, Tanja Ostojic, Dalida María Benfield, Raúl Moarquech Ferrera Balanquet, Pedro Lasch, Nelson Maldonado Torres, Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, Miguel Rojas Sotelo, Walter Mignolo.

knowing, being, and forms of cultural and creative production that have been erased [or dissipated] in the last 500 years.¹⁷²

In *Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings*, Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez challenge the way “modernity/(de)coloniality” conditioned modes of perception and of sensing. The authors speak of impositions related to western canons running hand in hand with economic and political hegemonic interventions that control knowledge, situating art and aesthetics as fields through which the west manipulated definitions of *sensation* in order to claim their cognitive superiority.

Looking into the ways affect and affectability are manipulated in modern philosophy to assert the superiority of the wchp subject is crucial to confront how the enforcement of a canon functions. Due to my focus on the ways cisheteronormativity manifests itself on the body, analysing how one feels and is made to feel is indivisible from questioning who is even allowed to claim affective and embodied experiences of the world. Thus, on one hand, my work reiterates a critique to systems of enforced superiority by exposing how questions of validity in relation to knowledge perpetrate a racist purpose. On another hand, I reiterate the way aesthetics was weaponised to shape “proper ways of feeling,” whilst reclaiming through an art practice ontological experiences outcasted from empiricism.

My position as a researcher is shaped by the work of thinkers who address the relation between colonialism and modernity, as well as the repercussions that relation has on art and affect. I point at how my work is influenced by scholars exposing that hierarchical relationalities root back to science and psychology’s fantasies of racial superiority, tying supremacist empiricisms and phenomenologies to definitions of what it means to be human. Some of the foundations of critiques to hierarchised relationalities are tied to Frantz Fanon’s work on double consciousness, and his articulation of a denied ontology. The first addresses the psychological turmoil inflicted onto black men for being defined through enforcement and confrontation with white supremacist ideologies, and the latter points at the general non-acknowledgement of all experiences that are situated outside a white phenomenology.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Transnational Decolonial Institute, “Decolonioial Aesthesis (I).”

¹⁷³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Reprint, Pluto Classics, (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 68-69, 82-83.

I am operating in a field that is historically part of a racist epistemology. I am also questioning the very same problems the colonisation of aesthetics via aesthetic enforced, so as to contest the foundations of the resistance one faces when challenging normativity. Engaging with the aforementioned intersections permit thinking through my own lived experience and affective processes, which I then situate in relation to social confrontations marking my own body and identity. Remembering what Katherine McKittrick describes as a self-replicating system within academia, to be cautious of modern philosophy requires more than just refraining from perpetuating bibliographic supremacy. As I address throughout this thesis, resisting empirical and ontological supremacy within modern philosophy is also constant endurance of doubt projected onto one's skills and practice. Concurrently, endurance is tied to affect and the models through which affect is defined and perceived. The purpose of this end section is to acknowledge the lineage shaping the way I understand inventions of gender as part of histories of enforced racial hierarchies; and to expand on the way affect, phenomenology and art are indivisible [here] and must be rethought in order to be able to speak of endurance of wchp.

— denied ontology

In *Towards the Sociogenic Principle*, Sylvia Wynter investigates the way western colonial subjective experiences were built to equate what it means to be a “normal” subject, concurrently defining what it is like to be human.¹⁷⁴ Wynter builds on Frantz Fanon's sociodiagnostic, a mode of analysis that combines the study of socially produced phenomena

¹⁷⁴ When speaking of Sylvia Wynter's work on Fanon's *sociodiagnostic*, I refer to two different versions of her article that was lastly titled “Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, Identity, the Puzzle of Conscious Experience, and What It Is Like to Be “Black”.” This distinction is relevant, the first draft is richer in contrasting Fanon's work with that of western philosophers quoted by Wynter. The first draft is relevant for my work, and I would argue for the article itself, because it provides pages of contrast between what was created as a “natural” understanding and definition of what it means to be human — directly tied to conscious, emotional, and embodied definitions of experience — and how the work of Frantz Fanon (through Césaire and Dubois) comes to collapse the hegemony of those definitions. Quoting from the editor's note on the published version of Wynter's article “due to the volume's size constraints, this chapter had to be heavily edited. In order to preserve the integrity of Sylvia Wynter's argument, however, we have limited the cuts to the introductory sections, which dealt with the historical background of the chapter.”

In the following footnotes I will distinguish both versions by adding “draft” to the first proposal for the chapter; please note that final and draft titles slightly differ.

Sylvia Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, The Puzzle of Conscious Experience, of “Identity” and What it's Like to be “Black,”” chapter draft, available at: http://www.coribe.org/pdf/wynter_socio.pdf, draft.

with the study of individual subjective experience. Fanon examines the way the invention of narratives, stories, and anecdotes that were manipulated by white supremacy serve to impose notions of “corporeal malediction” (as opposed to “benediction”), inflicting how black people were socially made to perceive themselves.¹⁷⁵

Wynter argues that analysing experience through Fanon’s sociodiagnostic allows for a break with western universalisations around phenomenology.¹⁷⁶ Weaving theories of consciousness of David Chalmers and Thomas Nagel, Wynter argues how experience is per fact subjective. Through an analysis of Chalmers’s work, Wynter begins exposing some of the problematics sustaining ideas of what objective experience entails; whilst pointing at the lack of basis for phenomenology to encompass subjectivity into what it defines as experiencing the world.¹⁷⁷ Later, through Fanon’s sociodiagnostic, Wynter proposes the *sociogenic principle* as that which allows understanding the universalised parameters defining phenomenology; she exposes how what is considered a valid “normal” experience works in tandem with diminishing the self-consciousness of non-white and non-western others. In concrete terms, Wynter furthers Fanon’s work on psychoanalysis and the ways sociogeny encompasses “the always socialized nature of our modes of being human, and thereby of our experiencing what it is like to be human.” Wynter emphasises how sociogeny is key to revealing the way pathologies were built and defined through imposed and internalised projections of a “normal” *self*, who is measured against an *other* whose ontological account is denied.¹⁷⁸

Working through the foundations of the racist imposition of normality, Frantz Fanon and Sylvia Wynter depict how the definition of “normal experiences” was reformulated and maintained throughout the centuries with the aid of biology and neurosciences.¹⁷⁹ Wynter contends the *sociogenic principle*, so as to go beyond scientific knowledges that condition a “biocentric conception of the human.”¹⁸⁰ The *sociogenic principle* is a constant of each culture, it is a

¹⁷⁵ Sylvia Wynter, “Towards the Sociogenic Principle,” 20, draft; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 84.

¹⁷⁶ Wynter, “Towards,” draft, 9.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 6, draft.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 13, draft.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 28.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 32.

commonality across identity constructions affecting how one is made to perceive oneself. In relation to self-identity, the idea of who is “normal” is culturally and artificially pre-defined through constructions centring the white western canon as the superior, good, and proper subject. The west imposed a universalised understanding of the human firstly through christian-religious indoctrination, shaping perceptions of identity regarding what it means to fall outside normality. One’s self-identification is measured against human categorisation; and self-experience is measured in relation to normality, which is mediated by the way one is made to feel, made to experience oneself.

So how does one claim a mode of experiencing when departing from the place of a denied ontology [the non-acknowledgement of how one experiences the world]?

Throughout my practice-led research my intention was to 1) give an embodied account of the viscerality of affect involved in the process of endurance [when my own identification began by being imposed rather than self-asserted]; 2) allow for my injuries to speak their shape, and in doing so, highlight the materiality of injuries that are dismissed due to the way they are [made] invisible [and therefore less important]: headaches, muscle-knots; and 3) by prioritising invisibilised injuries and microaggressions, I expose embodied and embedded forms of normality allowed to operate as tools of wchp.



Figure 30: *Are you being self-conscious?* / *A Faggot/Dyke Anthology*, digital photograph/video still, 2021

In *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiracist World*, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson provides an analysis of literature and visual culture of African diasporas, arguing for ways of being that sit outside what is pre-defined as human within western science and philosophy.¹⁸¹

Becoming Human's accounts of history map multiple ways through which a universalised understanding of [hu]manhood was imposed via equating whiteness to humanity, and how entire knowledge systems have been grounded to validate these equations. This canonised construction of superiority consequently came to define other physical requisites that have been and still are inflicting epistemological dichotomies, binaries, and categories sustaining not only hierarchies among humans, but also among species.

Jackson gives accounts of how blackness has been plasticised over centuries of history in relation to definitions of animality, bestiality, and manhood, in order to sustain an ontological record that situates western [christian] men as the ultimate [epistemological definition] of what it means to be Human.¹⁸² Jackson uses the term *plasticity* to speak of the way blackness has been equated to being animal, being beast, being overly sexual, manipulated by whiteness so as to sustain the image of its invented negative other.

Jackson's proposed *plasticised ontology* exposes the weaponisation of a racist telos in biology and philosophy, demonstrating how critically engaging with these historical constructions is necessary to understand and confront how histories of violence are still operating in the present. Jackson seeks imaginaries that sit outside western doctrines, engaging with literature and visual arts as co-constitutive forms of knowledge production that enable moving beyond static approaches to metaphysical discourses.

The violence of systems of inclusion and exclusion have been exposed since a *long* time [and notably continuously in the west since at least the work of W.E.B. Dubois].¹⁸³ The denial of systems of inclusion and exclusion has a common denominator, as it is shown by Gloria Wekker in *White Innocence*, in Shirley Anne Tate's inquiry into *whiteness* in relation to

¹⁸¹ Jackson, *Becoming Human*.

¹⁸² Ibid, 46-47, 63.

¹⁸³ W.E.B. Du Bois and Isabel Eaton, *The Philadelphia Negro: "Together with a Special Report on Domestic Service by Isabel Eaton"* (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2010).

institutional racism, in Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana's exposure of *white ignorance*, and in what Robin Di Angelo articulates as *white fragility*.¹⁸⁴ Thus, the "problem" is beyond the exclusion of non-western forms of knowledge, as Jackson points:

*[H]uman recognition—inclusion in biological conceptions of the human species and the transition from native to universal human subject in law and society—are not at odds with animalization. Thus, animalization is not incompatible with humanization: what is commonly deemed dehumanization is, in the main, more accurately interpreted as the violence of humanization or the burden of inclusion into a racially hierarchized universal humanity.*¹⁸⁵

Examples of how the above operates in the present can be seen in the way work done under the umbrella of diversity and inclusion point at the need to dismantle supremacist impositions, and how that is simply not a welcomed transformation. This has been made evident in Sara Ahmed's entire body of work; fighting against persistent racist [institutionalised] structures is no easy task, I cannot see how these structures would still be operating in the 2020's otherwise.¹⁸⁶ In other words, acknowledging a violent and racialised history, as well as its aftermath impact on socio-political-cultural-educational complexes, is not sufficient. This is a matter of *wanting* to confront [and dismantle] how histories of violence still operate in the present, and unfortunately not everyone is willing to do so.¹⁸⁷

I am pointing at the way strategies of separation to build a hierarchised humanity are not new, and how racialised constructions about what it means to be human directly impact cisgendered

¹⁸⁴ Wekker, *White Innocence*; Shirley Anne Tate and Damien Page, "Whiteness and Institutional Racism: Hiding behind (Un)Conscious Bias," *Ethics and Education* 13, no. 1 (2018): 141–55; Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, eds., *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, SUNY Series, Philosophy and Race (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2007); DiAngelo, *White Fragility*.

¹⁸⁵ Jackson, *Becoming Human*, 18.

¹⁸⁶ For more see: Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included*, (Durham-London: Duke University Press, 2012).

¹⁸⁷ For more recent actions seeking change and reparation regarding the way histories of violence and exclusion operate in the present please see: Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, eds., *Decolonising the University* (Chicago: Pluto Press, 2018).

and heterosexual categories of normality.¹⁸⁸ Wynter and Jackson articulate some of the ways a notion of white humanity has been exercising its self-entitled superiority; these thinkers have also exposed some of the ways the complex of white superiority is embedded in forms of knowledge production. In a postgraduate research context, the way I channelled this evidence of an intentional strategy of domination was by following methods and methodologies of artists and thinkers who expose, dismiss [intentionally or not], and/or refuse systems of measurability and knowledge *corroborability*. To reference is also to acknowledge. Refraining from deploying critical discourses foundational to western contemporary [validated] philosophy, I continuously seek approaches that allow dealing with the viscosity of affect without being restrained by systems of measurability that perpetuate exclusionary universalisms. What I *do* rather than propose, is to exercise theoretical approaches and hypothesis from an art based methodological standpoint that jeopardise [to use Saidiya Hartman's words] western knowledge production and perpetuation.

— *raw relationality*

In *In the Raw*, Denise Ferreira da Silva furthers a Black Feminist Poethical praxis through the analysis of Madiha Sikander's artwork.¹⁸⁹ da Silva has been addressing the ways in which universalised tools for reasoning, derived from western — Kantian centred — philosophy have been perpetuating white supremacist structures of knowledge production, and sustaining the

¹⁸⁸ In relation to hierarchised humanity not being new, I am thinking specifically of Emma Dabiri speaking of strategies of separation used by English colonisers used to segregate enslaved native Barbadian from Irish indentured servants in 17th century Barbados. Emma Dabiri, *What White People*.

¹⁸⁹ Denise Ferreira da Silva, "In the Raw," *e-flux Journal# 93-September 2018*, Accessed: September, 2020, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/93/215795/in-the-raw/>.

"*Majmua*, Urdu for 'assemblage', she weaves cloves, beads and microfilaments into a transparent curtain, invoking the scents that drove the imperial slave trade. 'Naked capitalism and internationalism, sometimes masked under the guise of religion and development aid, continue to drive networks of power controlling the globe'." In <https://lemillindia.com/blogs/journal/5-south-asian-women-shaking-up-the-art-world>.

For detailed images of *Majmua* please see: <https://www.picuki.com/tag/MadihaSikander>.

juridical systems that allow for violence against people of colour to serve as tools of wchp to maintain racial hierarchies in place.¹⁹⁰

In a reading of Madiha Sikander's *Majmua*, da Silva provides an analysis that steps away from the (Kantian) subject — defined as the one with cognitive capacities to rationally read the artwork as pleasing/pleasurable/harmonious. da Silva states that the Kantian subject, the transparent "I" — the [universalised ideal] viewer, when assuming to appreciate the work as beautiful, reiterates the pre-condition that joy provoked by the beautiful is an experience enabled by the ability to identify, as it is common sense[d] and thus universal, what the actual beautiful is.¹⁹¹ Thus, judging something to be beautiful is not an effect of art, but a formatted approach to what art *is* based on an always already conditioned way of reading the object. In other words, one must be able to recognise that art is art, with the added understanding that the work was created with the finality of being art. Since for Kant the function of art is to create an aesthetic experience, the ability to recognise art as art encompasses the ability to identify the author's intention to provoke that same experience, which, all in all encompasses the ability to form an aesthetic judgement. da Silva states that when the *other* enters the "aesthetic register," it does so through Kantian frameworks of universal reason in two ways: constructed as the primitive subject; and as affectable, which presupposes the inability to exercise self-control, and having thus no access to Reason.

However, according to da Silva, it is in the "inability to be taken as a formal-practical aesthetic object, [that] *Majmua* exposes the limits of Kant's formulation of affectability rooted in (...) an account of the judgement of taste that rests on the transcendental (formal) principle of finality."¹⁹² This reading of *Majmua* rethinks affectability through the significance of assembled material, its connotative histories, and the artist's intended and instinctive compositional choices. Through a black feminist poethical reading, da Silva states that *Majmua* is familiar in both an unmediated — raw — and a mediated way — by cognitive association.

¹⁹⁰ For further reading on "universal reasoning" see Denise Ferreira da Silva, "To Be Announced Radical Praxis or Knowing (at) the Limits of Justice," n.d., <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-1958890>.

¹⁹¹ da Silva, "In the Raw."

¹⁹² Ibid.

In da Silva's *poethical* analysis of *Majmua*, the artist's use of blacklight "dissolves determinacy," and in doing so blurs what is deemed *affectably* capturable within a framework of modern thought.¹⁹³ *Majmua* catalyses an engagement with the viewer that operates through a *raw* form of communication that attends first to a sensorial recognition [rather than aesthetic judgement], a form of knowing that can account for histories reduced through narratives of modernity.¹⁹⁴ Attending to matter in the *raw* requires acknowledging the ways in which each component has been determined, defined, and constrained by discourses of universal critical thought, whilst refusing its imposed definitions, and seeking imaginative forms of subjecthood that allow reading the artwork's material composition as both actual and virtual. Its actuality undoes the Kantian critique of aesthetic judgement by the material's account of geopolitical and economic histories of slave trade and imperialist control.¹⁹⁵ Concurrently, looking at each of *Majmua's* elements *in the raw*, da Silva reads an account of geopolitical and economic histories exposed by the material itself, which the material is capable of doing through its virtual *raw* signification.¹⁹⁶ da Silva conceptualises virtuality as a site for political imagining freed from formulations of space and time, enabling thus distinct ways of knowing.

The definition of virtuality is done through Octavia E. Butler's work; da Silva describes virtuality as composed by transversability: space-time intersections and crossings; a cut of/in space-time linearity out of which a (bodily) traversability occurs; transubstantiality, bodily transformations that are possible due to multiple existences/existing[s] — both of maker and

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ "Each piece composing *Majmua* – the cloves, the beads, the monofilament – refigures how current global geopolitical and economic lines have been designed by layers of trade, vanquished imperial powers, and the juridic-economic subject they created... Each material component recalls errant and unbounded and deep temporality. The figural time of matter dissolves historical time's (abstract) closures, thereby exposing the otherwise invisible and yet- so-familiar colonial links that cross oceans and continents." Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ For more on da Silva's use of *actual* and *virtual* please see Denise Ferreira da Silva, "Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(lon) of Blackness Toward the End of the World," *The Black Scholar* 44, no. 2 (June 2014): 81–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2014.11413690>.

¹⁹⁶ Here, da Silva is pointing at the signification of cloves and beads, composing part of *Majmua*, and how they point at material commodities traded during the colonial period, as well as their place in the making of global capital. da Silva, *In the Raw*.

viewer — across space-time, across kin and kind.¹⁹⁷ Through the use of fiction to critique philosophy, da Silva’s proposition surpasses what has been defining the capacity of aesthetic judgment in the same lines of what TDI terms “decolonial AestheSis,” and puts forward a phenomenology of embodiment that can encompass self-identification. This shift in narrative within an approach to phenomenology allowed me to understand some of the difficulties I had regarding speaking of protest. I will untangle this hesitance before returning to the overall intention to map my position around the interrelation of affect, art, and phenomenology.

According to da Silva, attending to matter in the raw is what allows radical thinking to emerge, it is attending to matter with a sensorial approach — listening, smelling, touching — situating the artwork in a way that accounts for its geopolitical and genealogical re- and de-compositions, and going beyond a colonial anthropologist approach to empiricism. I was interested in a *radical thinking* that occurs in moments of protest[ing], a type of agency that is shaped through the desire of reaching a freedom *for* being. I say freedom *for* so as to emphasise direction towards, a motion that is ignited by the fight *for*, and the desire to exist as *such*;¹⁹⁸ freedom *for* being is *resisting* the constraining frameworks preventing one’s right to live through something other than normativity, it is a form of agency I cannot dissociate from my experiences of street protest[ing]. This association of protest with resistance derives from embodied memories that have similar affective resurfacing[s]; I didn’t know this then [in 2019], so I placed a possible *raw* solidarity, or a *raw* relationality as descriptors of moments of protest[ing] that undid racial patriarchal supremacy and its consequential hierarchies: “a decomposition of forms, it explores, unsettles, tries to pervert, it is misreading, misunderstanding, misappropriation, a contribution to the task to bring up the end of the world as we know it.”¹⁹⁹

But with *raw* relationality I was focusing on a result, perhaps subconsciously pressured to find a result, a formula speaking of political agency revealing a certain success in confronting,

¹⁹⁷ “Note that these descriptors are not meant to name or determine something, which would be nothing more than a rehearsal of the moves of the philosophers of universal reason, in its historical and scientific stages. They are guides for the imagination.” da Silva, “Toward,” 93-94.

¹⁹⁸ In reference to Kara Keeling working through Audre Lorde’s *A Litany for Survival* “we were never meant to survive as *such*.” Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures*, ix.

¹⁹⁹ da Silva, “Speculative Planning.”

potentially overthrowing, an oppressive supremacist ruling. I could not articulate fully what my focus was, and thus I could not articulate why speaking of protest here [in a PhD] and in these [research] terms felt wrong.

Later, I understood that protest, however, is not simply about the moment in which the noun turns into a verb, it entails the agglomeration of sensations and emotions throughout space[s] and time[s], which can be built up[s] of struggles through history — historical struggles, their stories of struggles;²⁰⁰ it can be the outburst of one singular individual who has had enough — although there is never only one; it can be an immediate reaction against the implementation of governmental change [and so on and so forth].

This is not an attempt to distinguish semantic uses of protest and resistance, creating a listed categorisation is not my goal. Rather, thinking in these terms whilst being confronted with memories from moments of protest[ing], which were consequentially triggering childhood memories led me to think about resistance instead of protest. Virtuality can be used to address what happens in one's transformation amidst the structure of events that lead to, compose, and derive from protest and resistance. Resistance emphasises the frictions, normalised patterns leading to micro ["minor"] aggressions, and other behaviours dismissed within frameworks of normativity, what I will later describe in chapter four as nonconscious afferences of *form*.²⁰¹

— affect-art-phenomenology

Throughout this thesis I have built on *form* as a way of sensing and being in the world through the production and reproduction of patterns; *form* affects how one speaks, how one writes, how one self-identifies, and even how one cites and conducts research. But before reaching *form* I had to engage further with the origins of, and ramifications resulting from, the non-

²⁰⁰ Their stories gives both a non-binary and a sense of plurality tied to multiple types of history: those who were deprived of one, those who were excluded from it, those who write in ways not welcomed by it... [it being capital H History].

²⁰¹ The use of "minor" with quotation marks is intentional, it is a response to comments responding to my own experience of specific situation being "not that bad." A stereotype response that some belongs to the same category was "they didn't mean it like that," or "don't take him/her serious."

acknowledgement of [some] experiences, or Fanon's denied ontology. The relationship of representation in art and aesthetics directly impacts perceptions of self and other, because that representation is bound to hierarchical constructions privileging a white western phenomenology.

In the afterword of the tenth anniversary of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed states that at the time when she was writing the book [1999-2003], she "turned to emotion in order to explain how worlds are reproduced; in particular, [she] wanted to reflect on how social norms become affective over time."²⁰² Ahmed addresses some of the frictions she felt in relation to the way affect was being perceived as beyond and situated outside the body, separating affect from the body. For Ahmed, to work *on* and *with* emotion enables thinking of interrelations, of ways of being in the world that take what bell hooks calls context: considering the who, when, what, where and how of things.²⁰³

The way ontology and phenomenology are interdependent with the privileges of claiming empirical evidence cannot be dissociated from affect. Thus, when I claim that through this research *I carve a space within studies of affect through proposing an alternative approach to embodied experience and identity*, I am referring to affect as an umbrella term under which sensation and emotion in relation to experience occur. Challenging structures enabling the non-acknowledgement of how [some]one experiences the world allows exposing the roots of hierarchies within knowledge systems at large. Thus, in claiming a space from which injuries are allowed to speak, to become tangible, it is possible to expose embodied and embedded forms of normality operating as tools of wchp.

²⁰² Ahmed, *Cultural*, 204.

²⁰³ bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 9.

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APPENDIX 1: still image practice

Remakes



Beautiness (1999) / Beautiness? (2020), digital collage, 2020



Untitled (2020) / Fighting Fire With Fire (1996), digital collage, 2020



Untitled (2021) // Human Toilet Revisited (1998), digital collage, 2021



Irises for Isi, 2021 // Got a Salmon On #3, 1997, digital collage, (2021)



Bitten by an urchin (2013) / Self-Portrait with Mug of Tea (1993), digital collage, 2021



Horse (1990) / Self-Portrait #6 (1993), digital collage, 2021

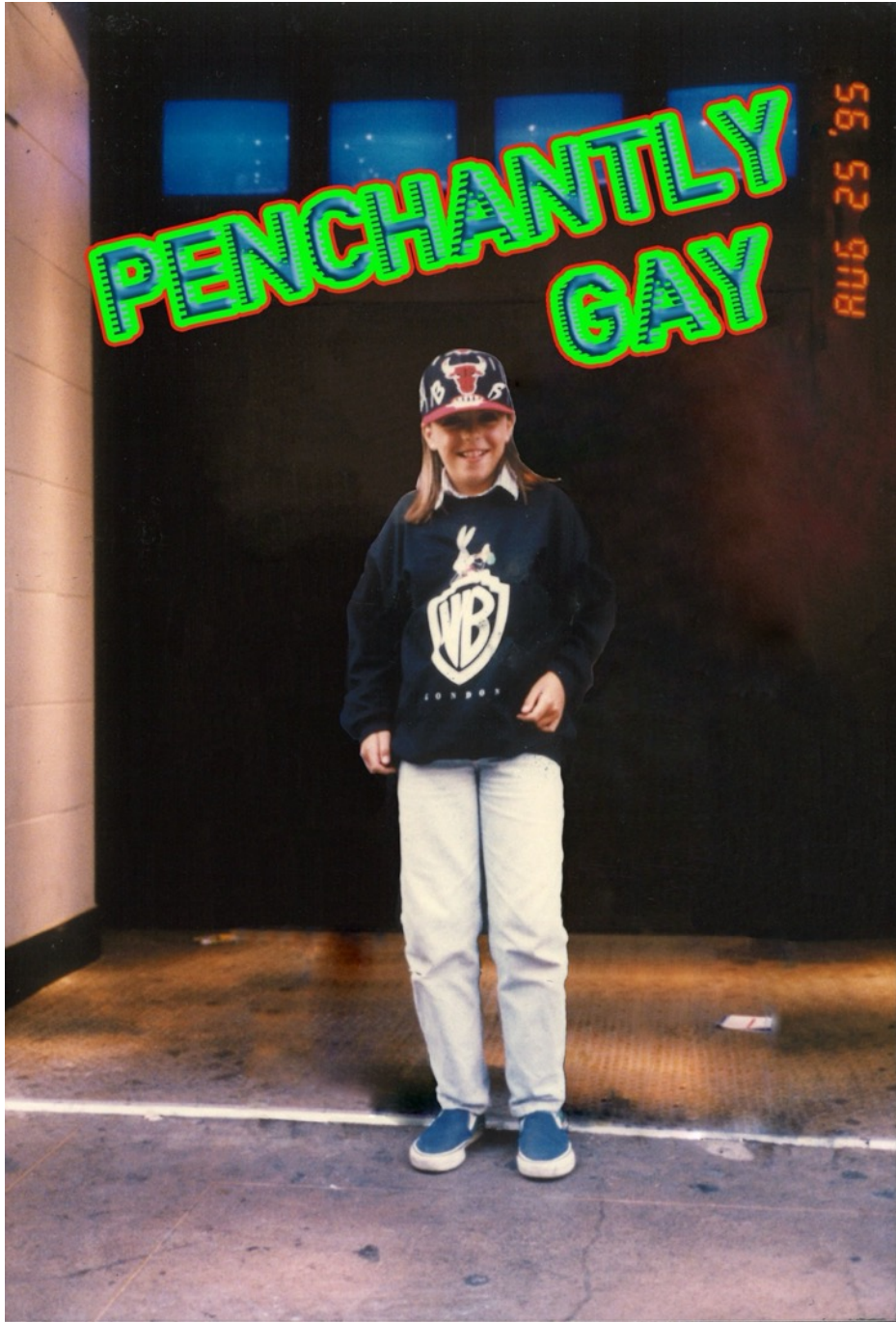


Eating a Banana (1990) / *Eating an ice-cream* (1985), digital collage, 2020

Penchantly gay



Penchantly gay — Roses (1995), digital collage, 2023



Penchantly gay — *Screens* (1995), digital collage, 2023

Publicly, and penchantly gay: documentation





















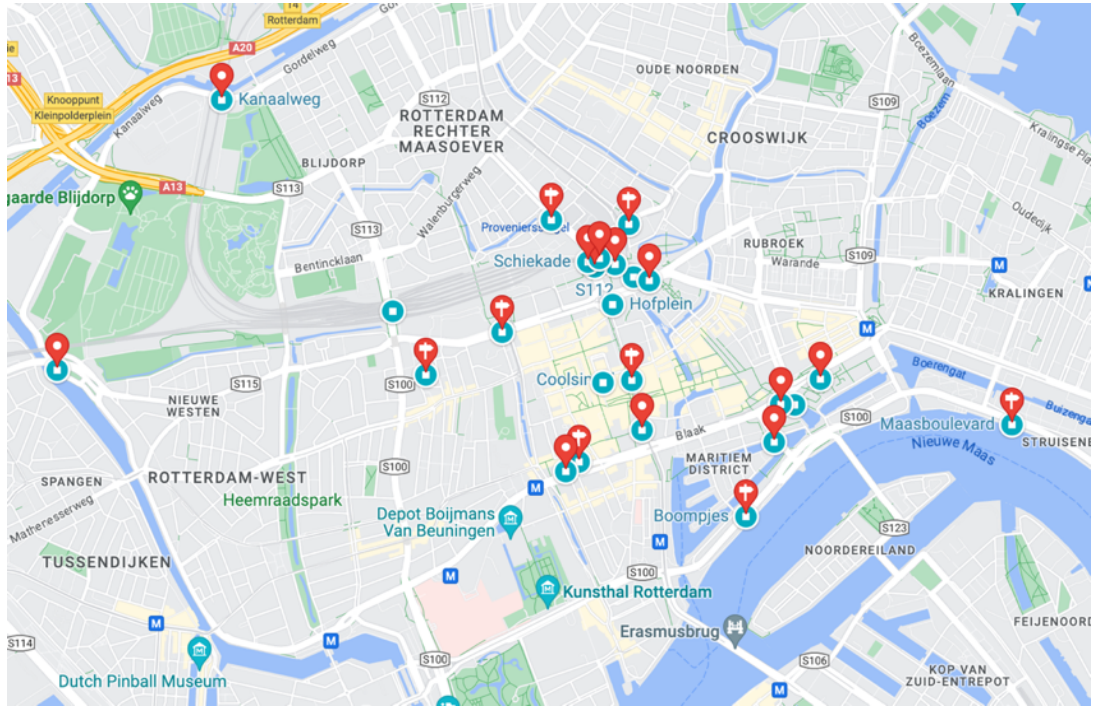


Figure 25: *Penchantly gay poster* location, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2023



Penchantly gay, artist talk and installation at CultureHub, Rotterdam, the Netherlands



Mis-located writing experiments

another type of raw, 2019

*they were sucked into the void, but in different directions at random
yet, still sucked into that vacuumed emptiness
how can flesh be sucked into and apart, toward opposite directions?
the question is not a question but an image of being pulled apart
leaving a trail of wetness up in a curve, as if a snail had passed by
but, this is another type of slime
it is a pleasant slime that as it is absorbed it contaminates that
through which it passes, and then it spreads
it continues its contamination process weaving its way into the
fleshiness that wants to be pulled apart
now that it is contaminated, the flesh feels in its most raw existence its
parts enjoying being pulled by a slime that is no longer wet
the slime goes through the flesh, it passes through/under/within its
rawness reaching every bit and, as the slime made its way through the
whole, the flesh turns into slime itself
merged with poison, it enjoys its own effect while it lasts, and before
becoming another type of raw.*

Figure 1: *another type of raw*, 2019, digital image/poem.

Throat, 2020

it is too tight, i am pushing as hard as i can and there is still no space in-between. is this what emptiness looks like? is this what emptiness feels like? everything else is reacting but me. i need, i must pull myself apart, to push in every direction possible, to move, even if for an imperceptible bit so that air can flow through, my existence depends on it, our existence depends on it! and yet, i cannot move.

It is dry, as dry and stale as emptiness can be or mean. Dizziness is arriving despite despair taking over. Despair is taking over, but not taking control, otherwise it would be taking control and not taking over. Despair is taking over and it is a despair that is not mine alone. I need to move I must move and I cannot. Who could tell that a body with no air would have the capacity to move, to look for its other half, to multitask in its attempt to run, to breather, and still look for the ones who got lost when we all ran away through the cloud sucking our presence...

i did it, just that inch, just that imperceptible bit that allows air to come through. i am pulling, pushing as hard as I can. we can breathe again.

Experiences of the throat when inhaling tear gas at short distance.

— some sort of end note —

Weirdly enough I have felt this before. Maybe this ‘comparable example’ is how one makes experiences tangible, palpable, feel-able. It was 30 years ago (now being 2019), 24 years before the gas experience (which was in 2013) the day when I inhaled a bottle containing ammoniac. I was looking for Hydrogen peroxide, oh, how wonderful it was to see all the white bubbly stuff consuming the ‘infected bits of wounds’! I had cut myself doing who knows what in my MacGyver childhood quests, it was a perfect excuse to pour the transparent magic — buns a little but totally worth it! I went to the bathroom whilst (fortunately) my mother was showering and opened the cabinets, unauthorised, looking for the bubbly stuff, hiding the consequences of my stupid quest. It was perfect because at least one of the parents was busy-to-the-point they could not oversee my doings, a task hard to escape from when you live in a household with few divisions. I opened every drawer, there weren’t many, and then (not quite, but) BINGO! I found the Hydrogen peroxide, most likely in a cupboard where I should have not messed with. Just to be sure I opened the bottle to smell it, make sure it was the good stuff I was looking for, and took a little sniff. It wasn’t Hydrogen peroxide, it was ammoniac and my whole respiratory system went into collapse. I was not a tiny child, but for the purpose of the narrative I’ll say ‘small’ me lost its breath. I pulled the shower curtain behind which my mother was showering and looked at her in panic due to the inability to breathe, my mother panics not knowing what had just happened, asking me what was the matter, knowing, seeing that I could not inhale. I remember it as it was today, the overwhelming feeling of not being able to pull air through your nostrils, to bring the invisible matter in, to perform that reflexive action so simple and yet vital. It could have not been more than ten seconds, but it felt like minutes, ten minutes of incomprehensible shock: not being able to breathe.

Phone call, 2020

mbk: where you afraid? No, (not at all), it all felt very normal. I saw them, she couldn't see them, and that was it.

[It didn't occur to me that this was something that might cause fear. Thank you for asking.]

I was so sure I'd get a clearer picture of what this was about if I'd ask you about what happened with the crosses. So I did. I started by saying "there was this day yo asked me to put cream on your back and I saw a cross."

You interrupted with a "no no."

How come you suffer from this 'no no' at the start of a sentence syndrome?! I thought it was a characteristic closer to my generation...

I asked you to let me speak until the end, I wanted to tell you my version of the memory.

I remember clearly seeing the cross on your back. I told you about it, and then you showed me two more that just like the first one you could not see yourself.

"how about here? Do you see one here?" [on your chest]

Yes.

And how about here? [on your forehead]

Yes

It was clear that you did not see what you where showing me, otherwise why ask? I didn't ask if you could see them, you just told me you couldn't.

I was not afraid, it was strange of course, but it was what it was and I let go.

What I didn't ask you on the phone was whether or not the memory of asking why was I seeing your crosses was yours or mine. I did not think about it at that time, I thought I wanted to know why I was seeing your protection surfacing, but after we spoke and it turned out that you have no recollection of that moment. I lost hope for detail.

Fortunately, perhaps, memory also works through triggers, and that is what happened during the phone call.

I did not want to know why, I never wanted to know the whys of these, others yes, but not these. I believe in it, I respect it, but I did not want to know too much, especially the whys. You, however, wanted to know, and you wanted to share. A few days later you told me I was 'too good hearted' or 'pure hearted', and that is why I saw them. I don't think I was good or pure, I was definitely protective: pointing a butterfly knife to your boyfriend's face; getting my largest friend, two golf bats and waiting for him outside the restaurant, not knowing where he was with him; those prodigious teenage days.

Our memories are a mess together. I asked you about the crosses, I am sure I was 17 when this happened, and you start telling a memory of "when we spent new year's at the priest's house and we were both dressed in white." WHAT!?! I forgot that one of your real estate clients was a priest, he had a holiday house that he hardly used — no comments — and you used it to party with your friends (and to provide our family with a free holiday house at a fancy location.

So the year when allegedly we were both in white, I got smashed because I was naively doing the bartender job, why do kids love to play the bartender?! We were supposed to burn our clothes after/at midnight, a detail I definitely do not remember! But I was definitely 14 on that day.

I understood from our call that you saw the crosses period earlier, which made me realise that that period lasted much longer, and now — Feb 27th, 2020, 11:29 — the thought of it makes me a bit sad.

I don't accept the messy memory, I know for sure I was already 17 when I saw them, I told you my memory must be quite accurate — not altered or influenced because we never talked about it, I thought. If we did not influence each other with our versions of how, what, when and where we remember then we have less chance of influencing each other.

I remember clearly seeing the cross on your back. I told you about it, and then you showed me two more that just like the first one you could not see yourself.

Change the subject. I wanted to ask more even if I was a bit crushed from you not remembering.

My stubbornness takes the best of me: changing subject by means of comparison, so not really changing, just trying to make a point that my memory is/was real and I am/was not misremembering details. So, 17 is a reasonable age to have a trustworthy memory from, unlike the several memories I have from the age of four or five... Like when I smelled that bottle of ammoniac — age three/four. “I went to the bathroom to look for oxygenated water, I loved oxygenated water because of the bubbles it made. You were in the shower, I opened the cabinet and found the water, just to be sure it was what I was looking for I opened and smelled it, and then I couldn't breathe. I remember opening the shower curtain in total panic, not understanding what was going on. Terrified, you asked me “what is it, what is it?,” and I couldn't answer, I just couldn't breathe. Slowly, and the slowly felt like an impossible couple of minutes, a little bit of air could come in, and increasingly went on until it was possible to breathe again.

...

mum: I don't remember any of that.

thought: FUCK MY MEMORY!

mum: But that happened to me.

Thought: WHAT?!

me: what do you mean it happened to you?

mum: Smelling ammoniac.

thought: FUCK MY MEMORY + I'M A FRAUD

mum: When we were living in Rosa Araújo [thought: so you were a teenager!] and that maid made me smell the jar, it felt like someone had knocked me in the head.

thought: NO, I TAKE THE 'FUCK MY MEMORY' BACK.

The feeling was different, the age was different. It was/is my memory. I remember our bathroom, the shower curtain, the feeling...

But then the being pregnant detail came.

You told me the only other time in your life you felt this 'head knock' was when you heard Tomané had died. You were pregnant with me. This would have been even more bizarre, having a memory that was transmitted during pregnancy, it could definitely be real, but again, the feeling was different, the age was different, I really think it is my memory, even if you don't remember and I suppose you were there.

I don't understand, even of me drowning you only have a "vague idea," I think I even have an image of the air bubbles in the water. It's ok I guess. I really wanted to make a point — stubborn. I remember things from a very young age and from not such a young age, some of them I found out to be true because of pictures or because someone confirmed the story, others stay as possibilities, loose bits of moments I think were real.

Appendix 2 – Ethics approval



Royal College of Art

Mariana d'Aboim <mariana.daboim@network.rca.ac.uk>

Research Ethics Assessment - Result

6 messages

RCA Ethics <ethics@rca.ac.uk>

31 March 2021 at 18:19

To: Mariana d'Aboim <mariana.daboim@network.rca.ac.uk>

Cc: Pil Kollektiv <pil.kollektiv@rca.ac.uk>

Dear Mariana,

Many thanks for submitting your Research Ethics Application Form. This has been reviewed and we are pleased to inform you that, based upon the information supplied, we can approve your application and you can progress with your research.

Please note that should you make any changes to this research project, you may need to apply for further ethics approval.

Please contact us at ethics@rca.ac.uk if you have any questions about the ethics process.

Kind regards,
The Research Ethics Team

--

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