

**THE HOUSE WAS LIKE HER:  
REBUILDING THE POST-TRAUMATIC HOME THROUGH ART PRACTICE**

**by**

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# Abstract

This practice-led research investigates the relationship between survivor and home in the aftermath of domestic abuse, focusing on how this trauma-fractured relationship might be reconfigured towards repair through art practice. It develops earlier insights into the traumatic event and victim-perpetrator relationships in artistic research, by examining the post-traumatic relationship between survivor and home environment, which remains underexplored. As the primary site of female victimisation, the domestic environment undergoes a kind of monsterisation in trauma's aftermath. Rather than offering refuge from the monster (Cohen, 1997), the domestic comes to embody it: the sanctuary-body splinters into vicious fragments, encoded with trauma, irreconcilable.

I first approach repairing these fragments through repetitious artistic processes including drawing, painting and ceramic sculpture, exploring a key mechanism for this splintering: traumatic repetition. Exploring repair through repetition creates space to explore, transform, and reconcile traces of trauma, repurposing repetition as a tool of repair. I go on to transform the spaces around these artefacts using installation alongside large scale visual narratives. Through these, traumatic personal-domestic bonds are transformed into nodes for social, environmental and temporal reconnection. Finally, I forge dialogues between the interior of this part-imagined post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door. Through the interplay of ceramics, installation and moving image, I explore the tension between comfort in confinement and wonder in wandering.

In this way, this study examines how splintered vestiges of the domestic can be rebuilt into 'something like a whole – though [...] not necessarily like any pre-existing whole' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128). It investigates the rebuilding of the post-traumatic home by repeating, translating and reconfiguring the echoes of the domestic environment. It explores the role of reparative art practices – processes and outcomes – in understanding the fractured afterlives of female trauma, and in reimagining the idea of 'home' as a safe place.

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# Declaration

I declare that:

- The work presented in this thesis is my own and embodies the results of my research during my period of registration.
- I have read and followed the University's Academic Integrity Policy and that the thesis does not breach copyright or other intellectual property rights of a third party. Where necessary I have gained permission to reproduce copyright materials.
- Any material which has been previously presented and accepted for the award of an academic qualification at this University or elsewhere is clearly identified in the thesis.
- Where work is the product of collaboration the extent of the collaboration has been indicated.

Signature ..*Rebecca Truscott-Elves*..... Date 14/01/2023.....

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Declaration of material presented previously for an academic award:

In *Chapter I: Introduction*, I present examples of work completed as part of the award of MA Visual Communication, Royal College of Art

Declaration of collaborative work:

*Burial of the Dead*, presented in *Chapter I: Introduction* as an example of prior artistic practice, was completed in collaboration with Claire Orme. I carried out filming alongside Claire, as well as editing and animation, while Claire directed the film's sound. Any contribution by collaborators is explicitly identified in the text.

A portion of the footage used for *Window's Edge*, presented in *Chapter VI: Thresholds*, was captured during a collaborative project which did not come to fruition. I captured the footage myself.

# I

## Introduction

Here in the shadow of the firs lay everything the old house had spat out in the course of its life, everything worn out and unnecessary, everything not to be seen.

Tove Jansson, *Black-White*, 2014, p. 4

This thesis begins and ends in my childhood home. It begins at the point I returned there from a dwelling in the city, dense with ruptured memories, compelled to examine how our relationship first with the domestic space and, later, with the world beyond its walls, might be repaired and rebuilt once fragmented by trauma. It ends at the point I chose to return again to this home, as a guest, to tend to unchosen bonds, and reflect on the journey we undertake as our selves forge, break and mend the ties we have to this most intimate of spaces: a refuge, a prison, a sanctuary. Using trauma borne of domestic abuse as a lens through which to approach repairing fragmented relationships with the home, and my background as a visual artist specialising in exploring narrative, I embarked on a journey of practice-led research. I began by uncovering and understanding mechanisms and impacts of female trauma from fields including psychology and social sciences, as well as examining previous artistic explorations of trauma and the domestic, before approaching the development of this understanding through conceptions of the reparative explored through what I came to understand as an expanded drawing framework.



Figure 1.1 *Creusa's Lament*, installation, 2016

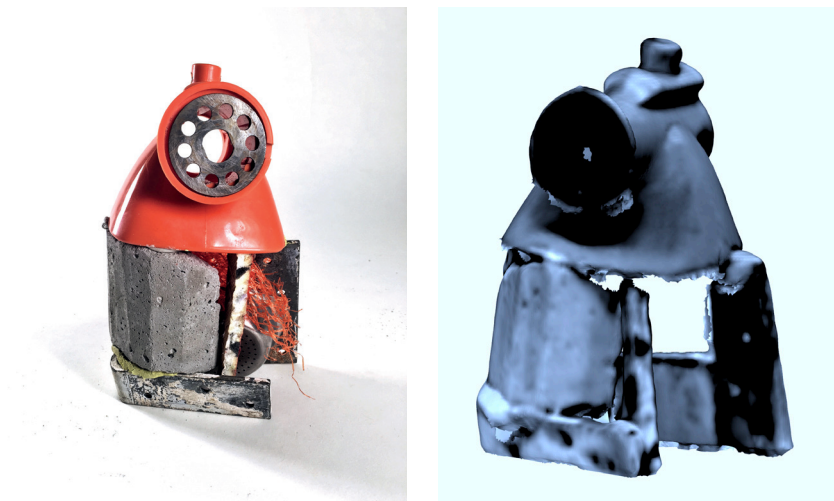


Figure 1.2 *Fabrications*, assemblage and 3D model, 2015

Home is an important concept in disciplines ranging from phenomenology to feminist theory, and it has been explored through a multitude of theoretical approaches. Likewise, the philosophical relationship between home and inhabitant has often been explored in literature and visual art. In Tove Jansson's *Black-White* (2014), an illustrator escapes the luminous and airy space of his wife's home to perfect his cross hatching for a new commission in the attic of his aunt's house. The divide between them becomes ever more apparent, causing his pages to gradually fill with black. That this relationship is well established – that the home is recognised as a vessel for traces of the psyche in narrative arts and beyond – offers a paradigm through which to explore what happens when the relationship between home and its occupant is ruptured – and how these ruptures can be repaired.

In this thesis, I explore this relationship through visual art practice in the context of repairing and rebuilding a ruptured inhabitant-dwelling relationship. I understand these ruptures through the lens of traumatic injury to this relationship originating in domestic abuse. Situated within the field of visual arts research, I use practice-led methodologies to explore the mechanism for trauma's splintering effect on the person-home relationship through the qualities of techniques I bring from my existing practice, and their ability to record traces of body-material engagement in particular. I first began to develop the artistic research which became the basis for my thesis during my MA at the Royal College of Art. Having worked as a freelance illustrator and animator for a number of years, I began to pursue this interest in visual narrative beyond the page and into narrative based installations that incorporated sculpture, large scale drawing, and sound work, through which I explored the story of Creusa from Virgil's *The Aeneid* in the body of work entitled *Creusa's Lament* (Figure 1.1). I used this project to develop my interest in using these visual storytelling techniques to translate, and potentially repair, fragments of the domestic, once the notion of the home as a sanctuary had been disrupted by trauma, which I had begun to investigate in the project *Fabrications*. This earlier project had consisted of small experiments in

any medium I could get my hands on at first, including assemblage and 3D scanning (Figure 1.2).

As time went on, having completed my MA, I continued to develop my engagement with repairing the domestic as sanctuary by refining these techniques into three strands of practice: ceramic sculpture, drawing, and moving image (Figure 1.3; Figure 1.4; Figure 1.5). This led to the Arts Council-funded collaborative exhibition *Plus One*, which took place in 2019 as part of the satellite events surrounding Margate's hosting of 2019's Turner Prize exhibition. In this exhibition, I partnered with artist Catherine Anyango Grünewald to explore our shared interest in telling the visual stories that emerge from everyday environments disrupted by emotional, intangible phenomena. We inhabited the town's subterranean spaces, translating them through drawing, clay and moving image, to build an evolving and immersive environment inspired by the sea, the chalk, and the preternatural hollows resting under our feet (Figure 1.6; Figure 1.7).

This experience fed directly into the beginnings of the artistic research explored in this thesis, which develops the emergent strands of my practice. Rooted in my background in illustration and animation, I consider these ways of working part of an expanded drawing framework: 'a matter of practice and repetition and development on a flat surface or in space' (Jonas et al., 2014, p. 36). This framework is key to approaching my practice as a basis for this research. Indeed, the development of this experience as a visual artist, and my understanding of expanded drawing practices and visual narrative in particular, will become central to the contributions made by this thesis. In this practice-led research, I begin to use these processes and their outcomes to create space to reconsider and reconcile processes of psychic repair, creating artefacts which can not only be observed and considered as standalone pieces, but also act as nodes for reparative networks. These networks bring together knowledge my own experience as a visual artist with a background in illustration and animation, which I have explored in this introduction, with theoretical areas including psychology, social





Figure 1.3 *Ebb*, glazed earthenware, 2019



Figure 1.4 *too menny*, pencil on paper, 2018

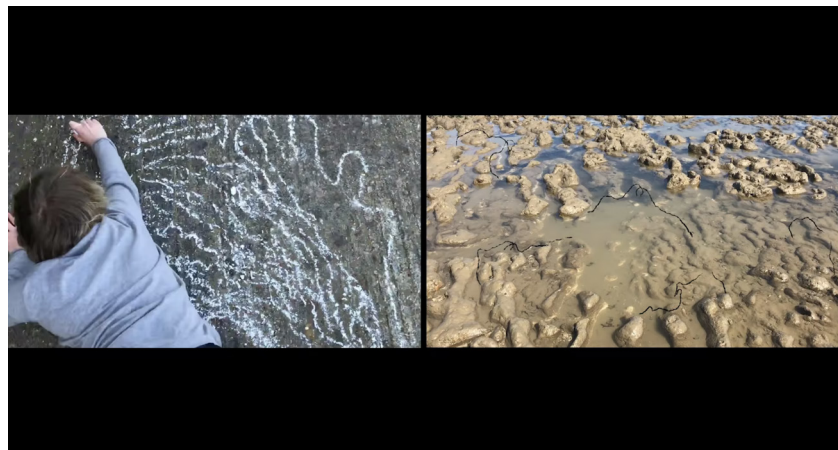


Figure 1.5 *Burial of the Dead*, film (with Claire Orme), 2018

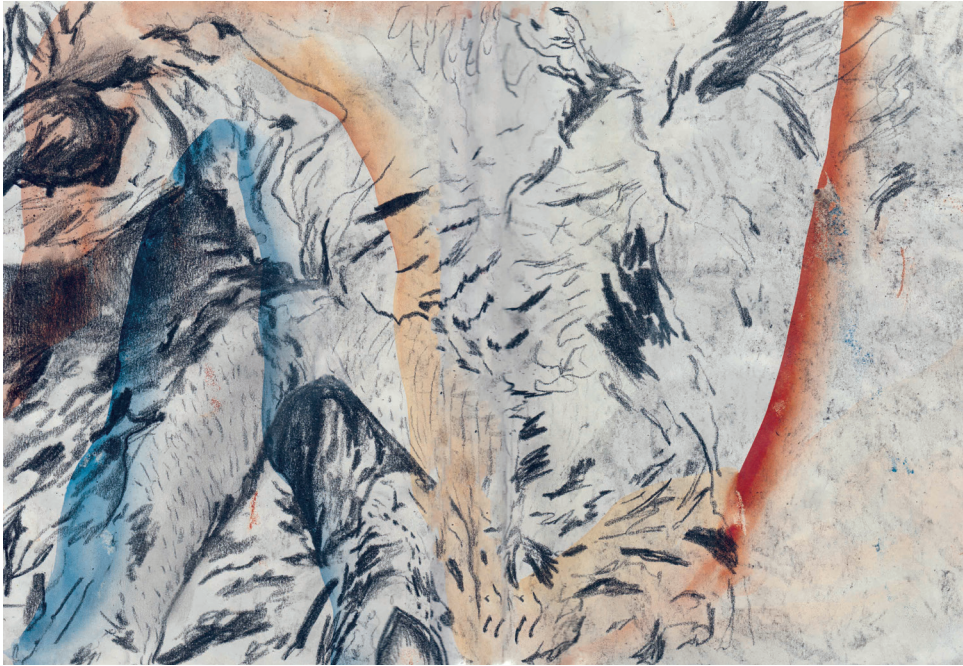


Figure 1.6 *Cavities* (preparatory drawing), watercolour & charcoal on paper, 2019



Figure 1.7 *Cavities*, installation, 2019

science, feminist theory and art history, which emerge from the following chapter.

In *Chapter II*, I begin to journey across these fields, embarking on a literature review with the aim of drawing out research questions exploring how rebuilding the post-traumatic home might be enacted through art practice. This creates a foundation on which my practice-led research is later built, underlying both the artistic processes I pursue and my reflections upon their outcomes, intersecting at the question of repair. I first explore interdisciplinary conceptions of trauma resulting from violence against women and its impact, before examining how these themes have been elucidated in visual art, paying particular attention to the work of feminist art historians and cultural theorists in this sphere. I then explore conceptions of the home in art, and particularly the domestic as a recurring theme in artistic practices developing from the late twentieth century onwards. In examining the interactions between these areas of the literature, it becomes clear that while there is much research into the traumatic event and the victim-perpetrator relationship in art practice, the post-traumatic relationship between victim/survivor and home environment remains underexplored.

Through reviewing the literature, I ascertain that the traces of trauma can be understood to remain embedded in the memory-structure of the home and, as I explore, the nature of traumatic memory is such that its discontinuity haunts the present, limiting the depth of human experience available within post-traumatic existence because of its tendency towards repetition. This is due in part to the sense of discontinuity in traumatic memory creating the conviction that firstly, the traumatic incident is in some way still happening, and secondly, a perpetual anticipation of further traumatic events. These intertwine to draw victims into cycles of revictimisation, and can be understood as manifestations of traumatic repetition because of the repetitious nature of both the traumatic memory and its effects. By echoing what is seen in traumatic repetition, I use artistic acts of repetition to translate and reconfigure these elements. In this way, repetition, translation and the ecology of bonds sit alongside repair as key concepts underlying my artistic methodology, which I go on to explore

in *Chapter III: Methodology*.

Within this overall aim of exploring repair and rebuilding, several key concepts emerge in my review of the literature which I later go on to apply through my practice. In *Chapter III: Methodology*, I build methodological approaches to developing this practice, which also build on my experience as a practitioner in the visual arts. These approaches build the strands of my practice with which I came to this research into tools for applying the concepts of repetition, translation, repair and the ecology of bonds through my studio practice. In this chapter, I also draw specific artists into this approach to the practice, specifically Anna Barriball, Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, Sigrid Hjertén, Anna Maria Maiolino, and Betty Woodman. Through these encounters, I also begin to bridge gaps between research into encounters with the domestic in art and investigations of female trauma in art. Having developed a methodological approach to the practice, I go on to relate the three phases of my artistic research.

In *Chapter IV*, I reflect on the first phase of my studio practice, in which I explore repetition as a generative act. I use repetitious acts of drawing, sculpting and painting to begin to rebuild the part-imagined post-traumatic home. These processes begin to create space for new connections between these reconfigured traumatic shards, forging an ecology of bonds between them by using traumatic repetition itself as a mechanism for repair (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011). In *Chapter V*, I analyse the next juncture in my studio practice, where I explore the ability of this practice to transform the traces of trauma by forging connections through the spaces within and between artworks. I begin by examining the hollows within ceramic vessels as artistically possessed spaces through which trauma can be approached (Pollock, 2013, p. 3). I go on to transform the environments these artefacts inhabit by creating spatial interventions using repurposed domestic materials, large scale paintings and, eventually, pastel drawings directly on the walls. In this way, I also bring together the importance of installation art in relation to the feminist art practices and artistic ex-

plorations of the home, seen for example in *Womanhouse* (1972), alongside Bachelard's concept of the corner (1994, pp. 136–147).

In *Chapter VI*, I document and reflect on the final phase of my studio practice. In this phase, I develop the encounters between artefact and interior environment created in the earlier phases of my studio research so that they might begin to cross the threshold between interior and exterior worlds, forging dialogues between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door. To do this, I return to artistic mechanisms of repetition and translation to explore threshold spaces, locating artefacts beyond the scaffolding of the built environment and exploring the relationship between interior and exterior worlds. At first returning to ceramic sculpture and installation, the work explored in this chapter culminates in the use of moving image to explore inhabited time at the threshold of the rebuilt post-traumatic home. Finally, in *Chapter VII*, I go on to discuss the findings that have emerged from the artistic research explored in chapters *IV*, *V* and *VI*.

Throughout this thesis, I explore how by focussing on repair, monstrous domestic parts can be translated, moving towards a resolution of trauma's propensity to continuously haunt while remaining inaccessible. In this way, this research investigates the rebuilding of the post-traumatic home by repeating, translating and reconfiguring the echoes of the domestic environment, which form 'signifying sequences' (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213) that are embedded in post-traumatic states through traumatic memories. I explore the role of reparative art practices – processes and outcomes – in understanding the fractured afterlives of trauma, and in reimagining the idea of home as a safe place. In this chapter, I have introduced the origins of this research in my artistic practice, and given an overview of how it will proceed. In the next chapter, I explore in detail the literature around trauma, the home and art practice which underpins the artistic research I analyse as the thesis progresses.

## II

# Literature Review

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I use the overarching aim of identifying opportunities to use art practice to explore repair and rebuilding of the woman-home relationship in post-traumatic states, identified in the previous chapter, to draw out specific concepts which will underpin research questions to investigate through art practice. I journey through existing literature in key fields including psychology, sociology, feminist and cultural studies, as well as art history, which are key to understanding trauma and post-traumatic states in the individual, in society, and in culture more broadly, but especially in art practice. Firstly, I explore how the causes and effects of intimate partner violence can be understood as part of an ecosystem, in which victimisation increases the risk of revictimisation in part through its effects on the psyche and on social relations. From here, I begin to consider how traumatic repetition might be embodied through art practice to create space for attachment and reattachment. I go on to consider how the home provides a conceptual space to explore these ecosystems, externalised through the art object as syntactical container for both the complexities of this ecosystem and the transformation – rather than entrenchment – of the traces of trauma. I then start linking some ideas around the reparative as understood in psychoanalysis, affect theory and post critique to these findings, particularly in how these ideas mirror elements of what I discover earlier in the chapter is known about recovery from trauma, just

as the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Ricoeur, 1970) encompasses some of the harmful elements of the after-effects of trauma. In this way, I identify some underexplored areas of the literature at the intersection of understandings of female trauma and understandings of the domestic in art practice. Having drawn out specific research questions to investigate key concepts in the repair of post-traumatic states, I begin to build a framework which uses the reparative to approach these research questions through art practice. Together, the concepts I explore point to a position from which trauma can be encountered and addressed, without necessarily becoming entrenched.

Before embarking on this journey, it is important to clarify the significance of considering the domestic and its relationship to the trauma born of the related issues of sexual assault and sexual, psychological and physical abuse by an intimate partner. This trauma is most often generated within the home. I am focussing in this research on its distinct effects on women in heterosexual relationships, because while both men and women of all sexual orientations can be victims of these forms of violence, the experience of victimisation is qualitatively different for each group, and women in abusive heterosexual partnerships are more likely to suffer serious injuries (Archer, 2000, 2002; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011). In addition, the literature on trauma, feminism and art from which my thesis emerges focusses on the specific effects of sexual and intimate partner violence on women. For the sake of brevity, I shall refer to these issues in this chapter and throughout this thesis using the umbrella term of violence against women.

## **2.2 Trauma**

### **2.2.1 The Emergence of Trauma**

To engage with current understandings of trauma resulting from violence against women, it is important to first understand the development of interest in this relationship. Not only within psychoanalytic theory (Hacking, 1991), but also in fields as diverse as the history of science (Leys, 2000) and analytic philosophy (Nussbaum,

2008), Sigmund Freud is recognised for his key role in “cement[ing]” the idea of psychic trauma, specifically, the trauma of sexual assault’ (Leys, 2000, p. 18) in the psychological literature and beyond. As I will explore later in this chapter, his legacy is also found in a peculiarly suspicious mode of cultural production and analysis, his ideas continuing to permeate the arts in particular, alongside their legacy in originating psychological understandings of trauma and abuse. In the late 19th Century, Freud and his contemporaries initially identified exogenous factors – namely, widespread sexual trauma – in expressions of hysteria in female patients, before a combination of the frosty reception for these ideas and the realisation that he may be influencing his subjects to lean towards such explanations, as was later repeated in the recovered memory epidemic in the late 20th Century (McCullough, 2001; Davis and Loftus, 2020), led them to focus instead solely on endogenous factors. In this way, Freud ‘turned away from the trauma aetiology of hysteria and developed his instinct theory and concept of transference’ (Lemprecht and Sack, 2002, p. 223). Following this, for the majority of the twentieth century, the psychological impacts of sexual abuse and family violence were under-researched, especially within the psychoanalytic literature (Shapiro, 1995). These were more often considered social problems, with psychiatric issues separated and confined to endogenous explanatory systems, originating in a defective mind. That is, the problems associated with that which manifested as trauma responses in women – often arising from violence against women – were considered solely social issues, rather than issues that might also have individuated psychic consequences. By the same token, the individual psychic consequences of violence against women, sometimes manifested in the shifting nomenclature of hysteria, were siloed from societal origins (Lemprecht and Sack, 2002).

However, by the end of the twentieth century in the West, a confluence of societal shifts thrust the psychic consequences of abuse into the spotlight. In this view, responses to societal, inter-human, issues became highly atomised; ‘political-economic dimensions’ of these issues began to take



a back seat to ‘identity-based politics’ (Edelman, 2001, pp. 299-300). That is, the atomisation of Western society coincided with, or even enabled, an approach to violence against women which came to focus on hyper individuated psychic repercussions, alongside bureaucratised and medicalised responses born of the burgeoning *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* and *International Classifications of Diseases*. This overcorrection from exclusively social – that is, a problem in society divorced from problems manifesting in the interior lives of women – to solely psychiatric ill also begat a world in which diagnostic categories begin to substitute individual experiences and personalities, creating ‘a particular medico-forensic-political language of individual and social control’ (Hacking, 1985, p. 164). In this way, overidentification with diagnostic categories can itself become life-limiting.

As Bessel van der Kolk explains, for ‘people with PTSD, the trauma becomes the central event in their lives, and events both prior to and subsequent to the trauma tend to lose their affective significance’ (1985, p. 368). This can be compounded in group psychotherapy, where there can be a prolonged period of ‘marked lack of interpersonal involvement’, with bonds based upon hyper-identification with those ‘with whom they relive some of the terror’ as mirrors of themselves rather than individuated subjects, at the exclusion of ‘the all-bad clinic leader or other “outside” agency’ (van der Kolk, 1985, p. 369). This fixation on trauma, and ‘intense splitting’ can also impact other out-groups in subjects’ lives, where ‘relationships with significant others such as wives, children or therapists are characterized by idealization or withdrawal rather than by empathy’ (van der Kolk, 1985, p. 369). It is, then, both important to recognise victimisation experiences as sources of psychic pain or trauma, and to relieve the isolation that often arises from this type of trauma due to its source in the most intimate relationships and encounters. Indeed, one of the most important factors for psychological health – and prevention of revictimisation (Clas- sen, Palesh and Aggarwal, 2005; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011) – is the kind of support network that becomes fractured in the wake of violence against

through my practice-led research later in this thesis.

Support and other groups, described by van der Kolk above, can provide relief from the profound isolation of these traumatic encounters in the short term, but if not geared towards facilitating ‘individual differences and attachments between members’ (1985, p. 369), sometimes this comes at the expense of the resilience, emotional regulation and consequent openness to the potential depth and richness of the human experience. If ‘people spontaneously come to fit their categories’ (Hacking, 1984, p. 161) – then if a subset of feminist theory locates womanhood within the category of victimhood, this limited sense of belonging becomes difficult to transcend, acting as a barrier to the repair of post-traumatic states. While scholars including Alyson M. Cole (2000; 2007) have argued that such critiques of ascribing victimhood categories through feminism omit the function of these categories to drive social change, I concern myself here with how the use of these categories for activist ends interacts with individual recovery from traumatic events, rather than weighing up their utility in driving activism. For example, a further risk of encouraging overidentification within these wound-categories is not only the harm of rumination in the full recovery from psychic injury (Classen, Palesh and Aggarwal, 2005, p. 121) but also that even as the burdens of social ills are individualised, expected post-traumatic responses can begin to slouch towards inescapable stasis, homogeneity, and the ensuing erasure of subjecthood.

This simultaneous individualising of social harms and collectivisation and ‘psychologiz[ing of] suffering’ (Leys, 2000, p. 173) also risks flattening or concealing the complex ecosystem of the significant problem of violence against women and its aftermath. The issues arising from this tension between the ‘personal therapeutic’ and ‘public or collective value’ (2000, p. 109) of testimony to trauma are relayed by Ruth Leys in 2000’s *Genealogy of Trauma*, in which she examines the links between approaches to trauma in psychology, activism, and culture throughout the twentieth century. In relation to testimony, prominent feminist psychiatrist and trauma re-

searcher Judith Herman's assertion that '[r]emembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims' (2015, p. 1) draws particular concern from Leys. This is because the evidence surrounding traumatic memory is complex, and yet for 'Herman and for the modern recovery movement generally, even if the victim of trauma *could* be cured without obtaining historical insight into the origins of her distress, such a cure would not be morally acceptable' (Leys, 2000, p. 109), because it wouldn't serve the collective purpose in the same way. This apparent tension between solidarity and full personhood becomes significant in the rebuilding of the post-traumatic home as an artistic-philosophical space invested in the psychological freedom to explore and celebrate wonder in its very rebuilding, and forms the starting point for my theoretical approach in the following chapter. In this section, I have explored the shifting perceptions of, and explanatory frameworks for, post-traumatic states, particularly concerning individual and group dynamics. In the next section, I will explore the significance of social and environmental relationships within recovery from trauma in more detail.

### **2.2.2 Ecologies of Trauma**

In this section, I build on the emerging significance of networks and relationships in post-traumatic repair. The lingering effects of the dichotomous approaches to understanding trauma responses in women, explored in the previous section, notwithstanding, more recently the importance of understanding the range of relationships and contributing factors between individuals, society, and environment has been better acknowledged in research on violence against women. Ecological frameworks for understanding trauma responses to domestic abuse expand on Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective (1977) and have proliferated in recent years, recognising that 'without consideration of the larger social context individual risk factors might not be fully understood' (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 215) – and vice versa. These studies and systematic reviews suggest some paths to addressing psychological

responses while also offering a model for integrating individualised and social understandings of them, recognising the importance of neither totally individualising nor totally collectivising the effects psychic trauma (Leys, 2000). Ecological approaches have emphasised the merit of considering not only the ‘characteristics of victim’ and perpetrator, but also ‘post-assault disclosures and help-seeking, and sociocultural norms’ and their role in shaping ‘the way in which this trauma affects women’s psychological well-being’ (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 226).

In this way, Campbell and colleagues consider the relationship between ‘individual-level factors [...], assault characteristics’ (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 225), microsystem, meso/exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem factors in their ecological perspective of the impact of sexual assault – often a component of violence against women – on women’s mental health and recovery. Respectively, these relate to socio-demographic, ‘personality characteristics, pre-existing mental health conditions, and biological/genetic factors’ as well as ‘coping processes’; ‘characteristics of the assault itself’ including degree of injury and victim–perpetrator relationship; disclosures to and support from friends, family, and other ‘informal sources of support’; signposting and more formal support services; socio-cultural factors and expectations; and a conceptualisation of the ‘cumulative effects’ of transitional events in a lifetime, traumatic and non-traumatic, recognising that ‘person–environment interactions are reciprocal and change over time’ (2009, p. 229). In considering the chronosystem in particular, it is unfortunate that the contributing factors to this prevalence of revictimisation in sexual assault and violence against women, while hypothesised by researchers including Foa and colleagues (2000), have been little studied, for fear of stepping into the territory of ‘victim blaming’ (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 215).

On the contrary, Kuijpers and colleagues have argued convincingly that further research investigating factors leading to victimisation and revictimisation would instead offer more paths for regaining control over events that so often wrest control from

victims. This becomes all the more pertinent when it is considered that an aggressor's use of 'power and control tactics' is itself a key predictor of revictimisation (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 211). There is also evidence to suggest a possible relationship between particular post-traumatic symptoms, such as dissociation, and revictimisation (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 211; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Winkel, 2012). This loss of power and control, then, can be reinscribed by these high rates of revictimisation, alongside responses of dissociation and an increasingly fearful and anxious connection to the world (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 226). These factors contribute to some of the cruellest aspects of the post-traumatic experience: difficulty in finding the means to connect, or to trust, or to find the depth and richness of life again, which in the context of revictimisation risk can become something of a vicious cycle. If suspicion becomes embedded – if this becomes the sole means of relating to the world – then person-environment responses become flattened, and cognitive inflexibility, a further risk factor for revictimisation (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 199), becomes difficult to shake.

That is to say, in this mode of person-environment interaction, both joy and danger become near impossible to distinguish or recognise because 'traumatized people have difficulty evaluating sensory stimuli and mobilizing appropriate levels of physiological arousal' (van der Kolk, 2000, p. 15). In order to restore the ability 'to distinguish between [...] real life threats, and the haunting, irrational fears that are part' of post-traumatic states, it is important that a sense of physical safety is restored (van der Kolk, 2000, p. 19), in part by (re-)discovering multiple modes of attachment to the environment, as a means to emerge from the binding and repetitious singularly vigilant mode I have discussed here. This more detailed understanding of the importance of networks in moving towards repair within post-traumatic states offers concepts to explore through my art practice, and will become important in formulating research questions under the overarching aim of identifying mechanisms for repair in this chapter. In the next section, I explore factors in revictimisation risk I have begun to

uncover here through the lens of traumatic repetition.

### 2.2.3 Traumatic Repetition

‘Hysterics suffer mainly from *reminiscences*’

Freud & Breuer, 1975, p. 7, original emphasis

Having identified ecologies of bonds as an important concept to explore through art practice in the previous section, it is important to further interrogate the mechanisms for harm integral to trauma reactions in order to identify further areas which can be approached through this aim of exploring opportunities for repair and rebuilding in post-traumatic states. In this vein, alongside considerations of ecologies, the *reminiscences* identified at the genesis of psychoanalytic understandings of the traumatic condition in female hysterics are the seeds of a related key concept in the development of approaches to trauma: traumatic repetition. Traumatic repetition is a concept originally introduced through the psychoanalytic literature through Freud’s hysterical ‘*reminiscences*’ (1974, p. 7), and it remains central to neuropsychiatric understandings of trauma. Just as the ties between subject, trauma responses and the wider world explored above are indicated in revictimisation, traumatic repetition and its centrality to common post-traumatic experiences including flashbacks and nightmares, is also related to revictimisation. Indeed, revictimisation itself can be understood as a manifestation of traumatic repetition in that instances of revictimisation enact repetitions of the first instance of traumatisation. The weight given to traumatic repetition through the history of the study of trauma reflects its centrality, although these manifestations of repetition are more malleable and intertwined with day-to-day experiences in practice than some strands of theory surrounding repetition suggest (Leys, 2000). This malleability is important because it suggests that rather than being a fixed point that is forever returned to, traumatic events can be incorporated into life’s history – life’s ecology – without being forgotten or endlessly repeated.

Traumatic repetition can be understood as a kind of dark nostalgia which, ‘like

melancholia, is an order of feeling that attaches itself to a lost object or ideal, specifically a home or homeland' (Lauzon, 2017, p. 27). This is because both traumatic repetition and nostalgia reach for the enactment of attachment 'to a fantasy rooted in personal memories, family lore, cultural narratives': a yearning for the familiar, however disturbing that may have been (2017, p. 27). These residues of the familiar have been explored in cultural studies through the concept of the ruin, in which 'that which is allegedly present and transparent whenever authenticity is claimed is present only as an absence: it is the imagined present of a past that can now only be grasped in its decay' (Huyssen, 2006, p. 9). In this way, the relationship between nostalgia, the ruin, traumatic repetition and the built environment – the home, in this thesis – can be understood. Just as the ruin allows for the flourishing of a nostalgia for an inauthentic shadow of the past, so traumatic repetition's residues and attendant patterns of re-victimisation, can be recognised through traumatic memory's permeation of the home. Traumatic repetition, like nostalgia, allows hooks from the past to remain 'both present in its residues and yet no longer accessible' (Huyssen, 2006, p. 7). Accessing the similarly inaccessible space, born of traumatic memories and manifested through traumatic repetition, becomes crucial to repairing these spaces and forming new attachments in the present. In this way, spaces themselves will become an important concept to explore through art practice in this research.

A key text analysing trauma within feminist and cultural studies becomes important to underpinning possible explorations of these spaces, or gaps. In 2013's *After-affects/After-images*, Griselda Pollock explores these gaps, and the transformation of traumatic residues so as to move towards altering the course of traumatic repetition away from revictimisation. She frames her encounters with traumatic repetition through reparative readings of artworks which engage with the traumatic, focussing particularly on artworks' repetition of traumatic event in the 'after affect' they provoke in their viewer. This affective repetition can be understood as an emotional state experienced by the viewer as an echo of, or reply to, the traumatic affect embodied by

an artwork in its capturing of the artist or subject's own affective state, which is then translated through the viewer's response. When artist's gesture meets signification in the viewer, Pollock argues, a space is opened, through repetition, for the transformation of trauma's traces into something that, unlike Huyssen's ruin, is accessible, tangible and more readily comprehensible – even malleable. For Pollock, the aesthetic transformation itself points to the potential for further transformation – for repair. This approach to repair through aesthetic transformation of spaces again emphasises the importance of spaces and of gaps as concepts within approaches to repairing post-traumatic states that are ripe for investigation through art practice, and so have great potential as foundations of the research questions I will pursue through my own practice later in this thesis.

It is important first to look more deeply into the relationship between trauma, gaps/spaces, and repetition, to facilitate the practice-led research that will follow. With this in mind, the 'interval between affect and sign' can be identified as the structure which enables this transformation of trauma through affective repetition into something more graspable (Pollock, 2013, p. 65). Building on Aby Warburg's explorations of the 'iconology of the interval', or '*Zwischenraum*', Pollock describes an essential but ignored:

space between spaces – attained by aesthetic processes, [...] an interval lying between the inchoate, unarticulated pressure of feeling, affect or trauma and the mastering of symbolically articulated understanding, necessary to the transformation of overwhelming affect into knowledge and memory. (2013, p. 63)

Traumatic repetition is echoed through this aesthetic processing, which in turn creates spaces through which the inarticulable weight of the traumatic undergoes translation into something like knowledge. The traumatic is not erased but it is translated and in some way assimilated through these productive repetitions. Because it is transformed, little by little, into the tangible, it begins to free itself from the compulsion to repeat itself through life, and so these spaces offer room for iterative change. This structure identified by Pollock, and its relationship to repetition, draws out another key concept



to hold in relation to repair in this study. It is particularly important because it repurposes what is a mechanism for post-traumatic harm itself: repetition. This leads me to consider whether by taking up the tool of repetition in art practice, the traumatic memory begins to unstick itself.

This exploration of transformation through making use of the interval between repetitions is evident, for example, in Pollock's examination of Bernini's sculpture *Daphne and Apollo* (1622-25). When Pollock first looked upon Bernini's Daphne and Apollo, she gasped (2013, p. 47). This physical reaction to the sculpture is significant, she explains, because with this gesture she apes Daphne herself. Pollock goes on to posit that if a purpose of myth is to offer narrative resolutions to contradictions arising from conflict, interpersonal or otherwise, then it's possible to read Bernini's sculpture as undoing this work by holding the narrative at the point of its contradictions. In so doing, he offers an opportunity for Daphne's open mouth to be read as a space carved out for Daphne's own subjecthood, rather than simply being a vessel for Bernini's presumed male viewer, both in her implied vocalisation and in the very existence of this physical space. Thus, Daphne can be reanimated by Pollock's own gasp.

In this way, repetition of Daphne's gasp emphasises not only the importance of traumatic repetition as a means to explore transformations of traces of the traumatic through art practice, but also to the potential for this artistic exploration of repetition to generate narrative. Furthermore, by framing artistic explorations of trauma through aesthetic *transformation* via affective repetition resists the trap of remembering only through photographs, which are closer to ruin in haunting rather than creating space for repair (Pollock, 2013, p. 4; Sontag, 2019, p. 72). That is, narrative can be a source of contextualised understanding to avoid the dead end haunting of photographic repetition, and by considering her arguments alongside Pollock's suggestion of affective repetition opening space for multiple narrative possibilities, the case for repetition as a scaffold for art-making which can begin to rebuild some of the haunting fragments of trauma woven into imagery becomes clearer. By holding open multiple readings and

reinterpretations of artworks and their history at once, a space is held for developing and enriched understandings. They become where we work out the nuances, consider the complexity of our leaky finitudes, in ways that link ‘the imagination powerfully to the adventures of the distant life in question’ (Nussbaum, 2008, p. 352). In this way, the intertwined concepts of repetition and repair will become important to explore through art practice.

By bringing together literature around traumatic repetition, I have the beginnings of a foundation on which I can build an exploration of these concepts through art practice. By beginning to formulate research questions around this concept, I create a space through which I can explore how this transformation through affective repetition can be generated by artistic processes which are themselves repetitive. It will build upon Pollock’s explorations of affective repetition, as well as her insights into the conceptualisation of trauma as a void – the unknowable shape left in the piercing of the psyche – that while it cannot be represented, it can be ‘approached, moved and transformed’ through art-making (2013, p. 4). Beyond the knowledge that concepts of traumatic repetition and the traumatic void are interwoven with questions of the nature of traumatic memory, it is important to consider approaches to traumatic memory from other fields so that when I interrogate these concepts through art practice, there is sufficient interdisciplinary understanding to scaffold this practice-led research.

In the field of neuropsychiatry, researchers including Bessel van der Kolk also offer a vision of the transformation of traumatic residues in order to change the course of traumatic repetition. However, for van der Kolk the transformation of the traces of trauma is only possible through the body due to the way traumatic memory inhabits the brain’s memory system (2006, p. 289). He theorises that traumatic repetition – in the form of flashbacks and traumatic nightmares in particular, and in the linked return to familiar, abusive, environments – is the literal repetition of the traumatic event. For van der Kolk and theorists he has influenced in psychiatry, psychoanalysis and cultural studies, these memories and their repetitions are exact replicas of the

initial trauma and do not develop or alter over time. The traumatic experience, and its repetitions, are:

inscribed in a special memory system in the brain that is held to be radically different from ordinary memory. Indeed, [...] van der Kolk and Caruth have materialized and literalized traumatic memory in ways that make it seem as if trauma stands outside all knowledge and all representation. (Leys, 2000, p. 148)

This interpretation seems to pose traumatic memory as insulated from the slippage between past and present, with an alternative conception of the interval producing an all but unreachable space. This interval, as opposed to that proposed by Pollock, holds little capacity for transformation, aesthetic or otherwise. A traumatic nightmare in this conception, for example, would contain a fixed, unchanging, repetition of the traumatic memory so that the contents of the nightmare are unaffected by day-to-day environmental factors, worries, joys. However, Ruth Leys argues that van der Kolk's own studies show just such interaction between the traumatic and the everyday, opening the possibility of a return to a more porous understanding of the interaction between traumatic memory and the world (2000, p. 249). It thus becomes possible to reconcile Pollock's aesthetic transformation with van der Kolk's own research into traumatic memory, even though the conclusions he draws, including that traumatic memories can only be transmitted or transferred between people rather than transformed, seem to contradict Pollock's conceptualisation of traumatic repetition as something which can be used through art practice to open space for transformation.

Just as the ecological model for examining violence against women from sociological and health perspectives offers a multifaceted understanding of the causes and consequences of these acts, so traumatic repetition provides a framework to comprehend some of the relationships between the life-limiting effects of these causes and consequences. Griselda Pollock begins to show, in her conception of the 'after-affect', that the interval between these repetitions can be opened up and transformed through art practice, although she does not explore this in depth through the lens of traumatic repetition, which can provide important links between multidisciplinary

understandings of the impact of female trauma and practice itself (2013). This is an important conceptual thread in this research, leading to the formulation of my first research question:

1. How can the concept of traumatic repetition be explored through different artistic processes to break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds?

By responding to this question through practice-led research, traumatic repetition can be applied through artistic processes to begin to invite narrative possibilities which are no longer literal repetitions of traumatic events – as in a flashback or a nightmare. Through artistic processes, malleability can be reintroduced. Rather than simply replicating sites of trauma, their repetition itself can begin to reorient these visual explorations of the post-traumatic home towards repair. In this way, I posit that the space of the memory itself might become accessible, rather than existing as a haunting presence. To extend the underpinnings of what will become the first phase of this research, I will briefly address the concept of translation, extending Pollock's psychoanalytic lens on trauma's after-affect in art.

#### **2.2.4 Trauma and translation**

In the previous section, I reviewed the literature around traumatic repetition, leading to the formulation of my first research question, which will scaffold the application of the concept of traumatic repetition through my art practice later in this thesis. In this section, I will address a concept which emerged in the formulation of this question, which requires further interrogation before I continue: translation. To begin exploring the translation of traumatic personal-architectural bonds through art practice later in this thesis, it is important first to create a deeper understanding of the concept of translation, which has arisen from the narrative possibilities in the voids, gaps and slippages I have been discussing. I will give a brief overview of the concept's application in literary studies, before moving on to the relationship between translation and art history, finally approaching psychoanalytic theorist Jean Laplanche's relation of

the concept to traumatic signifiers and the *après-coup* in more detail. Etymologically, 'translation' is derived in part from the act of moving a saint's remains from one place to another, and its adjacent meanings, to 'remove from one place to another' and to 'turn from one language into another' (Oxford, p. 501), carry the poetic sense of repeating a precious form in a new configuration or medium. Already, it is possible to see the relationship between *repetition* and *translation* in my research question, and its ripeness for applying through art practice later in this thesis. Indeed, translation is an important concept not only in linguistics, but also 'in the fields of theology, philosophy, literary studies and critical theory' (Bal and Morra, 2007, p. 5). It is important to understand its development in these fields to approach its growing impact 'within discussions of international visual and cultural practices', particularly those which 'consider visual, historical, social and subjective transformations' (ibid.), which are especially pertinent to this research due to its focus on the transformation of the post-traumatic subject via the repair of the post-traumatic home through visual art practice.

For Benjamin, a translation's meaning resides in the space of pure language between the original and its translation (1997, p. 162). In this way, just as an artwork is not created for its receiver (p. 151), the translation is not written for the reader, but for language itself (p. 163). De Man further elucidates this point, taking up Benjamin's image of the broken amphora, where to be reassembled its fragments must match, but do not resemble one another (Benjamin, 1997, p. 161), to explore this understanding of translation, in which 'there is an original, pure language, of which any particular work is only a fragment' (De Man, 2000, p. 30). These fragments 'do not match each other, they follow each other', just as translations can be considered a fragment of 'an original, pure language' (ibid.). In this view, translations' meaning resides in the space between the original and its translation. The slippages between these fragments and language itself create an avenue through which to pursue this theory of translation into art history (Morra, 2000).

For Morra, through Breugel's use of repetition in his *Tower of Babel* (c. 1563) paintings, both through myth – the story of Babel itself – and through his two paintings of the tower itself – he achieves what de Man declared impossible in literary analysis (de Man, 2000, p. 28): it becomes 'possible to consider the interplay between hermeneutics *and* poetics without one giving way to the other' (Morra, 2000, p. 131). The paintings themselves address the impossibility of reading them 'for hermeneutic truth claims' among the 'chaos brought on by multiple tongues'; they 'proliferate their own meanings' through the paintings' poetics, which themselves make it impossible to 'commit to a *singular* meaning' (ibid.). In this way, translation through the lens of art history can set works in motion via the impossibility of settling on a singular meaning. This movement in translation, this reanimation it provokes, will be significant in developing methodologies for this research in the following chapter. Its temporality is also key to understanding Laplanche's psychoanalytic approach to the translation of traumatic 'signifying sequences' (2017, p. 213).

Indeed, translation has been important to a number of psychoanalytic theoreticians, including Freud, Kristeva and Laplanche (Bal and Morra, 2007, p. 5), though I shall focus here on Laplanche's relation of the concept to traumatic signifiers and temporalisation, as this will provide an important basis for the relationship between traumatic repetition and translation which I can apply through art practice later in this thesis. In Laplanche's reflections on translation, he considers the notion of the post-Freudian *après-coup*, that is, the unstable relationship between past, future and present, where time, containing 'blows and shocks', moving 'in fits and stops' (2017, p. 22), advances in all directions, weaving a complex web of temporality. Parallels can be drawn between this concept and de Man's interpretation of translation, in which meaning 'is always displaced with regard to the meaning it ideally intended – that meaning is never reached' (2000, p. 33). This relationship between repetition, translation and temporality will also become increasingly significant as this thesis progresses. Laplanche relates the notion of the *après-coup* to temporalisation and translation by

postulating that ‘the engine of temporalisation for each human being is the relation with the first other’ – that is, the human subject uses their relationship with the other as the framework through which to understand their existence within time, and the relationship between internal subject and external object creates the means to translate these relationships into a sense of being-within-time. In Laplanche’s conception, that ‘which is not translated’ into the subject’s future is ‘repressed’ (2017, p. 51), ready to emerge as *après-coup* as a traumatised state, which must be triggered by a fragment of remembrance, but which is not present in the original traumatic incident itself (2017, pp. 44-45).

Laplanche goes on to interrogate this idea of translation, trauma, and the *après-coup* through the analytic process:

Treatment is not, in its essence, the translation of a present scenario into a past scenario, which the pattern would then have to manage – who knows how? – to insert into a project. This movement in time revealed by analysis, in an exemplary and prototypical matter, is that of the *decomposition* of signifying sequences, be they present or past, into elements to allow the analysand to spontaneously develop a new synthesis or translation of them – one that is less partial, less repressive, less symptomatic. (2017, p. 213)

Here Laplanche points to the composition, temporality and rhythm of music as a means to understand emotions through narrative, through progression in time, a point also argued by Martha Nussbaum (2008). Laplanche explains that translation in analysis is not simply establishing the relationship of what we might today refer to as a ‘trigger’ to a past psychic injury, but instead creates a movement in time through which threads of traumatic memory which may have become tangled, knotted, bound too strongly to the present and future iterations of self-temporalisation through objects which at any time may trigger a signifying sequence. Rather, the process of translation offers an acknowledgement of these signifiers into elements which can be rebuilt by the analysand, repairing the structure of the psyche and allowing traumatic symptoms to decline through creating space for reattachment through such translation. He goes on to reflect that psychoanalysis, and especially translation within psychoanalysis, functions as a refinement of processes that have always existed

within human interrelationships, and so has a fundamental connection to these relationships, and especially the process of human temporalisation (p. 213). The process of self-understanding within the human subject's own temporality, within their relationship with and between their own present, future and past, occurs through the movement between actions of decomposition of signifying relationships to objects outside themselves, and actions of reassembly through translation, towards synthesis with past, future and present selves, has always been fundamental to the creation of the subject's self-understanding through the movement of time.

In this way, the concept of translation, which I go on to explore through art practice later in this thesis, becomes a function of temporalisation. This relationship between translation and temporalisation begins to enact repair of traumatic wounds by creating space to reassemble 'signifying sequences' into a 'synthesis [...] that is less [...] symptomatic' (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213). By extending this psychoanalytic framework, as Pollock does when addressing artworks as analysands which hold space for the transformation of the traces of trauma (2013), it becomes possible to understand not only artworks but also art-making itself as leaving 'neither party unchanged' (Felski, 2020, p. 24) through this translation and temporalisation process. With this relationship between translation – with its gaps and slippages (Morra, 2000) – temporalisation and repetition in mind, I will now go on to expand the foundations of this thesis by first exploring the relationship between feminist understandings of trauma, art and art therapy and then examining conceptions of home, both in general and in contemporary art practice. This will illuminate further concepts central to repairing post-traumatic states through rebuilding the post-traumatic home, leading to the formulation of a further two research questions.

### **2.3 Feminism, trauma, and art/therapy**

The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended.



Due to the relationship between trauma and feminist causes, including violence against women, important investigations into post-traumatic states have been conducted in feminist theory, art practices and approaches to art history, which I began to touch on in exploring the work of feminist scholar Griselda Pollock in the previous section. Having established through interdisciplinary understandings of trauma that repetition, translation and the ecology of interpersonal and personal-architectural bonds will be important concepts to explore through art practice as this thesis continues, it is imperative now to understand some of the ways in which trauma has been approached through a feminist lens. While I will go on to discuss these feminist fields, I have framed this section with an insight from James Baldwin. In his discussion of the protest novel, a literary art form, he understands that to achieve solely political ends with works of art, its subjects must be flattened into categories which can often result in a restrictive understanding of the human subjects behind those categories, and the relation of these subjects to the world beyond that which their allotted category defines (Baldwin, 2018, p. 23). As I have begun to explore, the recovery from trauma relies in part on the ability to transcend rigid categories of relating to the world and to reopen wonderfully multifarious attachments between traumatised subject and life itself. In this section, I examine some historical feminist approaches to trauma, art, and their relationship through encounters with key theorists, before beginning to draw out their implications for this research.

Causes, effects and potential mitigations of violence against women have been theorised repeatedly in the fields of feminist activism and scholarship since their inception. This is seen for example in the temperance movement in the USA, in which early twentieth century feminists fought to ban alcohol sales in recognition of alcohol's role in marital violence (Masson, 1997). Recognition of the problem of violence against women was taken up again by second wave feminists, with the birth of the women's shelter movement providing respite from abusive relationships in the 1960s

and 70s. Some feminists in this period went further, conceiving of rape for example as ‘man’s basic weapon of force against woman, the principal agent of his will and her fear’: a ‘conscious process of intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear’ (Brownmiller, 2013, p. 15, original emphasis). As I will go on to explore, some feminists went on to take up the cause of trauma and recovered memory, which I briefly touched upon in 2.2.1, in the 1980s and 1990s. More recently, the #metoo movement, initiated in 2006 by Tarana Burke before exploding into international consciousness in late 2017 with allegations against Harvey Weinstein, brought the subjects of rape and violence against women back into the spotlight (Gill and Rahman-Jones, 2020).

The tendency towards collectivisation of not only suffering, which I explored in 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 in relation to diagnostic categories, but also aggression, into neat categories – in this case corresponding with sex – can be detrimental to exploring the nuances of this field. It can also erect barriers to the repair of ecologies of bonds by in extreme cases painting all or most of those falling in the male category as potential perpetrators. As I have explored, this can disrupt the repair of social bonds, increasing the risk of revictimisation, by fogging the ability to accurately prepare for and responds to genuine threats, a hallmark of post-traumatic states. It is important to understand the landscape of these nuances in the field of feminist analyses of violence against women, and resulting trauma, in order to continue drawing out concepts which are ripe for further exploration through art practice.

It has been postulated, for example, that the consequences of some campaigning within second-wave feminism, resulted in abandonment of the search for mitigation of the causes of violence against women and materially worsened conditions for low-income mothers in particular, due to a focus on stringent carceral punishment for perpetrators at the expense of the alleviation of poverty (Gruber, 2020, pp. 46-66). Later, *Ms.* magazine, influenced by campaigners, theorists and psychologists including Judith Herman, would endorse a position in the so-called memory wars in the USA

which resulted in many innocent parents and childcare workers being convicted of satanic ritual abuse of children based on memories implanted during recovered memory therapy (Grierson, 2003). Some of these theorists of the unquestionable veracity and literality of traumatic memory, recovered or otherwise, including Herman, Cathy Caruth, and Bessel van der Kolk, would go on to influence more recent researchers in art history field who focus on the relationship between feminist art and trauma, including Nancy Princenthal and Vivien Green Fryd (2019; 2019), whose work I examine briefly below, and in more detail in 3.2.1.

Both Princenthal and Fryd provide a helpful overview of interrogations of the traumatic in predominantly feminist art practices, written in the wake of the revived #metoo movement of 2017. Princenthal also acknowledges the nebulous qualities and cultural factors, which were at play also in the recovered memory movement, which make the subject of the artworks she explores interwoven with confounding factors. As she notes, even defining sexual violence is ‘harder than it seems’:

Acts of gendered aggression range from workplace coercion and everyday harassment to vicious and even fatal physical attacks by intimates and by strangers. All have been called rape, and no form of violence is more susceptible to redefinition by shifting cultural forces. In the spectrum of dramatic injury – of harm organized for maximum emotional as well as physical impact – sexual violence occupies a uniquely potent, and unstable, place. Tricky to define, sexual offenses are even more difficult to depict. (2019, p. 9)

In beginning to explore these confounding factors, Princenthal also relates the cultural and political understanding of subsets of violence against women to the contextualised understanding of feminist artworks which engage with female trauma. Indeed, both Princenthal and Fryd’s 2019 texts explore the concept of female trauma through feminist art practices, from their origins in the 1970s through to today. While providing valuable insight into these practices, they focus on primarily performance art, the traumatic *event*, and the victim-perpetrator relationship. I locate a key finding of my own research, then, in complementing these inquiries. To do this, I explore the relationship between survivor and home in the *aftermath* of traumatic events through art practice, with a focus on how art-making offers a means to explore and restore this

trauma-fractured relationship, and the navigation of the domestic world post-trauma.

This in turn relates these works to questions explored elsewhere in feminist approaches to art and the feminist canon. In particular, the delineation of art practice, craft, and art therapy, and the extent to which biographical details should be relied upon in understanding and establishing women's art practices, is an important theme in feminist approaches to the field of art history. This delineation is particularly important to examine in the context of this study, as it also elucidates arguments surrounding feminist art practices and the domestic, from the birth of feminist art in second-wave feminism to today. This can be seen, for example, in Janet Marstine's analysis of the paintings of Jane Orleman, which Marstine uses to explore a blurring boundary between art as therapeutic tool and art as high culture. Orleman's paintings depict shocking scenes of her own childhood sexual abuse within the home, using vivid, girlish, childlike pastel colours which add to the sense of the carnivalesque in the paintings, and Marstine explores the role of this contrast between content and visual language in fostering the disturbing quality of these images (2002; Figure 2.1).

Examining the dual audience of art establishment and therapeutic community, she explains that despite Orleman's paintings functioning as translators of 'private trauma into the public discourse' (Marstine, 2002, p. 636) by using the site of the home to expose abuses in the wider culture – and thus offering valuable additions to art and the wider culture rather than only art therapy – few critics have looked upon the paintings favourably, with some expressing violent emotional reactions to them. Marstine rejects any theoretical distinction between art and art therapy in which art embodies the maintenance of critical distance between personal experience and output. She argues that this a false dichotomy and a gendered one, with artists including Van Gogh not being held to this standard: 'the masculine ability to transcend individual trauma to achieve innovation remains little questioned' (Marstine, 2002, p. 633), a point also put forward by Linda Nochlin in her seminal essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* (1973). Through Marstine's exploration of what she posits

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Figure 2.1 *The Juggler Holds Trumps*, Jane Orleman, 1994

as Jane Orleman's use of the carnivalesque to expose the site of the home as arbiter of patriarchal abuses in the wider culture, she goes further than Nochlin by arguing for the importance of work that is traditionally distanced from even the feminist art canon as *art therapy* in contributing to a cultural (mis)understanding of sexual trauma.

Indeed, just as Marstine examines the sometimes reductive approaches to traumatic biographical details in appraising the work of female artists, so Griselda Pollock examines the contextualisation of the lives of artists including Frida Kahlo and Ana Mendieta (2013). She goes on to use the work and writings of Louise Bourgeois to argue for the significance of formalisation in avoiding the extreme biographical scrutiny that Marstine explores in attitudes to Jane Orleman (Pollock, 2013, pp. 89–123). Mindful of space constraints, I will not enter too far into a potentially distracting discussion of how an artwork's quality is appraised here. Suffice it to say that Pollock's discussion of formalisation here refers to recognition of particular qualities in an artwork which allow it to be placed in relation to the cultural landscape from which it emerges. These qualities relate not only to skill and craft but also to the consideration of the attachments that are forged between artwork, viewer, canon and beyond when artworks enter the world. Where Marstine argues for negating the significance of this formalisation, Pollock explains the significance of Bourgeois' own appraisal of its importance. It is through this form, this 'after-image', as Pollock puts it, that she conjures 'after-affect' in the viewer: the recognisable formalism places her work in cultural context and allows the viewer not simply to focus on the artist's psyche but instead to recognise ordinary conditions of loss, pain, trauma (Pollock, 2013, p. 92). Other artists use similar mechanisms to show the mundanity and profundity of these universal human psychic conditions – by using domestic objects, themes and fragments in place of or alongside such geometry.

With this in mind, feminist analysis of the delineation between art and art therapy can be extended to the delineation between art and craft, and by extension, public and private realms. In feminist approaches to these delineations, art, and the public

sphere, have often been coded as masculine, with craft, and the private sphere, coded as feminine (Lippard, 1978). Lippard uses this analysis to argue for the inclusion of women's 'hobby art' in the feminist art canon. She reappraises the cultural value of 'hobby art' and other artistic activities women undertake – perhaps including Orleman's 'therapeutic art' – at home. Louise Bourgeois has argued to the contrary: that traditional fabric arts, including weaving, in fact need to be pushed beyond the boundaries of the decorative to be understood as fine art, which 'makes great demand on the onlooker at the same time that it is independent of' them: specifically, she suggests transcending the category of crafts can be achieved through the already somewhat three-dimensional woven form into fully sculptural beings through the use, for example, of stretching and re-forming (Bourgeois, 1969). Lippard, and later Racz (2015), instead put it that these pieces, traditionally born of and confined within the home with women, should be considered artworks in their existing states. Lippard goes on to argue for a separation of the feminist art world from the existing art world in allowing the work of female makers to be appreciated in its own right – rather than having to conform to the values of what she conceives of as the patriarchal art world. However, this seems to verge on a desire to entrench the separation of women's craft and fine art, creating a reductive view of women's capacity to produce work that consciously creates meaning. There is sometimes an emphasis in feminist discourse on entrenching rather than transcending this separation, tending towards confirming that women need to be held to different standards, or as Donna Haraway put it in relation to the notion of a 'women's science':

We unmasked the doctrines of objectivity because they threatened our budding sense of collective historical subjectivity and agency and our "embodied" sense of the truth, and we ended up with one more excuse for not learning any post-Newtonian physics and with one more reason to drop the old feminist self-help practices of repairing our own cars. They're just texts anyway, so let the boys have them back. (Haraway, 1988, p. 578)

Here we return to the tension between group solidarity and full personhood explored earlier in this chapter and elucidated by James Baldwin in this section's epigraph. This

tension also reflects some aspects of dissociative states, in which the subject's relationship to the world is disrupted by a dissociation from their body and its position in relation to the space around them and, as I have explored, the ecology of their lives.

The significance of recognisable artistic qualities providing links through time and culture, transcending categorisation and category-based separation, translating impressions of emotion into reciprocal bonds with the viewer, be that through repurposing domestic objects or situating art-making within a canon, will be fundamental to the practice-led research I undertake. This is because of the importance of both the repair of the post-traumatic ecosystem, and of temporalisation, both of which I explored earlier in this chapter. Indeed, art-making as a means to connect with human culture through time will become particularly important in drawing out my second research question. Before formulating this second research question, I must further interrogate the concept of the home, both more broadly and as it has emerged in feminist approaches to the field of art practice. Here, Marstine's analysis continues to prove insightful.

Despite Orleman's paintings existing further outside the more formalist paradigm of other works from her contemporaries in the 1970s, they can be traced to a similar engagement with the 'gendered conception of home as the foundation of selfhood: home as mother, as womb, as body, as past, as privacy and as exposure' (Marstine, 2002, p. 636). Both Marstine and Pollock relate feminist works from this period to the notion of traumatic mimesis as a movement towards something (Huysen, 2000). This concept is also central to the conception of trauma as not a *thing* that can be approached but rather a void which can only be transformed (Pollock, 2013). As explored towards the end of this chapter, it is not my intention in this research to negate the importance of the home as a vital shelter for humans simply because there exist gendered stereotypes, and violent acts, that occur within its walls: I am concerned with the repair of the nest in the vein of Pollock's aesthetic transformations of trauma.

Using artistic investigation of the domestic as a space through which to explore



the rebuilding of post-traumatic personhood, it becomes possible to begin overcoming this tension: by focussing on repair rather than traumatic injury or traumatic catalyst, it can become possible to move towards transcendence of categorisation and transcendence of traumatic event. I shall explore these conceptions of repair in relation to art practice in the final section of this chapter, but first it is important to look more deeply at the site of the home. In the next section, I build on the exploration of feminist approaches to the delineation of public and private spheres in art-making, so as to more fully explore the relationship between the domestic sphere, trauma, and art.

## **2.4 Homemaking**

### **2.4.1 What is 'Home'?**

In the previous section, I began to address the relationship between art and crafts traditionally associated with women and the domestic realm. In this section, I will briefly explore the history of the concept of 'home' before going on to examine the relationship between home, feminism and art in more detail in the following section. The concept of 'home' has a long history in fields as diverse as philosophy, human geography, sociology, psychology and, as I will go on to explore in the next section, art history. It is differentiated from the house in that the house tends to refer to the physical structure, while the home represents the inhabited dwelling space within this structure, although it has been argued that house, home, and inhabitants – typically, the family – are sometimes conflated for political ends (Mallett, 2004). Crucially, the home can be seen to 'function as a repository for complex, inter-related and at times contradictory socio-cultural ideas about people's relationship with one another, especially family, and with places, spaces and things' (2004, p. 84): it is an 'embryonic community' (Douglas, 1991, p. 288). The position of the home as an inhabited space which is a locus for the ecology of bonds I explored above in 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 makes it ripe for exploration through art practice in response to repairing these bonds.

Indeed, the home can be considered 'one of the most idealized sites of human

existence' (Brickell, 2012, p. 225); it is 'the crucible of our society' (Saunders, 1989, p. 178). Sara Ahmed explores the disruption of the idealized home through the lens of migration (1999). Ahmed considers migrants' experience of the concept of home as 'not only a spatial dislocation, but also a temporal dislocation', because the home left behind is not only physically uninhabitable once displaced, but it also remains inhabited by 'the past' (p. 343). She posits that this shared experience facilitates the building of a new kind of home, through 'forming a community through the shared experience of not being fully at home – of having inhabited another space' (p. 345). With that said, the home can also be seen as a vehicle for the exclusion of the public world (Kaika, 2004). Benjamin explores the evolving concept of 'home' as emblematic of the emerging public/private distinction in Nineteenth Century Paris, emphasising the growing importance of the 'resident's own traces [...] moulded in the interior' (1969, p. 169) as part of this distinction. Bachelard (1994) also navigates these traces, relating phenomenological encounters with each space within a home, showing through these encounters 'how we take root, day after day, in a "corner of the world"' (p. 4), as well as the space this creates for inhabitants to imagine, to dream. Price has criticised Bachelard's examination of the home, positioning the autonomy of Bachelard's dweller-dreamers as masculinised, obscuring women's experiences of the home not only as a place of labour, which binds them to it, thus reducing their autonomy, but also as 'frequently a place of terror and danger', as the site of domestic violence (2002, p. 40).

These cross-disciplinary debates over the function of the concept of home lead Meers, drawing on Gallie (1955), to argue that 'home' is an 'essentially contested concept', in that it is a concept 'defined by intractable disputes over [its] meaning' (Meers, 2021). As I began to explore above, an important dispute which informs my research is that between the home as a place of sanctuary, and the home as a site of oppression and conflict. Feminist scholars including Friedan (2021) and de Beauvoir (1997) have critiqued this notion of home as a place of stability and sanctuary, arguing that for women, the home is a place of oppression and confinement: confinement imposed

by men, who enjoy the fruits of women's domestic labour in experiencing the home as a haven, able to come and go as they please. Friedan explores the means by which housework came to take up exponentially more of women's time when they did not have higher means by which to occupy themselves (p. 282). Similarly, de Beauvoir notes that prior to industrialisation, women looking after children in the home carried out not only housework, but also skilled, productive labour including pottery and weaving (1997, p. 85). When this skilled labour became located out of the home, and because 'housework alone is compatible with the duties of motherhood', de Beauvoir's housewife 'is condemned to domestic labour, which locks her into repetition and immanence', producing 'nothing new'; forever maintaining (1997, p. 94).

In response to second-wave 'devaluation' of homemaking, some feminist scholars 'of the 1980s and 1990s glorified the traditional housewife' (Cieraad, 2010, p. 98). This, perhaps, also coincided with rising numbers of mothers entering the labour market, 'hand[ing] over the care of her children to another for part of the day' (McDowell, 2007, p. 132). Similarly, Bachelard argues that there is power in making and remaking the home every day: 'through housewifely care a house recovers not so much its originality as its origin' (1994, p. 69). Cieraad extends this observation, drawing out the 'importance of homemaking practices' in embedding memories of the home, and positing that 'any place is best remembered in relation to practices performed' (2010, p. 98). In this light, Heidegger's analysis of dwelling and building can be understood through the lens of homemaking. For Heidegger, building belongs to dwelling because both create space within a location: space in which to dwell. Both bring selves into being by tying them to a location through the space they create (2009, pp. 66-76). Young has argued that this is an essentially masculine interpretation of the dwelling space, as dwelling becomes tied up with the physical mechanics of building structures, activities that are still mostly carried out by men (2000, p. 52). However, Bachelard shows us that this building – this making – can be understood through the historically feminine lens of homemaking as well. bell hooks explores this relationship between

homemaking and building, recognising the value of black women's work to care for, and in doing so, construct, 'homeplace', a private haven from racist aggression in the public sphere (2001, p. 385). Through these acts of care, hooks argues for 'the primacy of domesticity as a site for subversion and resistance' to society at large (2001, p. 389). That is, for hooks, acts of homemaking themselves facilitate 'subversion and resistance' (2001, p. 389), rather than the home acting as a site of resistance *to* homemaking.

Similarly, Young contends that homemaking offers a source of meaning-making to 'individual lives', and that this 'is an intrinsically valuable and irreplaceable aspect of homemaking' (2000, p. 61). Indeed, Saunders finds that, contrary to the notion that 'because men and women tend to perform different kinds of tasks in the home, they must therefore experience home differently (e.g. as a realm of autonomy for men but as a sphere of drudgery and subordination for women)' (1989, p. 178), there is a remarkably even distribution between the sexes in the conception of home. That is, while 'gender remains a key factor in shaping domestic activity' (Saunders, 1989, p. 179), there is 'no evidence [...] that women feel any more tied to the home than men do', and moreover, they 'feel equally positive about the benefits of home life' (p. 180). With that said, the home remains the most dangerous place for women and girls due to its function as the site of most violence against them (UNODC, 2019). These issues were further compounded by restrictions imposed in response to the emergence of COVID-19 (Campbell, 2020, p. 7). While Price argues that the 'scripting of home as intimate and safe makes violence against women difficult to see' (2002, p. 40), the replenishment of positive environmental bonds (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009), and a sense of physical safety (van der Kolk, 2000, p. 19), are key to recovery from post-traumatic states. With this in mind, in this research I approach the repairing and rebuilding of the post-traumatic home as a means to return it to a state of sanctuary, rather than a means to further disrupt notions of its protective qualities. Following from Friedan, who locates 'the problem that has no name' partly in the focus on housework at the expense of other applications of women's intelligence (2021,

p. 301), and de Beauvoir, who locates an origin of this lack partly in the excision of activities including pottery from the home (1997, p.85), this repair and rebuilding is ripe to be applied through art practice, and especially through work with ceramics, which is a significant strand of my own practice.

With this in mind, I can begin to frame the home in this project as an artistic-philosophical space and a representation of the shattered person-environment relationship by virtue of its position as crime scene – as traumatic progenitor. In this way, it also becomes a nucleus for rebuilding these bonds between personhood and environment, and beyond that, reconnecting personhood to wider humanity in all its richness and depth, repairing the ecology of bonds so vital to post-traumatic healing (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009). The home is offered redemption from its monstrous status as traumatic incubator through artistic investigation: from suspicion to re-enchantment. As I have explored, dissociative states are a hallmark of post-traumatic states and are typified by a divorce of mind from body, of body from environment, thought from matter (Breslau, 2009). By exploring the home through art practice, it can become possible to counter these traumatic disconnections, generating reparative approaches to the trauma-fractured home. With this in mind, in the following section I go on to survey predominantly feminist artistic approaches to the home, before going on to formulate my second research question.

#### **2.4.2 The Home in Feminist Art Practices**

In the previous section, I gave an overview of ‘home’ as a concept that has been explored across different fields, including architecture, sociology, and philosophy. In this section, I develop these findings from the literature into a foundation for my second research question by examining the relationship between the home and contemporary art practice in the context of feminism, beginning with the relationship between women’s crafts, the domestic and homemaking. The repetitious tasks of homemaking can be seen to act as a mirror to the careful attention paid to the crafting process in-

herent to the hobby crafts Lippard explores (1978; Bachelard, 1994, p. 69). They also speak to the multiple affective bonds between woman and home: the home has traditionally been considered women's sphere – private, and womblike in its protection and reflection of the family unit historically contained within it. In this way, just as women can be bound by category in some conceptions of art produced by women, as I explored in 2.3 *Feminism, Trauma and Art/Therapy* above, so they have historically been bound by the walls of the home. Moreover, the repetitious quality of these domestic acts can offer another echo of traumatic repetition, building up the structure of artistic possibilities for exploring the rebuilding of the post-traumatic home that this research is concerned with. Homemaking served as a key battleground for second-wave feminists, with campaigns including, for example, wages for housework, and it remains central to feminist debates, as can be seen in the separation of tasks that emerged in response to legislation enacted in response to COVID-19 and its related changes to the workforce (Saunders, 1989; Zamberlan et al., 2022).

Homemaking's place in second-wave feminism also sparked explorations in feminist art – the kind of home-crafts that Lippard explores (1978), as well as work by performance artists including Martha Rosler (1975). As I shall relay in this section, the rise of visual art which explored the home correlated with the rise of installation art, which in turn had a similar trajectory to performance art, a medium which itself enabled feminist artists to explore the concept of female trauma (Perry, 2014; Racz, 2015; Fryd, 2019; Princenthal, 2019). That is, the rise of installation art invited artistic investigations of the concept of the home in a similar way to the rise of performance art inviting feminist artists to explore trauma through their practice, which I explored in 2.3 above. These parallel trajectories between mediums and concepts further emphasise the importance of exploring the relationship between these areas of research – the home, and trauma – in this thesis. Indeed, continuing this parallel, in recent research centring on explorations of the relationship between the home and artistic practices, including by Gill Perry (2014) and Imogen Racz (2015), many facets of the

architectural-personal relationship are explored while omitting a full examination of the home as the primary site of violence against women beyond the acknowledgement of the destabilisation and denaturalisation techniques employed by feminist artists in exploring and representing the home. Just as I extend Fryd and Princenthal's survey of art practices primarily concerning the traumatic event itself towards repair of post-traumatic states, key findings in this research emerge from extending Perry and Racz's research into a deeper investigation of the relationship between violence against women, rebuilding, and the home.

The home has become a prominent concept in contemporary art, across two- and three-dimensional practices, and particularly within installation art, as I began to explore above (Perry, 2014, p. 9). Perry considers the rise of installation art to be not only a cause of the prominence of the concept by providing a medium suited to its exploration, but also to be driven by interest in the concept itself (Obrist, 2001, p. 96; Perry, 2014, p. 9). In this way, installation art can be considered, as in the work of Cornelia Parker, to create a feminine space, resonant with the private world of the home, due to its womblike, immersive, quality (Perry, 2014, p. 120). While male artists including Michael Landy (2004) and Donald Rodney (1987; 1996-7) have used the house in their installations to investigate the masculine, these have tended towards representations of exteriors – the public face of the home.

Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro's *Womanhouse* (1972) is an important example of the possibilities installation art opens to interrogate feminine domestic territories, as well as being a catalyst for feminist art practices that followed it, as the culmination of the first feminist art school programme (Schapiro, 1972). Each room of an abandoned mansion was transformed through the art practices of the women of California Institute of the Arts' Feminist Art Programme, allowing students to 'possess [...] spaces through their personality as painters' (1972, p. 269). Schapiro describes how she and Chicago brought techniques of consciousness raising from women's liberation into the classroom, allowing this circle of female students to become a conduit for the

personal, and personal commonalities, to become exposed – political. She reflects on the role of public exposition of the works in further challenging the students but also in sparking recognition and provoking reaction particularly among female audience members, which she attributes to the convergence of their intimate knowledge of the domestic and the ‘aesthetic distance’ created by having these environments reflected back through art making (1972, p. 270). Having an entire home as their canvas enabled the students to reimagine their collective experiences of the domestic into public artworks which both interrogated these experiences and used their multidisciplinary artistic practices to play with public and private perceptions of domestic space.

Drawing on the ideas of Bakhtan, von Schiller and Winnicott, Perry illuminates the broader relationship between installation art practices, the home and play through installation art’s ‘special potential to stimulate ideas and memories through the embodied experience of material objects’ (2014, p. 15). Play here serves not only to subvert aspects of the domestic but also to frame the ‘ludic nature of human expression’, emphasising ‘our ability imaginatively to manipulate reality, to create myths, reverie, rituals, games and performances that often evoke laughter, but are not inevitably bound up with it’ (Perry, 2014, p. 20). The emergence of these narrative possibilities through playing with possibilities at the edges of installation art returns us to Bachelard’s meditation on the corners of the domestic dwelling space in which ‘every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house’ (1994, p. 136).

In this way, the play of the imagination in the corners of these private, immersive places creates boundless space for narrative possibilities and reconnection in multitudinous affective modes. For Racz, exploration of factors including domestic abuse through art practice situated in the home acts as a disruption or negation these poetics, ‘present[ing] the domestic space as a place of resistance’ (2015, p. 82). However, through Bachelard’s understanding of the potential of corners, it becomes possible to conceive that the home itself can also offer opportunities to repair these ruptures, not



by excising them, but by using them to replenish personal-architectural bonds. With this in mind, I can draw on the literature I have explored in sections 2.3–2.4 around the relationships between, trauma, feminism, art practice and the domestic and formulate my second research question:

2. What effect does the artistic possession of spaces surrounding these artefacts – their own dwellings – have on developing visual networks which transform the traces of domestic trauma?

By applying concepts explored in this section, including formalisation, public/private and masculine/feminine dichotomies, domestic sanctuary spaces, and installation art as embodied experience, through art practice, I can begin to explore this research question through art practice later in this thesis. This will allow for the extension of research conducted on the relationship between art and the home, and art and female trauma, into the relationship between art, the home, and female trauma. Through artistic possession of architectural space itself, I can extend the artistic research I conduct in response to the first research question, which is bound up with individual artefacts, into the spaces between these artefacts, creating Bachelardian corners (1994, p. 136) which transform the traces of domestic trauma by creating spaces for imagination and reconnection. In the following section, I extend the twin notions of reconnection and repair by examining approaches to the reparative in psychoanalysis, cultural studies, literary theory and art history, before using these to formulate my final research question.

## **2.5 Expanding Repair; Approaching the Practice**

Works of art do not only subvert but also convert: they do not only inform but also transform – a transformation that is not just a matter of intellectual readjustment but one of affective realignment as well (a shift of mood, a sharpened sensation, an unexpected surge of affinity or disorientation).

Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, 2015, p. 17

Throughout this chapter, the literature I have surveyed across disciplines has often returned to concepts of repair and rebuilding. In this final section, I will explore repair

in more detail, leading to the formulation of a third research question, while also beginning to scaffold my methodological approaches, which I examine in more detail in the following chapter. The importance of appreciating art-making's ability to convert as well as subvert that Rita Felski elucidates in this section's epigraph will become central to my artistic approach in carrying out this practice-based research. By seeking to repair – to convert – connections which have been fragmented or disrupted by traumatic injury in this thesis, I can begin to pursue rebuilding of the post-traumatic home. Through art-making which explores the complexity of traumatic experiences and recognises the importance of repairing social and environmental bonds in the recovery from trauma (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009), I intend to extend the important works which emerged from feminist artists of the 1970s and their descendants, some of which I have explored in this chapter, from a framework of subverting the concept of home as sanctuary by emphasising its role as traumatic progenitor, towards converting traumatised person-environment bonds in the direction of repair.

The rising interest in the reparative function of art-making, across literary, visual and musical art forms, can be understood to be situated within what has been termed the eudaemonic turn (Pawelski and Moores, 2014; Felski, 2015, p. 151). Within this turn, researchers have begun to turn away from 'ideological pronouncements and entrenched positions' in their engagement with texts, and towards 'innovative approaches, interdisciplinary collaborations, and empirical investigations' within a framework of 'human flourishing' (Pawelski and Moores, 2014, p. 3). These ideas offer a useful framework for my approach to practice by mirroring the need for reattachment as reparative mechanism within post-traumatic states, especially in the healing of dissociation and the associated capacity for discernment of threat and joy (Breslau, 2009). Furthermore, the transformation of these bonds, central to the eudaemonic turn (Felski, p. 17), echoes Pollock's elucidation of art-making's potential to 'bring about *transformation* [...] of the traces [...] of trauma' (2013, p. xxi). For Pollock, this transformation 'does not imply cure or resolution' (p. xxi), because by 'definition, trau-

ma [itself] cannot be represented' (p. 4): it is a piercing of the psyche, an absence, a lack. Instead, Pollock's aesthetic transformation of trauma's traces 'is not cure; it is *poesis*: making' (p. 4). This *poesis* offers a shift from the stuckness of post-traumatic states towards movement, while also reorientating the relationship between artist and viewer towards the reparative. With this in mind, to further investigate the relationship between the potential of art practice to transform, it is important to understand the emergence of Sedgwick's concept of reparative reading as antithesis of suspicion in approaching artworks.

Drawing on Melanie Klein's conceptions of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's reparative is built to form a balancing companionship with a fundamentally anxious connection to the world and its cultural products. In this way, Sedgwick considers the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions in relation to one another, though not necessarily Klein's own confrontational approach to analysands (Klein and Mitchell, 1987; Ashtor, 2019). Instead of existing in the constant state of anxiety, hyper alert to danger, that characterises the paranoid-schizoid position, in the depressive position, the subject briefly:

succeeds in inhabiting: this is the position from which is possible to turn to use one's own resources to assemble or 'repair' the murderous part-objects into something like a whole – though, I would emphasise, *not necessarily like any pre-existing whole*. Once assembled to one's own specifications, the more satisfying object is available both to be identified with and to offer one nourishment and comfort in turn. (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128)

The 'part-objects' that derive from a hyper alertness to danger resemble hypervigilance in the wake of trauma, as well as the fractured conception of the home, and the wider world, as a safe place. As I explored in the first part of this chapter, one of the key life-limiting impacts of trauma resulting from violence against women is this fundamentally anxious or fearful connection to the world (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 226), and recovery from abuse is greatly influenced by person-environment relationships (p. 229). The 'heightened sense of watchfulness' (Felski, 2015, p. 37), along with the deadening effect of paranoia (Sedgwick, 2003, pp. 123–151), and the

persistent anticipation of harm, are both life-limiting and increases the power of the unanticipated to retraumatise. Echoes of this can be found in the way that trigger warnings tend to increase distress in traumatised readers (Lilienfield, 2017).

In understanding the suspicious mode of encountering artworks that Sedgwick and other researchers who make up the eudaemonic turn are responding to, we must return to Freud, alongside Marx and Nietzsche, as fathers of the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', first explored by Paul Ricoeur (1970). In following Freud's archaeological approach to endlessly uncovering of ways in which 'the past retains its grip on the present' (Felski, 2015, p. 58), it is possible that rather than being liberated from the past, its grip on the present in fact becomes ever stronger. In a manner reminiscent of the hypervigilance of post-traumatic states, the 'suspicious person is sharp-eyed and hyper alert; mistrustful of appearances, fearful of being duped, she is always on the lookout for concealed threats and discreditable motives' (2015, p. 33). Sedgwick goes as far as suggesting that in the act of describing these harms so forensically, they are at risk of being manifested (2003, p. 131). In this way, she elucidates paranoia's mimetic power, in which trauma's immanence is emphasised to avoid it coming as a surprise, and so it is continually anticipated. These lurking harms are always in mind, and so the full range of human experience is flattened into 'a heightened sense of watchfulness; we find ourselves constantly scanning our environment for possible dangers' (Felski, 2015, p. 37).

Following this, it becomes clearer that while describing harmful acts does not bring them into existence – while remaining silent would not also disappear these acts themselves – in some sense entertaining only a suspicious or fearful relation to the world can certainly prolong, entrench, worsen, and enact contagion of, the after-effects/affects of trauma (Pollock, 2013). In the context of trauma, then, by focussing on confrontation and exposure with no vision of repair and rebuilding, there is a danger of, if not engendering, then at least entrenching the very harms that arise from traumatic acts, particularly in the context of the negative impact of alienation on recovery

from trauma. Researchers discussed in *2.3 Feminism, trauma, and art/therapy* focus on artists and artworks that expose, and force the viewer to confront, trauma through representations of traumatising events, '[r]ather than aestheticise and neutralise' it (Fryd, 2019, p. 19). Sedgwick questions this faith in relentless exposure, arguing that one thing advocates of often confrontational approaches to exposing a problem are not suspicious of is the ability of this exposure to go some way towards solving it (2003, pp. 138-142). Similarly, Pollock argues that aesthetic transformations of the traces of trauma do not necessarily neutralise their origins, but rather allow engagement with the traumatic while reducing the risk of harm by secondary or re-traumatisation in both artist and audience (2013, p. 4), to which we can add the harm of reifying life-limiting effects of post-traumatic states related earlier in this chapter, particularly in section *2.2.2 Ecologies of Trauma*. With this in mind, approaching trauma through art practice in a reparative framework begins to create space for the reparative not only in the post-traumatic subject but also in the viewer.

In bringing together the artist, the artwork, and the viewer through the concept of the reparative in this way, it becomes clear that it is not only the interior of the post-traumatic home that is ripe for rebuilding through reparative art practices. Having first applied the concept of traumatic repetition through art practice to break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds, and then investigated the impact of artistic possession of spaces surrounding these artefacts on developing visual networks which transform the traces of domestic trauma, I arrive at the threshold of the post-traumatic dwelling space. Here, I can begin to consider bonds between the interior ecosystem of the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the outside world, through the formulation of a final research question:

3. How can artistic exploration of the threshold between interior and exterior worlds be used in the forging of a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door?

Drawing on the relationships between findings explored throughout this chapter, particularly the significance of restoring the post-traumatic ecosystem encountered in

2.2.2 *Ecologies of Trauma*, and the reparative, this third research question represents an evolution of the previous research questions. Having explored the capacity of art practice to transform the traces of trauma embedded within the post-traumatic home, through this final research question, I will apply the reparative to the relationship between interior and exterior worlds through art practice.

## 2.6 Summary & Key Points

In this chapter, I surveyed literature from a range of fields to build up a picture of key concepts which will be fundamental to my practice-led research as this thesis continues. These key concepts included trauma, feminist art practices, and the home. Through engagement with the literature, further concepts emerged under each of these umbrellas. I began by addressing the emergence of the concept of trauma from Freud and his contemporaries onwards, and the shifts between individual and societal, mind and body explanations for what we now consider trauma reactions (Lemprecht and Sack, 2002). The tension between solidarity and fully realised subjecthood began to emerge here as a key theme in the literature, and I went on to explore ecological approaches to repairing post-traumatic states, based upon Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective (1977). This led to a key finding which will go on to undergird this research, in that the related states of social disconnection and psychic dissociation increase the likelihood of revictimisation, while reconnection to social and environmental bonds counter both the dissociation which often constitutes trauma reactions in the context of domestic abuse, and revictimisation risk (Classen, Palesh and Aggarwal, 2005; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011). This concept of reconnection to an ecology of bonds as central to repairing post-traumatic states and protecting against revictimisation is important in countering the representation of trauma only as rupture, and I decided to apply it through my studio practice in investigating the rebuilding of the post-traumatic home later in this thesis.

I went on to extend my investigation into revictimisation by addressing the con-

cept of traumatic repetition, exploring arguments for the literality or malleability of traumatic repetition in the form of flashbacks and nightmares. Together, these investigations into the concept of trauma through the literature led to the first research question I will address through my practice:

1. How can the concept of traumatic repetition be explored through different making processes to break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds?

Before going on to address feminist approaches to trauma and art practice, I first explored the concept of translation in more detail in order to understand its potential role in post-traumatic repair through art practice. Drawing on Benjamin's broken amphora (1997, p. 161), before focussing on Laplanche, I established that through translation's slippages, traumatic 'signifying sequences' (2017, p. 213) can be repaired. With this concept in mind, I went on to address the relationship between feminism, trauma and art/therapy, and particularly arguments in the field of feminism and art history regarding the relationship between art and art therapy. Significantly, I found that while the traumatic event and the victim-perpetrator relationship has been approached through feminist art practices in particular, the repair of post-traumatic states, and their relationship to the domestic, are underexplored. It is to this space that my research sets out to contribute.

With a view to extending these questions, I went on to address interdisciplinary considerations of the home. I considered arguments that the home has been idealised to the point of concealing crimes committed therein, alongside arguments that this idealised notion of the home as sanctuary is necessary to offer a space for repair from such crimes. Focussing on discourse around housework and homemaking in particular, and the tension between diminishing these tasks and idealising them, I came to de Beauvoir's vision of the skilled potter working within her home, creatively satisfied (1997, p.85). The tensions between homemaking and these more creatively fulfilling tasks echoed the tensions between definitions of art and 'women's hobby crafts' (Lippard, 1978), which in turn mirrored tensions between art and art therapy (Marstine,

2002). Through the lens of these tensions, I went on to explore approaches to the home in feminist art practice, exploring some of the ways in which these practices have engaged with the concept of home. Key findings from the literature included the framing of installation art as a feminine space (Perry, 2014, p. 120) which both propels and response to the rise in interest in the domestic in contemporary art (p. 9), as well as the centrality of *Womanhouse* (Chicago and Schapiro, 1972) to the development of feminist art practices in the late 20th Century. Schapiro's reflection on her students' propensity to 'possess' their spaces during the making of *Womanhouse* that led to my second research question:

2. What effect does the artistic possession of spaces surrounding these artefacts – their own dwellings – have on developing visual networks which transform the traces of domestic trauma?

In the final section of this chapter, I investigated a concept which had emerged repeatedly throughout this chapter and which has resided at the heart of the thesis from its inception: repair. Exploring the reparative in more detail undergirded both the beginnings of my research methodology, which I explore in more detail in the following chapter, and the formulation of my third research question:

3. How can artistic exploration of the threshold between interior and exterior worlds be used in the forging of a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door?

Art practice can offer a means for complex exploration, and communication, of the equally intricate process of rebuilding the post-traumatic home. Rather than focusing on a sole aspect of the ecosystem in which these crimes nestle, through the philosophical and artistic space encompassed by the idea of the home, it becomes possible to create aesthetic transformations of the interrelationships that haunt the ecosystem evoked by their domestic dwelling space. The threads of embedded traumatic responses can begin to be respun. The home becomes a palimpsest where dissociation encounters reassociation: traumatic bonds are not erased or denied but accompanied by different affective bonds. In recognising the ecosystems and repetitious mechanisms at play, and the associated richness of the person-environment-societal relationship,



through art, the home becomes a space for investigating and expanding upon these multiple threads that bind us to one another, and the psyche to the world. In the next chapter, I will explore artistic methodologies for applying these concepts through art practice via my research questions.

# III

## Methodology

### 3.1 Introduction

I cannot imagine (and that is saying a good deal) such circumstances as might impinge upon the lovely and lovable world which quietly persists, whereas I can very well imagine that my fellow dreamers, thousands of whom roam the earth, keep to these same irrational and divine standards during the darkest and most dazzling hours of physical danger, pain, dust, death.

Lectures on Literature, Vladimir Nabokov, 2017, p. 373

In the previous chapter, I reviewed literature from a range of fields with the aim of exploring mechanisms for repair and rebuilding of the post-traumatic home through art practice. In this chapter, I explore methodological approaches to applying these concepts through art practice, using the research questions which emerged from my literature review as a scaffold. In *Chapter II*, key themes of repetition, translation and ecological approaches to approaching post-traumatic subjecthood emerged. These came together to emphasise the ways in which relationships between artwork, enclosing space, and the world beyond can be brought into practice to echo the ecosystems of rebuilding the post-traumatic home, and its own ecological relationship between subject, domestic space, and the wider world. In approaching this research methodologically, I bring my existing artistic practice, which I touched on in *Chapter I*, into conversation with concepts from fields spanning psychology, sociology, cultural studies and art history, to forge a written exegesis of the works produced and their relationship to the notion of rebuilding the post-traumatic home.

In the excerpt from *Lectures on Literature* above, Nabokov evokes the poetic connection that emerges between ‘dreamers’ from the ‘loveable world which quietly persists [...] during the darkest hours’, which we can access through narrative artworks (2017, p. 373). These observations operate in a similar vein to Baldwin, inviting the human spirit to persist in ‘beauty, dread, [and] power’, thus transcending the ‘categorisation’ of the protest novel (Baldwin, 2018, p. 23). The apparent tension between the solidarity of protest, which relies on categorisation, and full personhood, that I explored in detail in 2.3 *Feminism, Trauma and Art/Therapy* becomes significant in the rebuilding of the post-traumatic home as an artistic-conceptual space invested in the psychological freedom to explore and celebrate wonder in its very rebuilding, and forms the starting point for my research questions and methodology. The concept of reconnection, identified also as significant in reparative and post critical approaches to artworks and by extension art-making, lead my methodological approaches. In the following section, I expand on the process I used to establish criteria for artists to include and exclude from my methodological framework, before moving on to explore approaching my own practice through this framework in more detail.

## **3.2 Approaches to Practice**

### **3.2.1 Artistic Context**

In this section, I explore my rationale for selecting the key contextualising artists included in this thesis, as well as discussing those artists whose works were excluded. I was fortunate that as I embarked on this research, two important monographs were released about explorations of female trauma in mid-late twentieth century art: Vivien Green Fryd’s *Against Our Will* and Nancy Princenthal’s *Unspeakable Acts* (2019; 2019). These texts remain significant, emerging as they did in the wake of renewed interest in the field of female trauma, including through the #metoo movement, explored in 2.3, and the popularity of titles such as Bessel van der Kolk’s *The Body Keeps the Score* (2015), despite strong debates over the validity of the latter’s thesis, explored in 2.2.1.

As I describe in 2.3, the focus of these titles, along with literature on revictimisation, explored in 2.2.3, and repair, explored in 2.5, led me to focus this research on mending the relationship between subject and home in the aftermath of traumatic events, complementing Fryd and Princenthal's concentration on the traumatic event itself, examined in the mediums of performance and installation art in particular. Through this framework of complementarity, I began by following instinctive attachments developing towards the artists I ultimately chose to include in this study. Developing Fel-ski's framework of attunement, attachment and 'affective realignment' (2015, p. 17), I gravitated towards artists whose works may not have previously been explored in this context, and whose encounters with the domestic I felt offered some path towards repair. These key artists are Anna Barriball, Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, Sigrid Hjertén, Anna Maria Maiolino, and Betty Woodman. I decided to include their work because it resonated in some way with this spirit of repair, often characterised by actions which quietly mend, nestled at the threshold of two- and three- dimensional disciplines, and containing both deep emotional weight and a sense of lightness and wit. All of these artists explore the domestic, including the pain and pleasure – the darkness and the light – it can represent, as I explored in 2.4. The threads of warm attachment I was able to find in these works also created nodes through which I was able to build the ecology of bonds which became so central to this research. I further explore the rationale behind each individual artist's relationship to each research question later in this chapter, in 3.3.

Continuing to follow the importance of complementing the work of researchers including Fryd and Princenthal by exploring the mechanism of repair in the aftermath of trauma, it was important to set out my rationale for excluding particular artists, despite their work exploring similar themes. Fryd and Princenthal outline their own focus on artists and artworks that expose, and force the viewer to confront, trauma – '[r]ather than aestheticise and neutralise' it (Fryd, 2019, p. 19). With that said, Princenthal includes an exploration of Nancy Spero's *Torture of Women* (1974-76) and

*Notes in Time* (1976-79), works which use beautiful and delicate printmaking, painting and drawing techniques to draw the viewer into a dialogue around 'all manner of female subjugation – and, in some passages, triumph' (2019, pp.152-153). Spero's visual language, 'unmistakably her own', mediated through process, approaches the disclosure of female experiences through something of a different – perhaps more aestheticised, without being neutralised – lens. The question of the proposed relationship between aestheticisation and neutralisation, and in this framework, its inverse, exposure and confrontation, is significant for this research because it gets to the heart of what repair might be. Indeed, Princenthal positions the seminal performances of artists exploring violence against women as something of a riposte to Nochlin's notion that 'great art' can never be simply 'a translation of personal life into visual terms'. As both Princenthal and Fryd's texts explore, significant feminist artworks of the 1960s-70s, including *Ablutions* (Lacy et al., 1972), *Three Weeks in May* (Lacy, 1977), *Tapp und Tast-Kino* (VALIE EXPORT, 1968-69), *Untitled (Rape Scene)* (Mendieta, 1973) and Yoko Ono's earlier *Cut Piece* (1964):

established the model for witnessing sexual trauma through testimonials presented in written adverbial texts, performances, installations, and videos. The multitude of these performances in public spaces and their intentional use of reiteration embodied a strategy used in many settings to deal with traumatic histories (Fryd, p. 73).

This approach was fundamental to forging this important movement within late 20th Century art, and can also be seen as an extension of Chicago and Schapiro's approach to working with their students through consciousness-raising techniques as part of CalArts' feminist art programme (Schapiro, 1972, p. 269). However, these works were also noted to induce secondary traumatising in audiences (Fryd, 2019, pp. 47, 271) and retraumatisation among artists themselves through the making process (pp. 268-271). Furthermore, as I explored in 2.2.3, traumatic repetition is a significant mechanism of harm in the aftermath of traumatic experiences, and therefore by extending this mechanism through performance – through re-enactment – traumatic residues can be seen to be perpetuated and prolonged.

With that said, Princenthal describes artists staging their own traumatic performances as a sort of re-empowerment, bringing audiences into artists' domains and thus countering forced entry into their own (2019, p. 46). However, my intention here is to explore repairing the psychic-domestic relationship through art making, and, echoing Sedgwick's questioning of this 'faith in *exposure*' [original emphasis] (2003, p. 130), I too question the value of continual exposure – continual rupture – without resolution. While it is in this discomfort that some repair of the social fabric is imagined, it is clear from the literature that healing must take place through translating the traumatic into a medium which allows victim-survivors to flourish in their ecology of bonds with the world, and it is through this that revictimisation, and perhaps victimisation itself, can be prevented, because it reinstates the ability to discern threat, both allowing victim-survivor to flourish in the world and empowering them to recognise and escape threat. Therefore, by creating a sense of perpetual threat through exposure of sexual 'violence [...] as the foundation of everyday American family life' (Fryd, p. 193), from Suzanne Lacy's California rape map in *Three Weeks in May* (1977) to Freda Fairchild's *Abuse Closet* (2001), women are potentially placed in more danger.

To reiterate, while these works are valuable to the feminist art canon, and while, as Felski describes, this faith in exposure has been important to the development of key emancipatory disciplines in the academy (2015, p. 190), all this rupturing must be complemented by repair. It is perhaps striking that Vito Acconci's performances are included, rightly, as key to the performance art movement which enabled the development of these important performance-based feminist artworks, because his practice seems to epitomise the faith in (indecent) exposure at the expense of the moral foundations of a society that rejects sexual violence. While the underlying mood emerged in part from disillusionment with pretences of morality when society's underbelly seemed filled with hypocrisy and trauma, in dragging this underbelly into mainstream, only evermore exposing exposures could seem to follow.

With this in mind, I decided in this thesis to ground my own practice in perhaps

unexpected explorations of repair and the domestic in the work of female artists. While Ana Mendieta's *Untitled (Rape Scene)* (1973) were both shocking and groundbreaking, it is in her *Untitled (Siluetas)* series (1973-1980), though still shocking, that reconnection can be found with the world. While Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964) served as a cornerstone upon which feminist performance art was built, it is in the symbol of the scissors as 'an implement of construction' (Fryd, 2019, p. 36) that the threads of her work appear in my own practice-led research.

I have also decided to select artists to surround myself with whose practice is best positioned to inform my own. So, while I feel drawn to Mendieta's *Siluetas* (1973-80), my practice does not lie in performance, video or photography, and I will not explore her work in particular detail as I have with my selected artists, who predominantly work between painting and ceramics. I explore the relationship between my selected artists and my research questions in more detail in 3.3. First, in the following section, I extend some of the themes explored in this section, questioning the positioning of boundaries and vulnerability in my methodological approaches.

### **3.2.2 Locating Boundaries**

In the previous section, I established an artistic context for this research based upon seeking to complement artworks which have been explored as retraumatising, focusing on repair of the personal-environmental bonds rather than the traumatic event itself. In this section, I set out my process for establishing boundaries between the broad areas of domestic violence and trauma research I began to weave together in *Chapter II*, my own experiences and observations, and the role of vulnerability as a key to using my practice as a crucible for these elements. As I explore in 3.3.4, my work emerges intuitively through interacting with materials, having allowed research materials and observations to seep into my being. With this in mind, I was conscious that this thesis must also examine the threshold between detachment and intimacy in both the making and the writing processes, illuminating what Polanyi describes as

‘the bodily roots of all knowledge and thought’ (1969, p. 147).

Linda Nochlin, in her seminal essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists* (1973), challenges the conception of art as ‘the direct, personal expression of individual emotional experience – a translation of personal life into visual terms’, stating that ‘great art [is] certainly never’ that: to be great, it must reach beyond such specificities, which cut it off from greatness, to a coherent ‘language of form’ (1973, p. 5), something I also explored in 2.3. In 3.3, too, I positioned my research along Nochlin’s lines, complementing the reassessment of the relationship between ‘personal expression’ (ibid.) and greatness through the rise of performance art by instead following materials as a mechanism for offering glimpses of repair of the artwork’s ecology of bonds. With that said, in the context of artistic research, to share the creative process is itself intimate. Sharing even completed works involves a degree of exposure often anathema to the creative introvert – these are works that may have been wrestled with in the studio for months, years even – the artist’s interior life made visible, but also whole. To share the errors, thoughts of hand and eye, un- or under-filtered, made along the way, in the name of artistic research, is perhaps terrifyingly intimate. It is in sharing this process, then, in which life experiences and their encounters with the literature are already embedded, that vulnerability takes the stage, and this vulnerability forms one of the pathways through which the research is moved beyond an interdisciplinary exploration of literature female trauma, domestic violence and art, and towards an embodied response to all of these threads which reweaves them into small acts of repair.

In reading and looking, there is the comfort of an exterior source of verification, an appeal to abstract reasoning. To instead share embodied thoughts, transcribed on to paper, or into clay – and then to have to explain them, using words – this is truly challenging. And yet, to become detached in the act of writing about these intimate and ephemeral stages of the making process is perhaps to lose any sense of meaning from it. Early in the process of attempting to write about the works emerging from these relationships between texts, experience, artworks and making, seduced by the



apparent rigour of such detachment, I made it almost impossible for myself to say anything of value about the making process, because I wanted cold, detached, facts, preferably already stated elsewhere, to scaffold my true engagement with processes and works that had not previously existed.

This impulse pertains to an effect that Michael Polanyi describes, in that in attempting to veer away from the embodied cognitions arising from interaction with the world around us by appealing only to the frameworks laid down by the abstract reasoning of those who have gone before us in an attempt to reach something approaching objectivity, we ‘abandon the cruder anthropocentrism of our senses – but only in favour of a more ambitious anthropocentrism of our reason’ (Polanyi, 1962, p. 5). However, the making process – specifically, for me, making through clay – as I have explored, is not at all detached. Quite the opposite, it is truly embodied, perhaps with clay more so than many other mediums, due to its qualities of body and of earth. The direct connection between hand, eye, mind, and material makes detachment impossible. This is compounded by the problem of these thoughts – these hand-thoughts – being embedded within the process, and eventually, the artefact, being created: they are not separate, and yet in reuniting them with their origins in the literature around trauma and violence against women, they must somehow be separated. Perhaps the challenge therein can be understood as a component of another effect Polanyi describes:

Subsidiary awareness and focal awareness are mutually exclusive. If a pianist shifts his attention from the piece he is playing to the observation of what he is doing with his fingers while playing it, he gets confused and may have to stop. This happens generally if we switch our focal attention to particulars of which we had previously been aware only to their subsidiary role.

The kind of clumsiness which is due to the fact that focal attention is directed to the subsidiary elements of an action is commonly known as self-consciousness.’ (1962, p. 56)

That is, particularly in the exercise of the kind of embodied, complex skill that makes up art-making, focus on the components of this skill can make its exercise near-impossible. Polanyi goes on to explain the extreme end of this experience of self-con-

sciousness, which can be found in stage fright, for which cure can be found in the recovery of fluency, namely by ‘succeed[ing] in casting our mind forward and let[ting] it operate with a clear view to the comprehensive activity in which we are primarily invested’ (Polanyi, 2005, p. 58). Perhaps in this research, the delicacy of balancing detachment and vulnerability derived not only from a kind of shyness about revealing the intimate process of making, and a strongly felt sense that this work was about quietly mending the frayed seams of our relationships with the world, rather than feeling compelled to ruminate – a dysfunctional feature of post-traumatic states (Schumm et al., 2022) – over them – but also from a sort of retroactive stage fright: to write about process, one must necessarily break it into component parts, and in so doing, fluency is lost. In order to reintroduce movement to dysfunctional memory, and to create dialogue between the works which in some way embody the research material as it resides within my hands, purpose must be located in the process – and its vulnerabilities – itself. Not only the outcomes, but the vulnerabilities of the process itself, provide habitat for thought. If this purpose must come from the process, then the unguarded state of this process requests to be matched in honesty and intimacy in written reflection, while still acknowledging the artwork’s position as beyond simple personal experience (Nochlin, 1973, p. 5).

If it is possible to derive any sense of purpose from the act of writing about artistic research, it must come from the process – because often this is where the thought – that elusive original thought – lies – as well as the outcome, and if it must come from the process – then the unguarded state of this process requests to be matched in honesty and intimacy in written reflection. Through these moments in the research process, the boundaries between detachment and intimacy became permeable, and through grappling with them through documentation of process and written explorations, I found myself able to write along this boundary. By allowing the writing through these processes to become a vulnerable, intimate space, the writing itself became part of the comprehensive making process, rather than a deconstruction of

it – rather than a stage fright in reverse.

For example, it was only in documenting and writing through the unexpected, spontaneous fragmentation of these clay sketches that I could get to the heart of its significance, and begin to bring that detached original relationship I had formed with other thinkers in the process of writing my literature review into a more intimate dialogue with my own creative process. Specifically, in this case, I found I could reapproach my relationship – my journey – with psychoanalytic theorist Jean Laplanche, and art historian Griselda Pollock. From Laplanche, I could now see the significance of his ‘decomposition of signifying sequences [...] into elements to allow’ the traumatised subject to ‘spontaneously develop a new synthesis or translation of them’ in order to repair the ruptures created by traumatic memory, allowing her to move through the world unencumbered by jarring and unpredictable traumatic resonances springing from her environment (2017, p. 213).

Similarly, by returning to Pollock’s text, I could re-encounter, and apply through my practice, the etymology of symbol, from *symbállein* – as she puts it, ‘to put together or unite’, based upon the ‘ancient practice of breaking a single piece of pottery in two so that a traveller, carrying one part, might be recognised on his/her return’ (2013, p. 22). Rather than one artefact – embedded with traces of the domestic through the clay’s materiality, its imprinted pillow slip, and the artefact’s form itself, I had many pieces that could now journey and reunite as they moved towards repair, across the threshold of the part-imagined dwelling space I was contending with. Through sharing these processes, it became necessary to share the thoughts they contain, and the ecology of bonds with other thinkers that had scaffolded my research journey.

This also made it possible to rethink these relationships by returning to making. Here, the fragile, precious qualities of these leftovers came together to invite recomposition and re-integration between interior and exterior worlds through their repetitive processes and forms. By allowing not only the making process, but also the writing itself, to become a vulnerable, intimate space, the writing itself became part of

the comprehensive making process, rather than a deconstruction of it – rather than a stage fright in reverse.

### 3.2.3 Knowledge in Practice

As I have explored, my artistic background lies in illustration and animation, and as my practice developed beyond the confines of the page and into the world of the gallery, the importance of literature and narrative arts remained fundamental to my practice. Thus, in documenting, reflecting on, and discussing the practical explorations of rebuilding the post-traumatic home in the written portion of this thesis, *elucidatory* frameworks from the fields explored in the previous chapter, become a crucial framework through which first to examine the results of my studio practice but also through which to build on each phase of studio practice as it proceeds. This approach to practice, with a continuous dialogue between making, reading and reflecting, develops as my research questions have developed: allowing a structure to the thesis to emerge based on the narrative progression of a relationship between internal and external dwelling spaces. Key to the emergence of this structure was the work itself, and reflecting on the nature of narrative as a ‘bridge between art and life’ (Obrist, 2001, p. 96) created by constellations of artworks. By using artistic intervention, at varying scales, to create interactions between artefact and environment, I sought to test and offer iterations of the sense that it ‘is conceivable that such notions contrive to create possibilities within an exhibition where links can be made with life contexts, such as the scale of an apartment, of one’s living environments and surroundings’ (Obrist, 2001, p. 96).

These relationships between art and space begin to create bridges between art and life are crucial to exploring the rebuilding of the post-traumatic home. This is because in post-traumatic states, connections to traumatic memories can cause the subject’s perspective of the world to become fixed at the point of trauma, unable to build on the past to create different experiences in the future. All emotional content contains a re-

lationship to the past, but in depressive or post-traumatic states, the subject becomes unable to conceive of a future which is not simply a repetition of this past (Nussbaum, 2008, p. 177; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011). Through the narrative work of art, the viewer begins to understand the story of their own emotional history and be offered glimpses of a future over which they have control. By emphasising bridges between art and life in the construction of artistic narrative, the fixed traumatic points can be overlaid and brought into dialogue with futures that are not simply repetitions of the past.

While conscious that “bringing art to [social] science gives you a good chance of having neither” (Obrist, quoted in Edwards, 2010, p. 26), art practice can offer alternative tales to those which conceptualise ‘the already-constituted female subject as a completely passive and helpless victim’ (Leys, 2000, p. 38), which, I have argued, has on occasion been reinforced in both art practice and social science research. In this way, post critical or reparative artistic research methodologies can offer a counterweight to the ‘unexamined notion of contagion or infection’, and to the ‘stark opposition’ between external and internal forces in the consideration of female trauma (Leys, 2000, p. 38). Indeed, practice-based research offers the heterogeneity of approaches important to proffering the ‘shift in perception needed, from representational to relational or ecological’. (Cazeaux, 2017, p. 107) With Cazeaux’s positioning of this shift as fundamental to the value of artistic research, these relationships between ecological conceptions of the impact of violence against women explored in the previous chapter, reparative or post critical approaches to artefacts, and the use of practice itself as research method, are made clear. In this way, art-making itself can be seen to embody both the reparative and the understanding of the impacts of trauma within the social ecosystem. It is important to bear in mind ‘the concern, held by many practitioners and opponents to artistic research, that the significance of the research is located in the conceptual or theoretical framework that surrounds the making, rather than in the making itself’, (Cazeaux, 2017, p. 91) something I guard against by using practice

itself to drive responses to each research question through cultivating an intuitive approach to the practice, which I explore in more detail below.

### **3.2.4 Intuition, agency and movement**

It is a kind of liminal state of awareness, before dreaming, before imagining, that is connected to the spirit itself. It is an ‘impossible realm’ where glimpses of the preternatural essence of things find their voice. Arthur lives there. Inside that space, it feels a relief to trust in certain glimpses of something else, something other, something beyond.

Cave and O’Hagan pp. 66-67

In the previous section, I began to unpack approaches to my practice more broadly. In this section, I bring into focus the roles of intuition and chance in my own practice, the relationship between my ways of working and the literature, and the light shone on this way of making by philosophers Tim Ingold, Plato and Michael Polanyi, and other artists, specifically a somewhat eclectic collection of painters, Sigrid Hjertén, Helen Frankenthaler, Hilma af Klint and Cecily Brown, and musician Nick Cave. The way I work with materials – particularly with clay, and when mark-making directly on the walls – is based upon an intuitive and responsive relationship with my chosen mediums and the chattering threads that entangle us with the world. The importance of creating space to follow these intuitive hunches, through allowing chance and the accidental to take over, perhaps explains my feeling most at home when working with clay – and its direct connection with earth and our ancestors, as I explore in 3.4.2 and 5.2 – and working directly on the walls. This is both because of the enhanced importance of touch to these processes, and the unpredictability of their surfaces both pre- and post- mark making, due to a continual relationship with the world which does not exist, for me, in the same way with painting on canvas.

With that said, in the paintings of Sigrid Hjertén, which I explore in more detail in 3.4.1, ‘subjectivity and “intuition”’ are ‘sacrosanct’, rooted as her practice was in her time at the Académie Matisse (Behr, p. 153). Through her tools, she created space for intuition to roam the canvas. Moving further into the canvas itself, Helen Franken-

thaler's use of pigments to soak unprimed canvas can also be seen to connect with the intuitive, immersing the fibres in pigment and thus engaging the whole substrate in her intuitive process. Such enveloping approaches to pigment and surface connect directly to the intuition in a different way to traditional painting methods, materials and senses intertwining to embrace the accidental. Indeed, of her own practice, Frankenthaler noted the importance of creating 'spontaneous [...] points of departure' and that often what emerged from these points of departure connected to nature (Frankenthaler, quoted in Rowley, pp. 45-46). It's possible to see this relationship between the embrace of chance in the direct relationship between pigment and unprimed canvas and flourishing visual connections with the natural world in the work of contemporary artists including Aimée Parrott.

Already I have mentioned three actors in the art-making process: the artist, the materials, and the threads within and beyond them. To these we might also add, after Tim Ingold, the significance of movement as an engine of our ecologies of bonds with the world. For Ingold, 'primacy' must be assigned 'to processes of formation as against their final products, and to flows and transformations of materials as against states of matter' (2010, pp. 2-3). Just as the woven basket can be seen to emerge, rather than having form imposed upon its material structure, blurring the boundaries between making and growing and thus, mechanical and biological processes (2000, pp. 340-341), so perception is an 'active and exploratory' ecological process involving 'continual movement, adjustment and reorientation' (pp.166-168). It is this coupling of movement and perception that, for Ingold, form the agency to create flows of action: an agency which must be derived from skill – that is, which develops over time, so that agents are able to 'continually attune his or her movements to perturbations in the perceived environment without ever interrupting the flow of action' (2011, p. 94). These flows of action animate the world's meshwork – a term Ingold sets as a counterpoint to the network – in which, like a spider's web, 'the world [...] is not an assemblage of bits and pieces but a tangle of threads and pathways' (2011, p. 92). In a

similar vein, to Ingold's webs and baskets can be added ceramic processes, which have drawn focus more recently for the role of the accidental in the knowledge they create, both through the nature of clay itself (Malafouris, 2023; 2020), as well as by asking where 'does the thinking of the potter end and the forming of clay begin?' (2020, p. 5). In this way, actions, artefacts and agents can be understood by the animation of their entanglements, and the flows of action that can be seen to stem from intuition.

Similarly, throughout this thesis, this sense of movement, alongside the significance of ecologies of bonds, becomes central to my exploration of the unsticking of dysfunctional and traumatic memories. While Ingold's making as engine for our web-world provides something of a framework for my understanding of the intuitive processes in my own practice, and goes somewhere to explaining the means by which the different strands of this research began to come together through the making process, when considered in relation to the work and philosophies of Helen Frankenthaler, I felt the need to reach for something more to fully explain where these intuitive processes – where these hunches – come from. This led me to consider a perhaps more distant art form – songwriting – in the context of intuition. Although throughout this thesis I incorporate references to other art forms, and particularly literary art forms, as a lens through which to understand my own practice, I hesitated before including songwriting, as it seemed rather too distant. However, the framework resonated with me so strongly that I decided to make this brief foray into the philosophy of songwriting here, and specifically Nick Cave's accounts of his artistic process.

It was in his account of his approach to art-making as 'a kind of liminal state of awareness, before dreaming, before imagining, that is connected to the spirit itself' (2022, p. 66), that another thread within, or perhaps beyond, this Ingoldian web, became clearer to me. In this passage, Cave reflects on the mechanism for the ways in which the album *Skeleton Tree* (2016) seems to presage the death of his son Arthur, despite being written before that tragedy unfolded. On reading this, I experienced a deep sense of recognition of an artistic process guided by a relationship to that which



swirls beyond the imaginary, towards an ‘impossible realm’ (p. 66). For Cave, songs emerge from ‘another place that can be summoned through practice that is not the imagination, but more a secondary positioning of your mind with regard to spiritual matters’: a place where ‘it feels a relief to trust in certain glimpses of something else, something other, something beyond’ (2022, pp. 66-67). Here, songs become ‘channels through which some kind of greater or deeper understanding is released into the world’ (p. 67). Similarly, in my practice, the works which feel most successful are those which seem to have emerged from the periphery; whose source cannot be glimpsed directly. It is important that space is cultivated for whatever this is – chance, or what seems to be accidental – to take the reins, so that the works can connect to this realm.

Michael Conway describes this intuitive approach to art-making as ‘reflect[ing] an openness to an otherness’ and a ‘destination that has no name, [...] that describes something that is closer to nothing than to anything’ (2014, p. 519). This unfolding towards the beyond, into some ‘impossible realm’ (Cave and O’Hagan, 2022, p. 66) channelled through art-making, is reflected also in renewed interest in artists influenced by spiritualist ideas, including Hilma af Klint, who has recently been the spotlight of exhibitions at institutions including the Guggenheim (2018) and Tate Modern (2023). In what might be considered a different shade of a similar conception of the relationship between art, artist and other realms that Cave explores, Klint and other spiritualists, including Georgiana Houghton, believed their paintings directly channelled the spirit world, acting as a conduit for voices from beyond. Broadly, we might understand both Cave and Klint’s approaches as modes of mediumship, with chance and the accidental shepherding the interplay of artist, process and material. In this way, I began to consider mediumship an important concept in understanding the role of chance and the accidental in my own practice.

Indeed, visiting Drawing Room’s *Not Without My Ghosts* (2020), an exhibition of works exploring the ‘changing historical and aesthetic terms of artistic engagement with mediumship’ (Drawing Room, 2020), was influential on the development of my

practice over the course of this research. This was not only because of the confidence these artists displayed in their intuitive practices through their sense of connectedness with some ‘impossible realm’ (Cave and O’Hagan, 2022, p. 66), but also because I remember vividly the day I went to visit it: the first time I had been back to see art in a gallery in real life after the first lockdown restrictions were lifted. This encounter cemented the importance of understanding that can be opened up only through trusting in these intuitive processes, which create connections beyond that which can be understood through pure, mechanistic observation.

These ideas, of course, are not new, although it seems renewed interest in the spiritualists is one example of a renewed sense of the importance of attunement to that which is a fundamentally human knowledge – a knowledge that resides in the soul – beyond what, at the risk of cliché, emerging technologies, from smartphones to artificial intelligence, and a resurgent sense of turbulence in the world, can reveal to us. Indeed, they work to ‘return a sense of mystery and order to a world that seems dispiriting and beyond control’ (Davis, 2018). In this way, these ideas come to the fore as our relationships to technologies churn. As Father Paissy relates in *The Brothers Karamazov*, in the context of the relationship between scientists and truth, humans have examined ‘parts and missed the whole, and their blindness is even worthy of wonder. Meanwhile the whole stands before their eyes as immovably as ever’ (1992, p. 373). Similarly, we might reach further back, to Plato explaining that ‘the only subject [he] can regard as making the soul look upwards is the one which concerns what is, what can not be seen’ (2000, pp. 237–238). This is a component of Michael Polanyi’s work: this tacit knowledge that is so important to the pursuit of science, and knowledge more broadly, as distinct from the eternal gathering of data, something Ian Mitroff also argues (1972).

Through these thinkers, it’s possible to understand that describing women’s art as intuitive might not necessarily have been taken as ‘prejudice against’ it, as Carrey Lovelace describes (2016), but rather positioning it in a framework of thought

as great as any human's. Painter Cecily Brown examines the relationship between drawing, painting and chance in her practice in a way that taps into this intuitive realm. For Brown, it is important that her paintings give 'the sense of things that are still [...] becoming'. One of the ways she creates this sensation is through drawing and painting particular works, such as Degas' *Young Spartans* (1860) 'so many times that they're [...] embedded in [her] memory and in [her] painting memory'. She explains that 'it would be very boring [...] to work out a composition [...] and then just paint it': paintings must instead have 'that chance element', and 'that element of surprise'. By creating movement between 'much-loved painting[s] [...] embedded in [her] painting memory' and the 'game of manipulating chance' that happens, for Brown, particularly in the details of a painting, she retains the sense of flux, and the connection to life, that she wants from her paintings (Louisiana Channel, 2015). As with the image of Helen Frankenthaler surrounded by painted canvas on the walls and floor (Parks, 1956), Cave's illumination of the imaginal realm (2022), Dostoevsky, Plato and Polanyi's exploration of knowledge (1992; 2003; 2008), and the resurgent interest in Hilma af Klint and other spiritualist artists, I felt excitement at discovering this interview, as it illuminated both my own practice and its relationship to the spontaneous resynthesis of traumatic 'signifying sequences' explored by Laplanche and related in more detail in *Chapter VI*.

In my own practice, I am guided by the relationships between intuition, making processes and the material itself. There is rarely a plan for a finished artwork: things come together. In this research in particular, I was careful to read deeply into the literature around trauma and violence against women, which helped me to come to the centrality of repair to my thesis. I now realise this is also something followed on a hunch: as Polanyi describes, 'we can know more than we can tell' (2009, p. 4). At the same time, I built up materials collected from observing the world around me – a folded sheet; the back of a building filled with so many lives and faces; a painting in a book – through drawing. By the time I then entered my studio, these ideas and

glimpses were woven into my being by acts of drawing and writing, so that when I picked up a lump of clay, or indeed a paintbrush, I could attune myself to the materials, following them to make some meaning out of all I had observed. These objects could then be themselves observed and, in something like a flow state, reflected upon, reweaving the threads that had emerged with the sources I had begun with, towards a tapestry of meaning. That is, meaning emerges through the process, as well as in creating connections with audience, and also in the object itself. Perhaps in fact it emerges in the making process, is embedded in the kiln, and extended in the gallery. In this section, I have probed the roles of intuition and chance in my practice, and their relationship to the absorption, translation and production of artistic knowledge. I go on to consider more detailed methodological approaches to each research question in the following section.

### **3.3 Research Questions**

#### **3.3.1 Research Question I**

In the previous chapter, I reviewed literature from a number of fields, with the aim of exploring repair and rebuilding of the post-traumatic home. Several key concepts emerged from examining this literature, which enabled me to formulate research questions. The first research question began to emerge from literature in the fields of sociology and public health, which analyse the impacts of violence against women through an ecological model, which offers a multifaceted understanding of the causes and consequences of violence against women and revictimisation in particular. Bringing in literature from psychology, I found that the revictimisation risk explored through these ecological models can be understood in the context of traumatic repetition, in that revictimisation functions in a similar way to other aspects of traumatic repetition, such as nightmares and flashbacks, and can also be ameliorated through consideration of the ecological approach. In this way, traumatic repetition began to provide a framework through which to comprehend some of the relationships be-

tween the life-limiting effects of symptomatic post-traumatic states, including revictimisation. To orient this exploration towards repair through art practice, I turned to art history and cultural studies, considering the ‘after-affect’ which emerges in the gap between art-making, artefact, and artefact’s reception, and allows for the ‘transformation [...] of the traces of trauma’ (Pollock, 2013, p. 4). With this in mind, I formulated my first research question as follows, to create space to begin to apply these concepts through my practice:

1. How can the concept of traumatic repetition be explored through different making processes to break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds?

In exploring this research question, I use artistic repetition to mirror and develop traumatic repetition, as a means for progressing towards translation and reconfiguration. These repetitious processes develop over the course of the practice explored in this chapter, beginning with using the repeated mark making central to drawing to repeat – and translate from photograph and memory to graphite on paper – collected visual remnants of domestic interiors. The imprecision in this repetitive process begins to create space for the development of the fragmented and discontinuous traumatic memory fragments contained within the walls of the home, and I continue to open these spaces by repeating the imagery in these initial drawings across different mediums: moving image, painting, and ceramics. Gradually translating these artefacts of repetition of dwelling space fragments back into three dimensions becomes significant due to the increasing amount of space held for the drawing of new connections which diverge from the repetitious path through what becomes translation *through* repetition (Figure 3.1).

The act of drawing becomes the first medium through which to explore this notion of repetition: I use the pencil to translate gathered imagery and memory fragments of the domestic into drawn repetitions which are then repeated themselves through redrawing. Drawing is significant for a number of reasons: firstly, it is itself a repetitious act – not only through the repeated meeting of pencil and paper in an



Figure 3.1 Developing approaches to repetition, mixed media, 2019

evolving network of marks, but also in the way in which it speaks to the history of art-making, to the enchantment to be found in viewing a drawing by an Old Master, or as I explore in the next section, a drawn mark in the bowels of a cave. Furthermore, in the context of politics, protest and war, it is argued that drawing is a manifestation of ‘a growing impulse to stake a physical claim, as if putting a pencil to paper might counter the disconnect that constitutes our experience’ (Gilman, 2010, p. 115). This physicality of the repetitious act of drawing as a means for countering disconnection can be extended from the context of politics and war to that of the post-traumatic state, which is so marked by disconnection, through its ‘ritual[istic]’ (Jonas, Marranca and MacDonald, 2014, p. 36) qualities. Drawing becomes a means to forge new connections, and reinstate broken connections, in order to begin to translate traces of trauma through repetition of their whispers in the domestic.

Building on this, my relationship to the work of Anna Barriball (1972-) is also key this decision to explore drawing as a tool for repetition and repair. Seeing Anna Barriball’s work in the flesh for the first time at her 2016 exhibition, *New Works*, was a threshold moment for my own practice (Figure 3.2). She illuminated the possibilities of the pencil as a mediator of our experience of domestic interiors, in order to begin to transcend the boundaries between internal and external worlds – both in a psychological sense and in the sense of the home as an artistic-philosophical container. She uses repetitive processes, such as rubbings, to create imprints of the space and transform them into echoes of domestic interiors through ghost-like encounters with forms no longer resting against her delicate paper supports. This in turn creates a space to encounter the importance of the domestic space in the formation of memories by allowing her viewer to encounter mere suggestions of this space, translated through meticulous repetition, mediated by direct contact between graphite, paper, and domestic artefact, from its original architecture and into the gallery setting. This in turn influenced my methodological response to this research question by opening possibilities for emphasising the importance of domestic spaces in our deepest mem-

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Figure 3.2 *Under Stairs Door* (Barriball, 2015)



ory formation and also opening what a drawing can be. In not simply creating 1:1 drawings of the domestic artefacts she chooses, Barriball uses her drawing materials to create physical encounters with these ghosts.

As I outlined in *2.2.4 Trauma and Translation*, translation through the action of repetition, as exemplified by Barriball's work, is an important concept for this research due to translation's ability to repair traumatic 'signifying sequences' via reassembly into a 'synthesis' that is 'less symptomatic' (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213). The ways in which traumatic memories, absorbed in vestiges of the domestic, are held through time connotes a sense of their dark preciousness. By creating physical, artistic, manifestations through repetition, these haunting fragments begin to be translated to new artistic-philosophical locations where they can be reconfigured through new connections. Consequently, I begin to focus on how the trauma fractured person-home relationship might be translated and also reconfigured – retranslated – through repetition in art practice.

To continue this translation through repetition, I begin to repeat the imagery created through drawing by building layers of clay, first in the form of tiles and then in the form of sculptural vessels. Building these clay coils creates the opportunity to build the initial pencil drawings into three-dimensional space, marking an opening from which more points of reconnection can emerge between the inhabitant of our post-traumatic home's past, future and present, as well as with her dwelling space. The reconfiguration of repeated imagery which emerged from the drawings works to amplify this. The medium of clay also offers an opportunity to repeat material themes from the history of the human home. It repeats and 'register[s] the primordial action of making – the first human intervention in the material world': specifically, the material world of the domestic (Pollock, 2013, p. 152). This relationship between clay and the domestic, particularly through the work in tiles, also offers points of connection between repetition – in the format of the tiles, as well as in the coiling process to build the vessels – the domestic, and the body in space – evoked by the vessels' bellies. These

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Figure 3.3 *Woman in Red Interior* (Hjertén, 1915, cited in Behr et al., 1999, p. 105)



Figure 3.4 *Wraith* (in progress), charcoal on canvas, 2020



Figure 3.5 *The House Was Like Her* (in progress), oil on canvas, 2020

connections to the body in space also provide a larger three dimensional surface area through which to spark multiple narratives around each artefact, also enacting the kind of affective repetition explored by Pollock and described in the previous chapter.

To enact the final strand of translation through repetition in response to this research question, I absorb these test vessels into paintings, which also chart an artistic dialogue with a painter who almost exclusively rendered domestic scenes and their connection to her psychic pain: Sigrid Hjertén. I build layers of paint, continuing to repeat imagery from initial drawings, as well as impressions of ceramic sculptures, alongside repetitions of the imagery found in key Hjertén paintings (Figure 3.4). I describe this dialogue in detail in *Chapter IV*. These layers of oil paint retain the inhabiting of three dimensional space created through clay, while the bodily, unctuous quality of oil paint draws additional connections between body and space by evoking the messiness of the body through the imagery of domestic space (Figure 3.5). The dialogue that begins to form between drawing, painting, and ceramic form serves to emphasise repetition's role in understanding and translating the traces of trauma. With this in mind, in the next section I go on to build a methodological approach to my second research question, which addresses the space these dialogues inhabit.

### **3.3.2 Research Question II**

In the previous section, I built a methodological approach to applying the concept of traumatic repetition through my practice to break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds. The next research question that emerged from my literature review builds on the importance of the ecology of bonds in trauma's aftermath from the psychological, sociological and public health literature explored in *Chapter II*. It develops these findings by bringing them into conversation with findings from the fields of art history and cultural studies, particularly through a feminist lens, on the significance of the domestic dwelling space in art practice. By extending these considerations into space in this way, particularly through analyses of the rise of installation

art, I could begin to consider the 'after-affect' within the spaces surrounding artefacts (Pollock, 2013, p. 4). With this in mind, I formulated a second research question to scaffold the extension of the first strand of my research into domestic-architectural space itself:

2. What effect does the artistic possession of spaces surrounding these artefacts have on developing visual networks which transform the traces of domestic trauma?

In answering this research question, I extend the artistic research already conducted further into architectural space by using this network of artefacts to transform the space around them. To do this I first consider the hollows within ceramic vessels as a kind of artistically possessed space, drawing on the ancient origins of hand coiled pots to create connections through time as well as space (Arnold, 2009), before using repurposed domestic materials to increase their impact on the space they inhabit. I go on to use the patterns, shapes, colours and motifs which have emerged from the previous research question to begin to create large scale paintings in preparation for direct wall drawings in pastel, which ensconce these artefacts (Figure 3.6), and which also reach out through time, to the cave paintings which connect us to our ancient ancestors' possession of their dwelling spaces (Saltz, 2015). Between the artefacts created in response to the first research question and the transformation of the built environments they inhabit, constellations can begin to form. Reflecting on this idea of the artistic intervention, on varying scales, interacting with its environment, I seek also to test and offer iterations of the sense that working at this scale can forge connections 'with life contexts, such as the scale of an apartment, of one's living environments and surroundings', and that these connections might act as 'bridges between art and life', transforming the traces of domestic trauma through connecting to dwelling spaces through art in this way (Obrist, 2001, p. 96).

The heterogeneity of approaches described throughout this chapter – of forms, materials, and outcomes – combined with these 'life contexts' (Obrist, 2001, p. 96), offers a mechanism by which dialogues can be opened for visual networks to flow



Figure 3.6 Large scale paintings and drawings (in progress), 2021-22

between through the transformation of spaces through art practices and public interaction with these spaces. These visual networks mirror the importance of ecologies in understanding the rebuilding of the post-traumatic home, as outlined in the previous chapter. In this way, these now immersive visual narratives offer a means of sense-making that both draws on the long history of what Miriam Schapiro, reflecting on *Womanhouse* (1972), describes as artists' compulsion to 'possess [...] spaces through their personality as painters' (1972, p. 269), from cave paintings, to the Sistine Chapel, to *Womanhouse* and beyond, and offers space for expanding points from which new connections and narratives can emerge. These responses, folded into the fabric of the research, offer artistic means to understand the effectiveness of artistic engagement with these ideas, while also enabling 'us to remain in the present – the work can still be created' (Obrist, 2001, p. 100) – and consider the future. Through these constellations of works, the research continuously examines 'the embeddedness and situatedness of its object of investigation' (Bergdorff, 2012, p. 47) by considering not only process but environment.

This approach is also influenced by the work of Betty Woodman (1930–2018) and her use of the relationship between the domesticity and intimacy of ceramics and the large scale possession of space offered by painting to transform spaces (Figure 3.7). In this way, she takes the 'relationship of painting and three-dimensional pottery into new kinds of complexity' (Britton, 2016, p. 381). Furthermore, by developing the spaces around her ceramics with painting on canvas serving as 'carpet' and theatrical backdrop (Britton, 2016), she uses the relationship between paint and clay to invite her viewer to contemplate the artistic possession of domestic space. By also engaging with different scales, materials, and modes of repetition and translation, in my methodological approach to this second research question, the conversation between works is in turn expanded and created anew, ready to be brought into the reparative approach to repairing the trauma-fractured home through visual processes. The works animate their environment and are reanimated in turn (Felski, 2015, p. 175), reconceptualising

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Figure 3.7 *Theatre of the Domestic* (Woodman, 2015) Photo: Mark Blower



the traumatic fragment's network and reminding us that 'above all, this enchantment arises by the grace of the attunement between living beings.' (Despret, 2016, p. 4) This expanding network of responses fills the artistic-philosophical space of the home with possibilities for regeneration and repair, eventually leading the network to the threshold between interior and exterior worlds. I explore a methodological approach to the artistic exploration of this threshold in response to my final research question, in the following section.

### 3.3.3 Research Question III

In the previous section, I built a methodological approach to exploring the artistic possession of the spaces surrounding artefacts in order to explore transforming the traces of trauma held in this space through art practice. In the final research question which emerged from *Chapter II: Literature Review*, I consider how the restored and enlarged network of relationships, within and between the post-traumatic subject and the post-traumatic home, might be expanded to bridge the threshold between interior and exterior worlds. In doing this, I also build on literature explored in the previous chapter, particularly in *2.5 Expanding Repair*, relating to the 'affective realignment' of repair (Felski, 2017, p. 17) through the reassembly of trauma's 'part-objects' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128). To do this, I take elements of the ceramic fragments and pastel wall drawings from interior environment to the outside world by placing them in nature. In this way, I use artistic research to explore another key component of rebuilding the stable post-traumatic ecosystem analysed in *2.2.2 Ecologies of Trauma*: the ability of the post-traumatic subject to engage with the world beyond her door with connective mechanisms other than fear or hypervigilance. I continue to use the home as an artistic-philosophical space to be able to do this, recognising its importance as traumatic progenitor and also its restored protective qualities, formulating my final research question as follows:

3. How can artistic exploration of the threshold between interior and exterior worlds be

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Figure 3.8 *Here and There* (Maiolino, 2012) Photo: Haupt & Binder



Figure 3.9 *Chamber* (in progress), installation, 2021

used in the forging of a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door?

To support this use of the domestic in reaching across its own threshold, I return to Griselda Pollock. She offers a conception, from Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, of dialogues between objects, which draws upon the etymology of the word 'symbol', from the Greek *symbállein* – 'to put together or unite'. It 'refers to an ancient practice of breaking a single piece of pottery in two so that a traveller, carrying one part, might be recognised on his/her return' (Pollock, 2013, p. 22). This engagement with pottery, the symbol, and trauma again speaks to domestic artefacts while also conveying the traveller stepping beyond the boundaries of her home and risking the loss of access to her private realm, carrying only a broken piece of it. It is in the return of these fragments to one another, that she can access this protective interior realm again. This reunification of fragments into a new whole, which can never hope to be the same as the whole from which they sprung, speaks to trauma's piercing of the psyche. What can also be seen in parallel with the story of the *symbállein* is the emergence of hyper-vigilance and a fragmentation of the concept of 'home' as a place of relative safety, and the final transformation of these fragments into their own new whole.

This approach is also influenced by the work of Anna Maria Maiolino, whose use of clay in contingent states, creating gallery installations using unfired clay, draws out the relationship between clay and domesticity through its resemblance to bread (Figure 3.8). In this way, she uses her travelling clay installations to explore hands as 'instruments by which the caring mother moulds from the earth's product necessary if inadequate nourishment' (Pollock, 2013, p. 145). Maiolino's fragments of clay as unbaked bread create an ecology of bonds with earth, creation, nourishment, and the domestic. In developing these clay part-objects, her works explore the threshold between the mother in the kitchen and mother nature beyond the kitchen door.

In my own approach, by using clay to move beyond reuniting fragments and towards building anew, this process remains in flux, seeking new connections with

other artworks and with fellow humans who are themselves engaging with the exterior world. It opens a space for the understanding and exploration of trauma through artistic research in public, alongside the artistic gesture as the moving *towards*, making and representing, as individuals and as part of collectives (Pollock, 2013). When this conception of the symbol is brought together with the idea of translating traumatic repetition into the traumatic interval, it becomes possible to make these processes active, re-situating this knowledge in and through art practice.

In this way, visual narrative offers aesthetic transformation of these fragmented vestiges of traumatic events in the domestic realm in a way which can build on clay's aliveness. Taking the notion from trauma theorists and therapists of locating trauma within the individual life narrative and instead locating the self in a narrative that connects – and expands – inner and outer worlds, starting at home before moving beyond its threshold. It also stands to prove invaluable in transforming and enriching our understanding of the impact and resolution of these traumatic residues, by acknowledging that 'the cognitive content of emotions arrives embedded in a complex narrative history, without mentioning which one frequently cannot give an account of the full specificity of the emotion itself' (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 179). With this in mind, in the final development of these ceramics' journey, I begin to create narratives around a window threshold (Figure 3.9), building also on Friedberg's exploration of windows and selfhood (2005, p. 232).

In documenting the adventures of these artefacts, which may be there one day and gone the next, I can explore contingency as a building block of inhabited time. In this way, I begin to relate the journey across thresholds back to repetition and time. From these interactions across this threshold, I go on to make two films using both animation and video footage, exploring the notion of the window threshold, and beginning to investigate the virtual mediator as both an opening and a barrier to the world beyond the architectural structure. Visual motifs from drawings, paintings, and ceramic works are united in the medium of frame-by-frame animation, which itself

relies on sometimes arduous repetition in order to forge new connections between these works, drawing connections between this final stage of my research and the methodological approaches which led to it.

As a final stage in the methodological progression of responding to this research question, this animation, along with fired ceramic offcuts which repeat in inversion the forms created in the earlier stages, meet the threshold of a found window frame, emphasising both the domestic and the centrality of repetition both to understanding the traumatic and to generating space in order to forge new ecologies of relationships between domestic imagery, across thresholds. By intertwining the capture of gesture and transformation of matter, haunted by notions of the home, and offering itself as a physical manifestation of working *through*, thinking through; ‘making something happen that solicits our elaboration as thought’ (Pollock, 2013, p. 159). By using narrative structures in the visual form, the complex narrative histories that lead us to the post-traumatic state can be acknowledged, while also offering a vision of the complexity of a narrative future, full not only with potential for traumatic repetition and fear but also giving ‘nourishment to curiosity, wonder, and perceptual delight’ (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 237) by creating dialogues across the post-traumatic home’s threshold.

### **3.4 Summary and Key Points**

In this chapter, I developed methodological approaches to the three research questions which emerged from reviewing the literature in *Chapter II: Literature Review*, which I formulated as follows:

1. How can the concept of traumatic repetition be explored through different making processes to break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds?
2. What effect does the artistic possession of spaces surrounding these artefacts – their own dwellings – have on developing visual networks which transform the traces of domestic trauma?
3. How can artistic exploration of the threshold between interior and exterior worlds be used in the forging of a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door?

Building on my existing artistic practice, my background in illustration and animation, and my review of the literature, I also considered the influence on my methodological approaches of artists including Anna Barriball, Sigrid Hjertén, Betty Woodman and Anna Maria Maiolino respectively. I built an approach to the first research question which encompassed the influence of Anna Barriball and Sigrid Hjertén on my practice, applying the concept of traumatic repetition through expanded drawing practices in graphite, clay and painting. My approach to the second research question extends these techniques into architectural space through sculpture- and installation-based interventions in space, incorporating the influence of Anna Maria Maiolino. In the final phase of my research, I will apply the methodological approach I built alongside the work of Betty Woodman, by exploring the threshold between interior and exterior worlds through clay and moving image. In the following three chapters, I analyse the results of my artistic exploration of these questions using the methodological approaches I described here, beginning with *Chapter IV Repetition: Building Her House*.



## IV

# Repetition: Building Her House

### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I set out to explore studio practice made in investigating the first research question which arose from reviewing interdisciplinary approaches to trauma in the context of domestic abuse in *Chapter III: Literature Review*, particularly in the fields of psychology, sociology and cultural studies. The interwoven concepts of traumatic repetition, the traumatic void and translation emerged through reviewing literature from these fields, and in this chapter I develop these concepts through art practice to explore the reparative capacity of repetition, using the traumatic void as a source of narrative potential through aesthetic translation. With this intention, I brought together these key concepts into the formulation of a first research question as follows:

1. How can the concept of traumatic repetition be explored through different making processes to break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds?

As discussed in the previous chapter, *Methodology: Developing the Practice*, I decided to approach repairing these bonds by using the space for narrative development and translation created by repetitious drawing processes. In this way, the works I reflect on in this chapter are iterative, with drawings from memory, photographs and observation developing into three dimensions, understanding hand built ceramic sculpture



within an expanded drawing framework. In this way, the drawing processes used in the study themselves explore a key mechanism for this splintering of the domestic sanctuary-body: traumatic repetition. Traumatic memory's discontinuity enables haunting of the present, limiting the depth of human experience available through propulsion towards repetition. Exploring repair through repetition creates space to explore, transform, and reconcile traces of trauma. Splintered vestiges of the domestic are rebuilt into 'something like a whole – though [...] not necessarily like any pre-existing whole' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128). By focussing on art's 'ability to recontextualise, reconfigure, or recharge perception' (Felski, 2015, p. 17), monstrous part-memories can be translated, moving towards a resolution of trauma's propensity to continuously haunt while remaining inaccessible.

This chapter examines how monstrous, fragmented, bonds might be translated through a constellation of drawing processes which centre around repetition, moving towards repairing trauma's propensity to haunt while remaining inaccessible. It investigates the rebuilding of the post-traumatic home by repeating, translating and reconfiguring the echoes of the domestic environment, which form 'signifying sequences' (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213). It explores the role of reparative drawing practices – through both processes and outcomes – in understanding the fractured afterlives of female trauma, and in reimagining the idea of 'home' as a safe place. I begin by reflecting on the first stage of this process, developing a *Taxonomy of Home Parts*, below, before analysing the repetition and translation of *Taxonomy* through different mediums. I then consider the process of extending these initial findings into three-dimensional space, before exploring repetition through time by bringing these works into conversation with those of twentieth century Swedish modernist painter, Sigrid Hjertén.

## **4.2 Building Her House**

### **4.2.1 Taxonomy of Home Parts: Photography**

In this section, I reflect on the process of building a visual framework through which

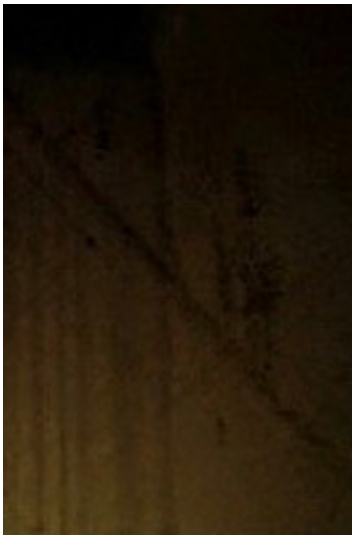


Figure 4.1 *Taxonomy of Home Parts*, found photographs, 2019

to explore my first research question. Having reviewed the literature around traumatic repetition, and considered how my existing art practice could be used to explore the key concepts in my first research question – repetition, translation and narrative – it became clear that I would first need visual reference material with which to build my visual explorations of these concepts. With this in mind, I decided first to gather photographic reference material from domestic interiors, which I intended to use as a basis for the first instance of artistic repetition, and indeed translation, in this chapter. From reviewing the literature on trauma and representation, I was conscious of the risks of using photographic imagery in perpetuating traumatic haunting by only presenting an inaccessible, fixed point in time (Sontag, 2019, p. 72), and equally by establishing a nostalgic stasis (Huyssen, 2006), and so I tried to address this in a number of ways.

Firstly, I decided to select imagery from three different sources: the home I inhabited in the city before first returning to my parents' home as an adult; the home I lived in with my parents and my sister when I was a young child; and photographs of strangers' houses which I had collected from boot fairs over the years, with additional photographs purchased from strangers on the internet. It was important that these photographs of strangers' houses were physical photographs, so that they held a physical trace of the dwellings they were impressions of, rather than existing only as digital imprints, so that this depth of traces could be brought out in the process of translating them into drawings. At first I anticipated that the mechanism for repetition would arise from drawn interpretations of the photographic imagery, but as I began to categorise the images, I realised that repetition could be found also within the images themselves (Figure 4.1-12). Similar features arose across different images of dwelling spaces – a chair, a door, a light fitting. By combining imagery saturated with my own memory, recent and distant, with imagery saturated with other people's memory, I hoped to move towards creating space for narratives of repair to form through repetitions of the forms found in the imagery in a space that was part-im-

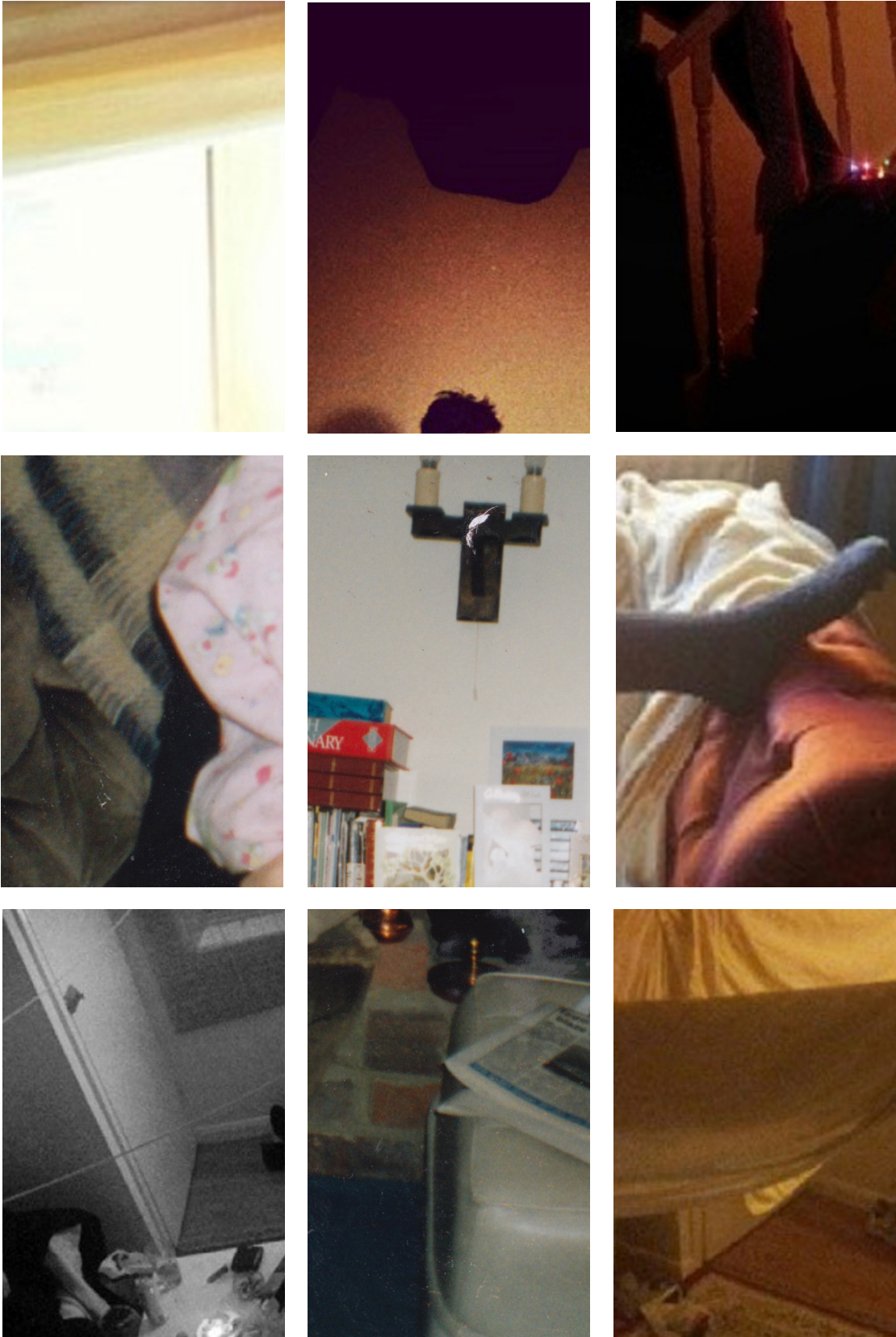


Figure 4.2 *Taxonomy of Home Parts* (continued), found photographs, 2019

aged, part-remembered. By using my pencil to bring together repeated imagery found across these images, I intended to explore one way in which repetition could be repurposed towards an abundance of narrative opportunities: a future which was not limited to traumatic repetition, in which exact patterns re-enact themselves in a life, further embedding traumatic events through revictimisation (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 199).

Secondly, I moved to avoid nostalgic stasis and photographic haunting by creating crops of these collected images so that they were pixelated, blurred, hazy recollections which themselves spoke to the normal experience of memory, rather than the more literal imprint theorised around traumatic memory (Leys, 2000, p. 148). While this was the intention behind approaching the collected imagery in this way, I was not expecting to find that the cropping process also created further spaces for narrative possibilities by defamiliarising elements of the typical English domestic environment so that it could be encountered as an unfolding space: that while the imagery was repetitious of not only familiar imagery of the home but also contained repeated elements within the set of images, the unfamiliarity generated by the cropping process also created the possibility of aesthetic transformation. This became something I explored further through the process of redrawing the images and allowing the medium of the pencil to create its own repetitions of the collected imagery.

In this way, by finding repetition within these cropped fragments firstly within the photographic imagery itself and then through drawn repetitions, I found that even within the source material, it was possible to move towards being able to create space for rebuilding traumatically fractured connections within the home into 'something like a whole – though [...] not necessarily like any pre-existing whole' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128). It also became apparent through these mechanisms that the narrative possibilities developing within this interior world could provide a scaffold for exploring the concepts of repetition, repair and translation, moving towards the aesthetic rebuilding of the post-traumatic home, using not only repetition but also

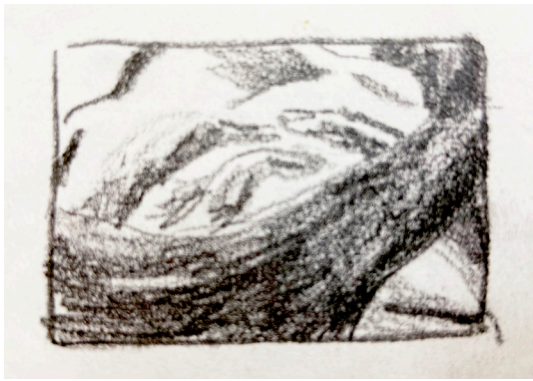
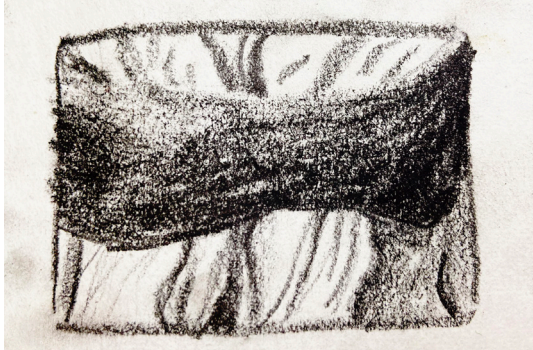


Figure 4.3 *Taxonomy of Home Parts* (development), pencil on paper, 2019

the fractured domestic itself to explore psychic repair. By creating a domestic space that was unrecognisable as a specific home but instead began to draw networks of visual connections between these domestic fragments, I intended to create visual explorations which looked outwards from the confines of the often extremely internal experience of the traumatic while exploring concepts central to our understanding of post-traumatic states. I go on to analyse the translation of this imagery using graphite pencil in the following section.

### **4.2.3 Taxonomy of Home Parts: Graphite Pencil**

Having explored the photographic imagery I brought together, I proceeded to repeat it using the medium of drawing. As explored in the previous chapter, *Methodology: Developing the Practice*, I decided to use drawing for this stage of investigating repetition both because of its centrality to my existing practice and because of the repetition inherent to the drawing process: repeated meeting of tool and paper, repeated weights of strokes generating tone and form, a method repeated through the history of art practice for transcribing the world around us (Figure 4.3). To further emphasise this repetition, both within drawing based practice itself and between the photographic imagery I had sourced and its drawn repetitions, I decided to begin by drawing repeated rectangles roughly equal in size through which to frame the drawings.

I intended that this would subsequently assist with the recognition of repeated pattern and form within the imagery, as well as itself being repetitive, so that these initial drawings would form a fruitful basis from which to create further repetitions of the imagery in other mediums. As I proceeded to make the drawings, it became apparent that these rectangles also created a sense of narrative by echoing the visual language of visual narrative formats including storyboards, comics, as well as sequential image making of the like practised by William Hogarth in his *Rake's Progress* paintings and etchings (1735) or more recently by Paula Rego (*The Abortion Series*, 1998). This was an important discovery because in this chapter, I am exploring how

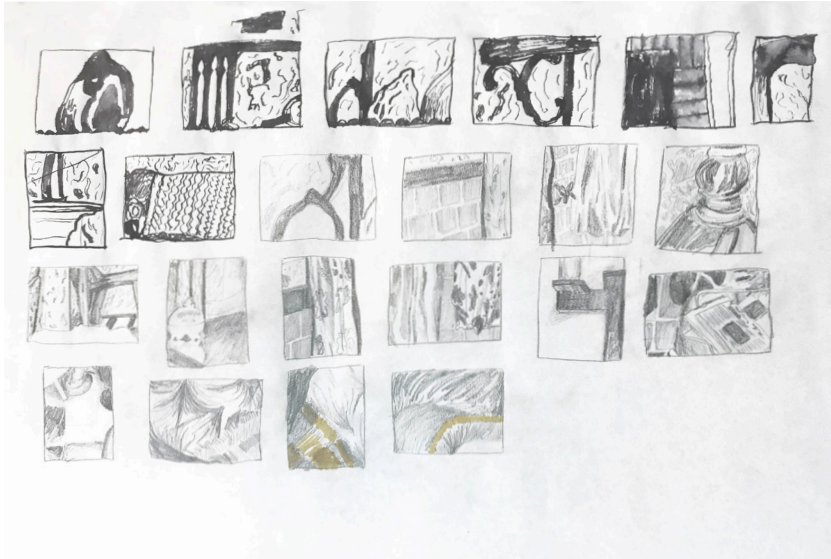


Figure 4.4 *Taxonomy of Home Parts* (in progress), ink, felt tip and pencil on washi paper, 2019

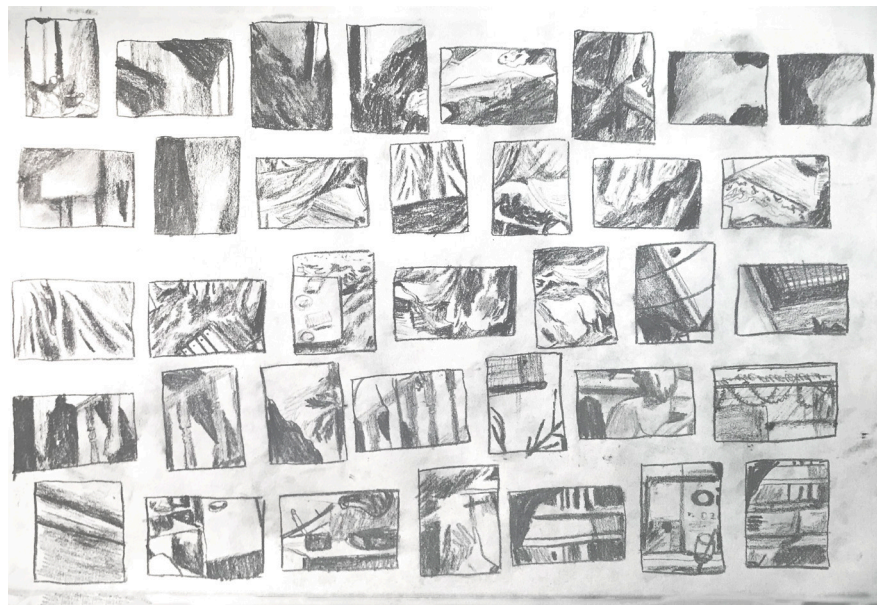


Figure 4.5 *Taxonomy of Home Parts*, pencil on washi paper, 2019



repetition can be used to formulate narrative possibilities rather than enclosing the post-traumatic home's inhabitant in patterns of repetition and revictimisation. The format of the panels would also come to echo the windows of the home I was building, paralleling Alberti's observation of a painting's frame acting as a window (Alberti and Grayson, 1972, p.55), which would become a key idea to explore in *Chapter VII: Thresholds*, later in this thesis.

Having established this panelled format, I began to draw. As can be seen in Figure 4.4 opposite, at first I experimented with different drawing mediums besides pencil, including brush and ink and coloured pens. However, I found these to be unsuccessful in comparison to simple pencil drawings because the ink lines were too precise, and I was trying to add visual information in another dimension – colour – too quickly. By using only graphite pencil marks, I could both retain the hazy, memory-like qualities of the cropped photographic imagery, and also emphasise the repetitious quality of the imagery by uniting it with the same mechanism (Figure 4.5). It also offered the opportunity to analyse one medium before adding a new stage of repetition into different, coloured, mediums later in this initial experimenting phase.

Furthermore, I found that the specific character of the graphite pencil emphasised the repetitious movement of the drawing process, because to create line and tone with graphite pencil, one must pay attention to the same area of the paper again and again, which is not the case with ink, where I would simply add water. I found that repetitive motion of the drawing tool allowed more space to reflect on repetition's significance in exploring visually the repair of the post-traumatic home. I also realised that the repeated movement central to the pencil drawing process began to create a sense of movement beyond the *stuckness* of the encounter between traumatic memory and domestic interior, alloyed by the 'physical claim' drawing allows us to 'stake', countering 'the disconnect that constitutes' the post-traumatic experience (Gilman, 2010, p. 115), as I explored in the previous chapter, *Methodology: Approaching the Practice*. This in turn meant that forms that began to emerge from this process generated an evolution

in the sense of tentative reconnection between fragments, offering impressions of shapes and spatial relationships that had previously been unclear and disjointed.

Pursuing drawn repetitions of the photographic imagery as these panels took shape also opened my first explorations of repetition through artistic processes so they might break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds to the relationship between repetition, ritual and life progression through its ecology of bonds. As I used the pencil to explore repetition in this way, I felt the 'ritual[istic]' (Jonas, Marranca and MacDonald, 2014, p. 36) capacity of drawing strongly, not only because of its repetitiousness, but also because of the meditative quality of the care and attention paid to each detail of each image. This sense of drawing as ritual came to be important because it added a further layer of structure to the encounters between residual traumatic memory and progression in the rebuilding of this part-imagined post-traumatic home. Ritual symbolises progression from one life stage to another, and by using this simple mechanism, there opened the possibility to tap into this human notion of the ritual as rite of passage, and the space for connection such rituals create – to one other, to past and future.

Furthermore, I was pleased to find that by drawing on very fine, translucent, washi paper, the drawings were able to form connections with the world above, beneath and around them, moving towards translation through the environments they themselves inhabit. This translucence allowed further exploration of translation through repetition because the act of drawing and re-drawing each element on this surface brought a sense of presence to each passing moment and to each environment they inhabited. This allowed me to begin to use artistic repetition as a means to explore the importance of cognitive flexibility as a means to reduce risk factors for revictimisation (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 199). Drawing these repetitious panels with graphite on washi paper in this way prevents the imagery of the emerging post-traumatic home from 'dwell[ing] in the past', instead 'envision[ing] a possible present in which the still inchoate energy they contain is harnessed' (Gilman, 2010,

p. 120).

In this way, these initial explorations of repetition, first through photographic imagery, and then through drawing with graphite pencil, also reinscribed the connection between exploring repetition through art practice as a tool for post-traumatic repair, and the field post critique as antidote to the hermeneutics of suspicion in the arts, in particular with the notion that:

If we stare for too long at the bright patch of sky, our eyes struggle to readjust to our immediate surroundings; dazzled by the light, we no longer perceive distinct objects but only a vague and confused blur. [...] The multiple hues of the present are flattened into a monotone shade of grey (Felski, 2015, p. 145).

The debilitating dissociation which can be central to post-traumatic states puts women at risk of revictimisation because of a linked inability to discern true danger. This dissociative state can be likened to the state Felski describes above, where the richness and complexity of each moment becomes flattened within a state of anxiety and suspicion. I found that by creating images through repetition and ritual in this way, it became possible for the repetitious drawing process itself, with its sense of movement and presence, combined with the translucent qualities of the washi paper, to begin to reinscribe the 'multiple hues of the present' (2015, p. 145).

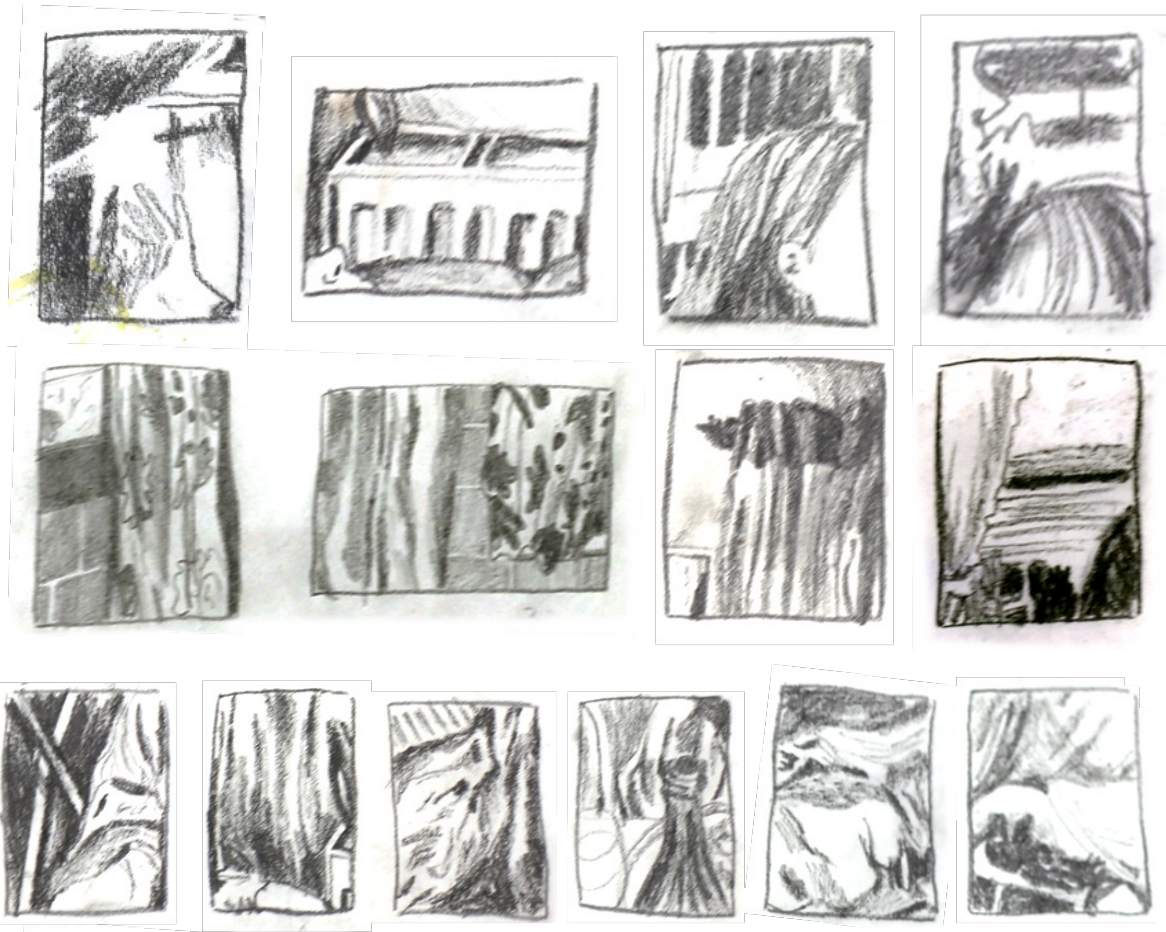
I found this was further developed when I began to scan and reposition the image panels, because of the tonal qualities of the pencil drawings, as well as the thought I had put into establishing a visual foundation for this exploration of artistic repetition. Further narrative possibilities began to form between the drawn panels, and through this process I found that as the drawn taxonomy developed, the repetition of marks led to encounters with repeated shapes and forms, and areas of shadow and light, that could begin to be drawn together into visual rhythms. As I began to explore in *Chapter II: Literature Review*, the slippages created by the gaps which these acts of translation inhabit create a sense of movement and connection between fragments of the larger whole of the visual language of the post-traumatic home I was creating (Benjamin, 1997, p. 151; De Man, 2000, p. 130). In the final *Taxonomy of Home Parts* reproduced

overleaf (Figure 4.6), what emerged was the bond of curtain-fold to curtain fold, slat to radiator vent, blanket to bed sheet, balustrade to limb, and finally, simple repetitions of abstract forms derived from these domestic spaces.

This was the first instance of the notion of rhythm, and the temporality it connotes, which I will return to as an important development in the potential of repetition in works explored later in this thesis, particularly in 6.3.2 *(Re-)Animating*. The process of repositioning the panels into new miniature shape-narratives also meant that I was also able to begin to observe a foundation of connections being forged through these simple drawings, and that they had the potential to begin to spark new visual ideas and connections themselves. Furthermore, I discovered through this final arrangement that these smallest visual elements, when enlarged and made central to a visual narrative, could begin to become the building blocks for new wholes, offering repair through repetition and translation. Through this process, it became possible to explore also the:

*decomposition* of signifying sequences, be they present or past, into elements to allow the analysand to spontaneously develop a new synthesis or translation of them – one that is less partial, less repressive, less symptomatic. (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213)

Ties between the traumatic memory must be reformed with other memories, and day-to-day experience, to heal relationships with the world, rather than remaining as a thought in the continuous present: repetitious, jarring and monstrous. By at once focussing on these aberrations in drawings, which come out of the meditative processing of surroundings in this medium, and magnifying them, turning them into patterns, rebuilding the visual world with them not at the core, but rather acknowledged as every other detail is acknowledged, they are transformed, and can do more than simply haunt. In this way, the repetitious quality of pattern is also related to ideas of encryption, and through them, and the traumatic crypt might begin to be unlocked (Pollock, p. 26). I decided to develop these insights further, and went on to explore what would happen when I introduced colour to them. I reflect on this process in the



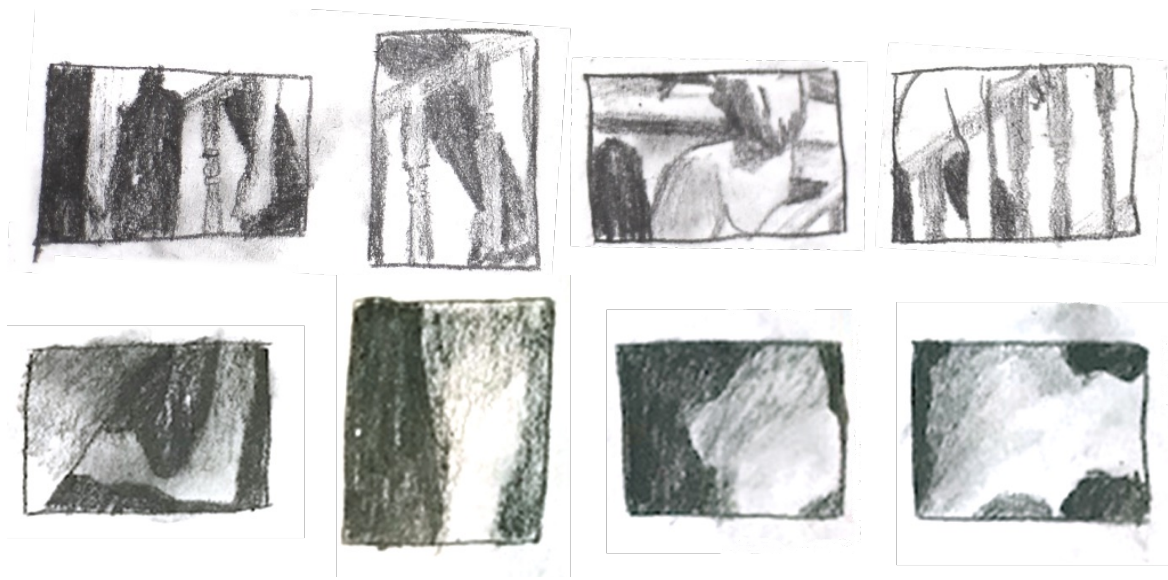


Figure 4.6 *Taxonomy of Home Parts*, pencil on washi paper, 2019



Figure 4.7 Studio wall, 2020

following section.

#### **4.2.4 Taxonomy of Home Parts: Colour**

In the previous section, I reflected on the process of building *Taxonomy of Home Parts* in graphite pencil. In this section, I explore the process of translating this imagery into colour (Figure 4.7). With the relationship between post-traumatic states, ‘monotone shade of grey’ (Felski, 2015, p. 145), the gaps afforded by translation (Morra, 2000, p. 136), and the importance of forming new ‘signifying sequences’ (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213) in mind, I decided to explore what would happen to these image sequences if I began to translate them through coloured mediums. I repeated the same imagery, translated already through one medium, graphite pencil on washi paper, and went on to translate it again by taking each panel first on to individual sheets of A7 paper, using coloured pencil, oil pastel, and chalk pastel to repeat them in non-naturalistic colours: as bright as possible (Figure 4.8). I intended these colours to be bold and vibrant, but they ended up having a jarring effect, which surprised me. I was pleased, however, to find this jarring effect quite effective in communicating something of the sometimes queasy-making feeling of suddenly encountering all of one’s senses anew as emerging from dissociative states. As I explored in *Chapter II: Literature Review*, at times, it might feel more comfortable to return to the disconnected, dissociative state, rather than embrace repair (van der Kolk, 1985).

To the ‘multiple hues’ (Felski, 2015, p. 145) I was beginning to explore in repetitive imagery, I began also to incorporate three dimensionality, which oil pastels in particular were creating on the paper surfaces. I considered this might be helpful in approaching affective repetition through reaching into three dimensional space explored in my review of the literature on trauma, repair and art practice (Pollock, 2013, p. 65). To further emphasise this effect, I decided to add thickening materials and impasto grounds to some of the small images. Beginning to work with these layers, I





Figure 4.8 *Taxonomy of Home Parts* (development), oil pastel, coloured pencil, pigment and wax on paper, 2019-20

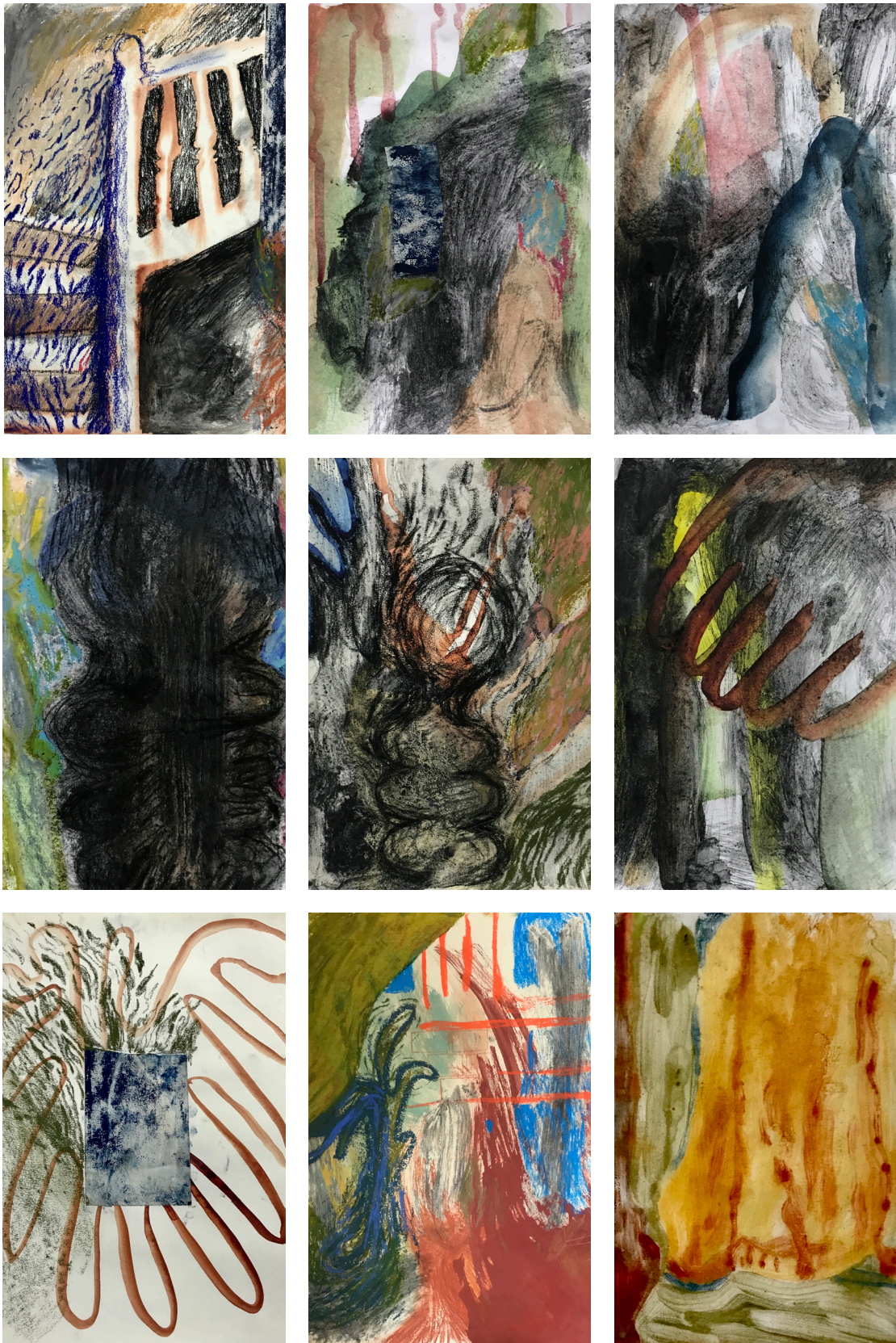


Figure 4.9 *Taxonomy of Home Parts* (development), mixed media on paper, 2019-20

built further dimensions to the coloured imagery by first creating more direct impressions of the internal environments around me – in my studio, in my home – by using rubbings and monoprints (Figure 4.9). I then repeated the act of fragmenting and rebuilding these impressions, returning to a visual exploration of the splintering effect of trauma. First I sliced into them with scissors, before bringing them into dialogue with drawn repetitions of the imagery I had already made using graphite pencil.

I found that dissecting and bringing together imagery in this way began to bring a depth to the part-imagined post-traumatic home I was creating, which worked with the use of colour to return a richness to the narrative forming between each of these glimpses, in the gaps of the translation process. Where I had intended to use repetition to begin breaking down fragments of the post-traumatic home, I found instead that acts of repetition repeatedly came together to forge new connections and narrative possibilities, not only through layers of repeated imagery but also the layers of colour and elements of three-dimensionality, again echoing Benjamin's observations of the art of translation holding the key to the larger story of language itself (1997). This depth created an opportunity to explore visually the presentness I had found through the initial drawing process. The layered imagery created multiple points of attention on which to focus, which as a visual exploration offered an alternative to the flattening of traumatic repetition as a point that is always returned to in the present, rather than inhabiting time as other important memories do.

In this way, from the repetition within the growing *Taxonomy of Home Parts*, I found a more complex visual environment emerging. This led me to consider that not only colour but also space would be a key concept to explore through repetition, because the depth made available through pursuing artistic repetition had also begun to create a break from the flat experience of dissociative traumatic memory. Moreover, a number of the visual structures which had emerged through these processes lent themselves to being explored in three dimensions, which I anticipated might create a dialogue between the iterative repetitions in two dimensions and artistic exploration

of the concept of the traumatic void through affective repetition (Pollock, 2014, p. 65). I decided to pursue this by gradually working further into three dimensions, a process which I examine below.

#### **4.2.5 Darling, Be Home Soon**

In the previous section, I reflected on the expansion of monochrome imagery from *Taxonomy of Home Parts* into colour, and found that through translation into colour, imagery began to grow into three dimensional space. In this section, I explore the development of these processes further into three dimensions by working with another pillar of my practice: clay. Seeking an iterative approach to working more sculpturally, I found the extra dimension to the repetitious drawing processes explored above enabled me to begin considering working with clay as another drawing process in itself. Before leaping to explore this through ceramic sculpture, I also wanted to investigate the relationship between clay and the domestic by bringing its material relationship with the domestic together with the domestic imagery I had been exploring so far. In this way, I wanted to find out what would happen when I brought clay together with the concepts of repetition, translation and repair central to this first research question. To begin, I decided to create a series of tiles which would speak to a common domestic application of clay, the repeated squares coming together to create a single image using the layers of imagery I had begun to build up through drawing. As each tile would act as a small fragment of a larger image, as well as a three-dimensional ceramic artwork in its own right, I anticipated that together they would create space for visual exploration of this relationship between the domestic, traumatic splintering, translation and repetition.

To ensure these tiles acted to continue developing the drawn imagery I analysed in the previous two sections which visually explored traumatic repetition, to the tiles and the repeated imagery I began to add marks which were themselves reminiscent of drawing techniques: cross hatching, rough shading, and line work. Remaining in the realm of drawing in this way extended my exploration of traumatic repetition



Figure 4.10 *Darling, Be Home Soon* (in progress), bisqueware, 2020

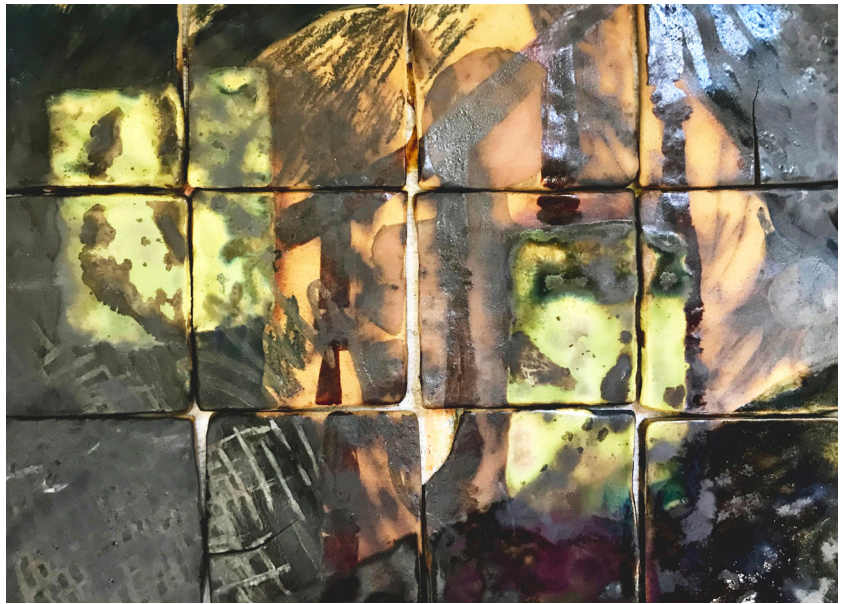


Figure 4.11 *Darling, Be Home Soon*, glazed stoneware, 2020

repetition can be used to formulate narrative possibilities rather than enclosing the post-traumatic home's inhabitant in patterns of repetition and revictimisation. The format of the panels would also come to echo the windows of the home I was building, paralleling Alberti's observation of a painting's frame acting as a window (Alberti and Grayson, 1972, p.55), which would become a key idea to explore in *Chapter VII: Thresholds*, later in this thesis.

Having established this panelled format, I began to draw. As can be seen in Figure 4.4 opposite, at first I experimented with different drawing mediums besides pencil, including brush and ink and coloured pens. However, I found these to be unsuccessful in comparison to simple pencil drawings because the ink lines were too precise, and I was trying to add visual information in another dimension – colour – too quickly. By using only graphite pencil marks, I could both retain the hazy, memory-like qualities of the cropped photographic imagery, and also emphasise the repetitious quality of the imagery by uniting it with the same mechanism (Figure 4.5). It also offered the opportunity to analyse one medium before adding a new stage of repetition into different, coloured, mediums later in this initial experimenting phase.

Furthermore, I found that the specific character of the graphite pencil emphasised the repetitious movement of the drawing process, because to create line and tone with graphite pencil, one must pay attention to the same area of the paper again and again, which is not the case with ink, where I would simply add water. I found that repetitive motion of the drawing tool allowed more space to reflect on repetition's significance in exploring visually the repair of the post-traumatic home. I also realised that the repeated movement central to the pencil drawing process began to create a sense of movement beyond the *stuckness* of the encounter between traumatic memory and domestic interior, alloyed by the 'physical claim' drawing allows us to 'stake', countering 'the disconnect that constitutes' the post-traumatic experience and modern life more broadly (Gilman, 2010, p. 115), as I explored in the previous chapter, *Methodology: Approaching the Practice*. This in turn meant that forms that began to emerge from

practice, so important for repair of the post-traumatic subject (van der Kolk, 1985; Classen, Palesh and Aggarwal, 2005; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011), as well as creating space for reconnection through both echoes of drawn marks and translation of fragments of domestic imagery into a greater visual whole. By beginning to bring these processes into three dimensional space, the effects of uncertainty and translation began to become more pronounced due to the nature of ceramic processes and the physical spaces between each tile. This once again emphasised the importance of translation's slippages (Morra, 2000, p. 136; Benjamin, 1997) in creating space for an ecology of bonds to form in the visual language of the post-traumatic home under repair (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009). I also found that the darkness of the imagery overall came to emphasise the panels overglazed with a crystalline formula – these shine through in the top left and bottom right of the piece, and reframe the connection between Alberti's window (Alberti and Grayson, 1972, p.55), the panel as a device of visual narrative, and the site of the window as threshold between interior and external worlds. I will approach these themes in more detail later in this thesis, as they recur throughout my research: first in the final section of this chapter in approaching the narrative world I begin to build through painting, and then in chapters *VI* and *VII*. With the importance of the window noted for later investigation, I decided first to explore some of the visual motifs that had arisen from working with the tiles, as well as from *Taxonomy of Home Parts*, in a more sculptural format.

#### **4.2.6 Grappler, Offering**

In the previous section, I began to locate clay in the expanded field of drawing through examination of the process of making tiles. In this section, I explore what happened when I pushed these findings further into three dimensional space. Just as I was not yet sure of the significance of the window panel, other than it was repeatedly arising through my artistic explorations of traumatic repetition within the domestic environment, I knew that working with clay in my practice has a strong relationship to



Figure 4.12 *Taxonomy of Home Parts* (detail), pencil on washi paper, 2019



Figure 4.13 *Offering*, glazed stoneware, 2020



the centrality of drawing in my practice, but I was not yet sure of the depth of these bonds. I go on to investigate further by paying careful attention to each stage of the hand building process in *Chapter V: Dwelling Spaces*, but for now it was enough that a connection could be made between drawn imagery reflected on earlier in this chapter, and its translation into three dimensions through the medium of clay. Each coil, each engraving of emerging forms with a serrated tool, corresponded to the drawn lines I had been making, and, by inhabiting three-dimensional space, staking even more of the claim to connected presence that two dimensional drawings represent, which I began to explore in *Chapter II: Methodology* (Gilman, 2010, p. 115). With this in mind, I will reflect here briefly on two early ceramic pieces I made in direct response to the two-dimensional drawings I had made.

The first translation of these drawings was a direct repetition of a form drawn early in the process of making *Taxonomy of Home Parts* (Figure 4.12). I found myself attracted to the more sculptural shapes – perhaps once a table leg, a bed post or a balustrade – emerging from these drawings at first, as they were ripe for such a translation back into three dimensions. I created the central body of the sculpture first, adding texture to the clay surface by bringing in a repetitious use of a clay needle: I poked small holes all over the curves of the central form. Doing this, I again allowed explorations of ways in which the connection between drawing and clay can be emphasised. Just as I had painted cross hatched areas on the tiles above, here I translated a method for creating tone in drawing into physical punctures of the clay body. I found that this generated a continuation of the repetitious, ritualistic quality of the initial drawings I had made.

I added the four legs emerging from the base of *Offering* after creating the central body of the sculpture. These legs began at first to destabilise this body and then in the firing process to add life to its static belly. However, although I had added these four legs emerging from *Offering's* body, the resulting sculpture was rather unstable (Figure 4.13). While this was potentially also intriguing, I left it as a test object for

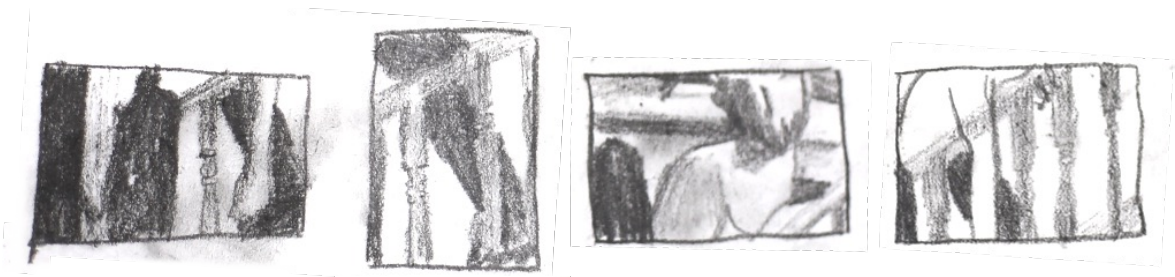


Figure 4.14 *Taxonomy of Home Parts* (detail), pencil on washi paper, 2019

now, as I found it difficult to use *Offering* to develop insights into traumatic repetition. While it developed my approach to applying the concept through artistic processes by translating a drawing from two- to three-dimensional space, I felt it did not yet reach towards the creation of narrative possibilities for reconnection and repair as the two-dimensional drawing processes, and *Darling, Be Home Soon*, had. With this in mind, I set out to make a new sculpture, *Grappler*, with the intention of creating additional, more complex spaces for these possibilities to form in the translation of fragments (Benjamin, 1997, p. 151), while also strengthening the connection between drawing and sculptural processes in my practice.

To make *Grappler*, I decided that instead of selecting a single image from the *Taxonomy of Home Parts*, I would use a selection, as it was the relationship of the drawn images to one another where the connection between repetition, repair and rebuilding was most evident, through the generation of narrative possibilities in the slippages of translation (Morra, 2000, p. 136). Within this selection, I made sure that the repetitious qualities I sought to explore while making these drawings were evident in the form of repeated shapes, so as to fully enable the exploration of repetition through the sculptural element of my artistic practice. The panels I selected still contained elements that lent themselves well to translation into three dimensions, while also making the most of the potential of their original medium, graphite pencil, and its claim to physical space (Gilman, 2010, p. 115), through the combination of line and tone, light and shade (Figure 4.14; Figure 4.17).

I decided to use vulcan black clay, which is a grogged clay, lending itself towards hand building, and which fires to nearly black. I intended for the shade of the clay itself to allow further ideas around light and shade to emerge as they had in *Darling, Be Home Soon*. I began by forming three pillars (Figure 4.15) which were based on the shapes brought out through Figure 4.14 and Figure 4.17. Pursuing the possibility of drawing in three dimensions, and findings in *Chapter III: Methodology* about its relationship to repetition and ritual (Jonas, Marranca and MacDonald, 2014, p. 36), I also



Figure 4.15 *Grappler* (in progress), vulcan black clay, 2020

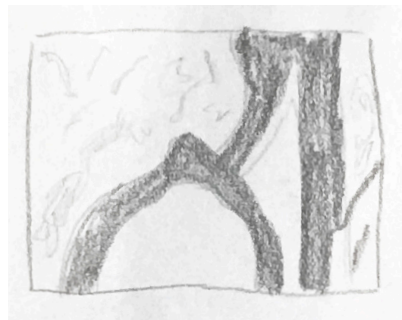


Figure 4.17 *Taxonomy of Home Parts* (detail), pencil on washi paper, 2019

Figure 4.16 *Grappler* (in progress), vulcan black clay and aluminium foil, 2020





Figure 4.18 *Grappler* (in progress), vulcan black clay and porcelain slip, 2020



Figure 4.19 *Grappler*, glazed stoneware, 2020

created a two lines connecting the three pillars (Figure 4.16), which was an attempt to relate the thick line found in Figure 4.17 directly into three dimensional space. As the sculpture grew, despite the nature of the clay, these additions in particular became unstable, and I had to support the structure as I was making it and as it was drying with aluminium foil. Upon reflection, the documentation of this use of foil was helpful in re-introducing a material directly from the domestic; directly from the kitchen (Figure 4.16).

I found that the unexpected repetition of this domestic material within the context of this sculpture provided an additional node for narrative possibilities to flourish, and the crinkles in the surface of the foil themselves spoke to the pattern in the background of Figure 4.17. Pleased that these dialogues were beginning to emerge, and that the form of this sculpture seemed to lend itself more to the notion of reaching into future potentialities through its three pillars with their three mouths opening into the belly of the construction, I reflected that the success so far of this structure could also be due to the connection created by the three dimensional line not only between drawing and sculpture but between each pillar – each node – of the sculpture itself. It seemed that this third experiment in clay sculpture was more able to make a direct connection to the energy of the repetitious drawings I had made earlier. By using repetition in sculpture, I found I was able to begin breaking down ‘signifying sequences’ (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213), reassembling them into a new whole which gropes towards repair.

I proceeded to use porcelain slip on the upper surfaces of the sculpture to allow the glazes I would use to impart their full depth of colour (Figure 4.18). However, when I retrieved the sculpture from the kiln, it became apparent that I had not put enough thought into the specific colours I had used on this sculpture and that it would likely have been more successful if I had only used the porcelain slip (Figure 4.19). This is because in the images before firing, of the greenware sculpture smothered with porcelain slip, it seems that more can be made out of the undulating surface of

the sculpture, not to mention the three-dimensional line I had created (Figure 4.18). In terms of being able to reflect on repetition through artistic processes, this unfired sculpture offered more space to consider signifying sequences, for example.

Furthermore, I found that the glaze had reacted with the slip and cracked extensively, which was not my intention (Figure 4.21). With that said, the repetitious pattern created through these cracks by the unknowable process within the kiln had the potential to create space for reflection on fragmentation, rebuilding and the nature of repair within the context of artistic exploration of traumatic repetition. In this way, while the repetitive sculpting process – repetitive both in the process itself and in its repetition of earlier imagery – had created spaces to forge new bonds, the unexpected results of the firing process had reilluminated the capacity of these explorations of repetition through art practice to also fragment bonds further, without necessarily leading to repair. The disappointing effect of firing on the sculpture also created opportunities to forge ahead with these explorations of traumatic repetition through art practice in that the unsettling, monstrous fragments of the post-traumatic home could again be revealed, ready for repair.

Having reflected upon these early experiments in exploring traumatic repetition through art practice, I decided to take the errors within the sculptures and translate them into a new medium so as to further explore the potential of repetition to break, forge and translate bonds within the post-traumatic home. I decided to do this by bringing together the concept of the panel or window with repeating visual references to ceramic sculpture, as well as repeating some of the imagery found in the work of an artist who has been a key influence on my practice, whose subjects are often domestic interiors and who herself struggled with post-traumatic states: Sigrid Hjertén. I reflect on these encounters below.

### **4.3 After Hjertén**

In the previous section, I reflected on the process of extending two-dimensional *Tax-*



Figure 4.21 *Grappler* (detail),  
glazed stoneware, 2020

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Figure 4.20 *Sigrid Hjertén and Liselotte Watkins* (CFHILL,  
2018



*onomy of Home Parts* into space through translating it into three-dimensional ceramic sculpture. In this section, I extend these works also through time, by bringing them into dialogue with the work of two artists: Sigrid Hjertén and Liselotte Watkins. Sigrid Hjertén's work is underexplored in English-language scholarship, although it has received renewed attention in her native Sweden more recently, particularly through her posthumous collaborations with contemporary artist Liselotte Watkins. I decided to make use of her work in this strand of my research not only in order to add to the contribution of this thesis by bringing her work into conversation with the concepts I have been exploring, but also because her paintings are so often situated within the home, offering glimpses of others' lives through her own windows. In this way, the window again becomes an important concept to explore within the relationship between art practice, gendered trauma, narrative, and the home. Furthermore, by engaging with her work through my own practice, I intended to add an additional layer of repetition to the works already explored in this chapter, creating additional 'sites of time' (Pollock, 2013, p. xxviii) for connections between visual languages, and moving towards repair.

I had initially planned to visit Hjertén's archive in Stockholm, inspired in part by the collaboration between Liselotte Watkins and Hjertén at CFHILL Gallery, Stockholm, in 2018 (Figure 4.20). Watkins had repeated the colours and figures in Hjertén's work across found terracotta pieces which she repainted. As this work opened visual dialogues between Hjertén's early twentieth century and Watkins' early twenty-first century, it also created a dynamic of timeless rooms, and space for reflection upon women's place within rooms. In this way, she reactivated vibrant connections in and between Hjertén's work and Watkins' historical artefacts. In visiting the archive, I hoped to build on this reactivation of relationships, and these translations between forms, through Hjertén's own raw drawings, which I had glimpsed briefly in her great granddaughter's home some time ago. Unfortunately, this trip to the archives was not possible due to travel restrictions imposed in response to COVID-19, and so instead

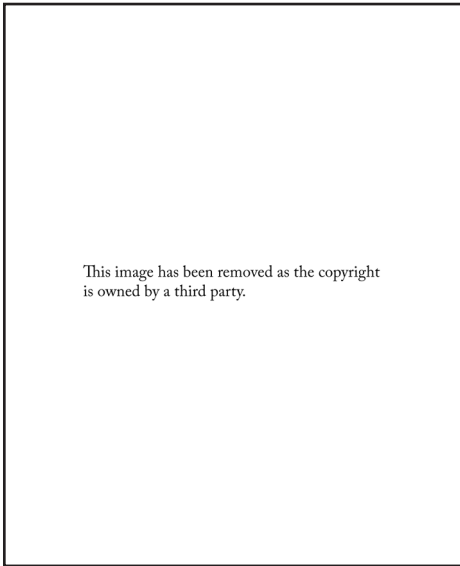


Figure 4.22 *Sigrid Hjertén – Pioneer of Swedish Expressionism* (Behr et al., 1999)

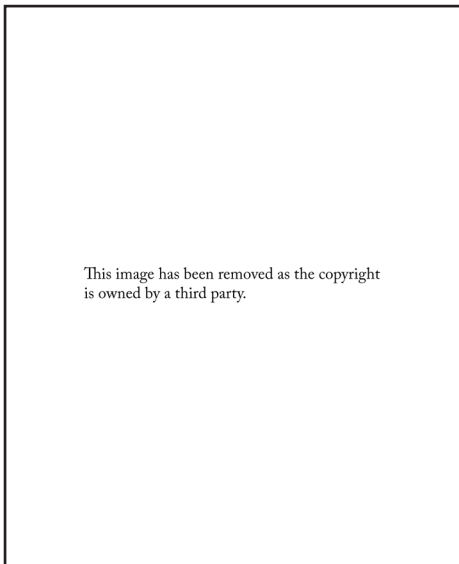


Figure 4.23 *The Blue Locomotive* (Hjertén, 1919, cited in Behr et al., p. 131)



Figure 4.24 *After Hjertén*, oil on canvas, 2020

I have traced these relationships with the help of my memory of the impression these drawings and watercolours had made on me and a nondescript looking German catalogue of Hjertén's works (Behr et al., 1999; Figure 4.22).

I made three paintings which adopted imagery found in Hjertén's paintings. The first is a painted sketch which uses one of Hjertén's paintings, *The Blue Locomotive* (1919), of the world outside her window as its source (Figure 4.23). This was useful in creating space to consider once again the concept of the window and its function in this thesis, and in finding ways of bringing narrative shocks into these painted repetitions by introducing fire, a visual metaphor for the destruction of the safe home environment by traumatic fragmentation. While it also began to bring together some of the domestic imagery I had drawn previously within the site of a dolls' house, I found my painting itself to be unrefined, and the colours off (Figure 4.24). I had also selected something of a small canvas, which offered little opportunity to explore the full potential of Hjertén's windowscape. I did find that I had begun to seek out the relationship between drawn and painted marks in repeating the pattern found in Hjertén's original painting, however, and this would be something I brought forward into my second and third paintings.

The second painting repeats a female character at the centre of *Woman in Red Interior* (Hjertén, 1915; Figure 4.26), clothing full of rich pattern and surrounded by domestic ceramic items: china cups, saucers. I decided to add to these with forms repeated from my own work in ceramic sculpture, using the handles of the form at the left of my painting to echo – repeat – the female protagonist's stance (Figure 4.27; Figure 4.25). I had also initially intended to introduce narrative panels at the top of the painting, but decided eventually that this would have created too much of a busy narrative space, with panels competing with strong colours. In a similar way to the brighter panels in *Darling, Be Home Soon*, though, the way that the layers of paint formed over the top of the panels I had initially painted did leave traces of them (Figure 4.28), and I decided to take this trace of slippage between interior and exterior

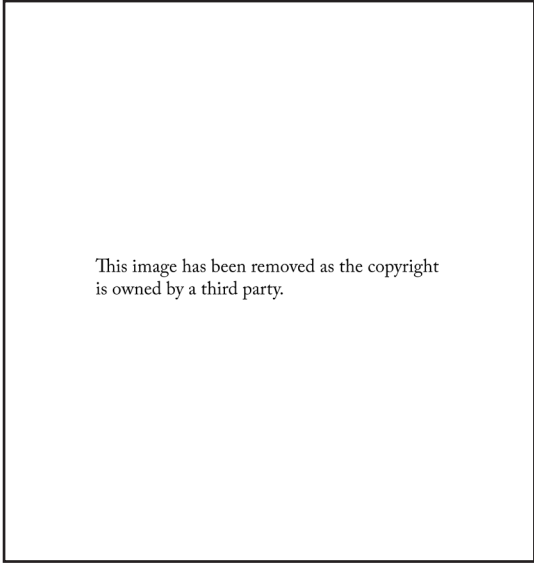


Figure 4.26 *Woman in Red Interior* (Hjertén, 1915, cited in Behr et al., 1999, p. 105)



Figure 4.27 *Wraith* (in progress), charcoal on canvas, 2020



Figure 4.25 *Wraith* (in progress), oil and charcoal on canvas, 2020



Figure 4.28 *Wraith* (detail; in progress), oil on canvas, 2020



Figure 4.29 *Wraith*, oil and soft pastel on canvas, 2020

forward into later experiments, because of the way it enabled me to use the haunting trace of an image as a site of potential growth rather than the static nostalgic haunting of a photograph (Sontag, 2019, p. 72).

As discussed, while I decided against introducing narrative panels in this painting, I did decide to take my previous endeavour to explore the relationship between drawing and painting further by making the most of repeating Hjertén's representations of domestic pattern. I also introduced soft pastel to repeat some of the patterns which had emerged from the drawn experiments I reflected on at the beginning of this chapter, but on a larger scale (Figure 4.29). I began to find that by using the repetitious, ritualistic technique of drawing, which I began to explore in *Chapter III: Methodology* (Jonas, Marranca and MacDonald, 2014, p. 36), to work into the painting's surface, I might be able to uncover something further of the potential of artistic repetition to create a multiplicity of nodes from which bonds could form, and 'signifying sequences' could be re-formed (Laplanche, 2017, p.213).

The final painting I made in response to Hjertén's work brought together some of my earlier observations both from initial explorations of traumatic repetition through art practice and from engaging with Hjertén's paintings to make the first two pieces I have described. I will reflect on this work in more detail as I found it to be the most successful of the three. Thinking deeply about the ways in which repetition could forge conversations between past and present, and offer opportunities to reframe the future through notions of repair, I decided to repeat a curtain which appears in two of Hjertén's paintings, *Iván Asleep* (1915; Figure 4.30) and *Iván in the Armchair* (1915; Figure 4.31). With this act of painted repetition, I intended to not only further explore traumatic repetition but also to illuminate the layers of the domestic in my own painting.

In Hjertén's paintings, her son Iván is embraced by a curtain. As I reflected on this embrace, I noted that the artist also makes use of repetition within the curtain itself, and within a growing relationship between the hanging fabric here and in her other

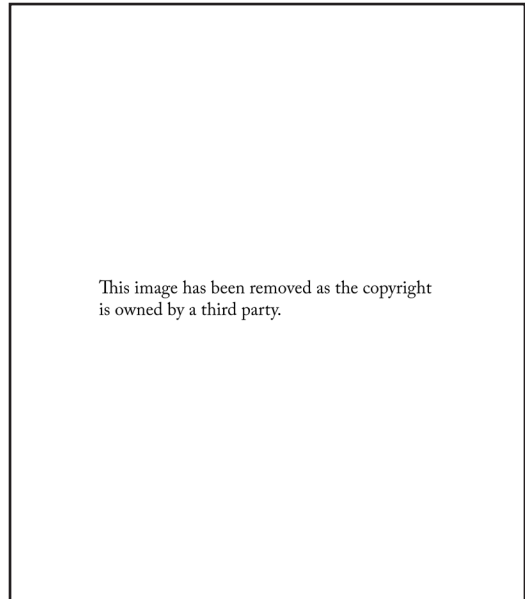


Figure 4.30 *Iván Asleep* (Hjertén, 1915, cited in Behr et al., 1999, p. 95)

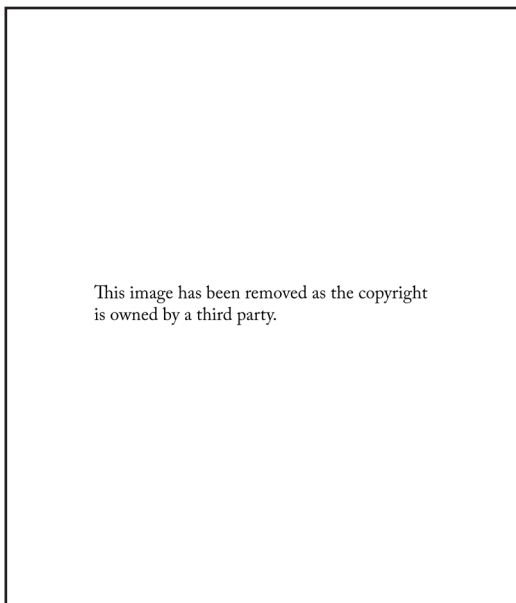


Figure 4.31 *Iván in the Armchair* (Hjertén, 1915, cited in Behr et al., 1999, p. 93)

paintings, two of which I explored above. I observed that this use of repeated pattern relates the painting to the notion of the comfort of repetition offering a seductive comfort alongside the risk of revictimisation, and Iván's embrace by this familiarity, as well as by his domestic shell, leaves him sleeping peacefully. This is further emphasised by Hjertén's use of cool colours and frenetic paint strokes in the world beyond Iván's window, contrasting with warm, womblike colours in his domestic dwelling space. In deciding to incorporate an echo of Hjertén's curtain here, I intended to use repetition of these domestic fabrics to forge connections both to Hjertén and to Liselotte Watkins, whose background lies in textile design. The layers of draped fabric add a dramatic sense to this interior, and the repeated patterns in the curtains that appear throughout Hjertén's paintings create a network of rooms. This is important both because it generates the space for connection between Hjertén's interior worlds and my own part-imagined post-traumatic home, across time and space, and because it brings the visual language of domestic space, translated across these spheres, into dialogue with Benjamin's vision of translation creating access to language itself (1997).

In addition, I was able to explore more fully through my own art practice how encounters with the domestic in the processes of other artists might offer aesthetic transformations of affective traces of trauma. In this way, I could emphasise ideas of fragmentation and repair by drawing Hjertén's paintings into visual dialogue with one another and my own work; making these connections, and the many ways that people and things can relate to one another across time and space, not only visible, but animated through artistic processes. Furthermore, I found the bodily, unctuous quality of oil paint – the medium used in the Hjertén paintings and my own – brought out the relationship between home, sculpture and body. This is important because one of the purposes of exploring the home as an artistic-philosophical space is also to explore the relationship between embodiment and recollections of space, and how these recollections can be reformed so as to build new connections: to become unstuck from the pattern of traumatic repetition (van der Kolk, 2000, p. 19).





Figure 4.32 *The House Was Like Her* (in progress), oil on canvas, 2020



Figure 4.33 *The House Was Like Her* (in progress), oil on canvas, 2020

I began by painting *Offering* as a figure in the space of the canvas, building up layers of colour which reflected the qualities of the glaze I had used in the ceramic tests explored earlier in this chapter (Figure 4.32). I decided to add elements to this new constellation, building on my findings from the emerging narratives explored through artistic processes explored throughout this chapter. I began to build a tale within the painting itself, eventually inviting *Offering*, Hjertén's curtain, the balustrades of *Taxonomy of Home Parts* and *Grappler*; each acting as characters, each sparking the beginnings of a new story of their own through their repetition in this painting (Figure 4.33). I took these harmonised parts to investigate the notion of repair through repetition at a higher degree of intensity, forging and reforging these characters in layers. Gradually I increased the intensity of the imagery and its connections with each layer, with thicker and thicker paint, each daub forging new connections through its repetitive gestures. I decided to begin to scratch into these layers, building up additional fragments of Hjertén's painting, my own home-history and found images. Adding and removing paint in this way enabled me to consider the painting as an extension of the drawing processes I had been exploring throughout the works reflected on in this chapter. I found this also highlighted the emerging conversations between my ceramic and two-dimensional works through their connection to the drawn line.

As the figures in this story built up in each layer of paint, I decided to return to the window as a narrative device by adding a more recognisable figure. Within this window, I painted a repetition of a still from archival footage of a beautiful woman crying almost ecstatically – on a bed (Curtis, 2016; Figure 4.34, Figure 4.35). As explored in *Chapter II: Literature Review*, hysteria is deeply connected to the development of interest in female trauma (Lemprecht and Sack, 2002). In the completed painting, the forms of *Offering* provide a base for layers of intersecting repetitions, beginning through this layering process to generate connections also into three dimensional space. Through creating these three paintings to develop the findings I had made through my artistic practice in the works explored in this chapter, I had begun to forge

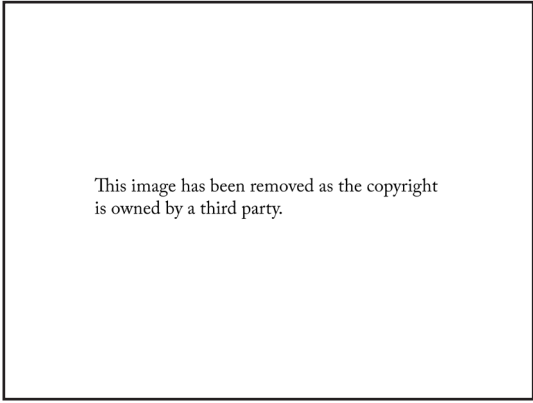


Figure 4.34 Still, *HyperNormalisation* (Curtis, 2016)



Figure 4.35 Preparatory drawing, *The House Was Like Her*, watercolour on paper, 2020



Figure 4.36 *The House Was Like Her*, oil on canvas, at 155a Gallery, London, 2020 (Photograph: Warbling Collective)

new connections through time and space using repetition. Engaging with Hjertén's work, archival domestic imagery, and imagery from my own homes had served to repeat and reformulate fragments of the past into a part-imagined post-traumatic home entering the rebuilding process. By layering these repetitions in thick paint, and repeating in painting clay forms I had made, I had also begun to forge connections in space, which would provide a foundation for the works explored in the following chapter. Before proceeding to reflecting on artistic research undertaken in response to this second research question, I will briefly summarise the key findings from this chapter below.

#### **4.4 Summary and Key Points**

In this chapter, I analysed artistic research I conducted which explored traumatic repetition as a means to create movement from the often fixed and imposing nature of traumatic memory, generating sites for connection and reconnection through art practice. In reflecting on sometimes disparate elements of my studio practice in this chapter, I sought to explore how the concept of traumatic repetition could be explored through different making processes to break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds, responding to my first research question, which arose from *Chapter II: Literature Review* and which was composed as follows:

1. How can the concept of traumatic repetition be explored through different making processes to break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds?

In answering this question, I reflected on the dialogue between drawing, painting, and ceramic sculpture in my studio practice, within this practice using repetition itself as a means to repair fractured, fractious part-objects and rebuild the post-traumatic home. By taking this multidisciplinary approach, I started to build constellations of works which drew out the 'traces [...] of trauma' (Pollock, 2013, p. xxi) and used repetition – in process and source material – to begin to shift the relationships between the nodes in the post-traumatic ecosystem. In doing this, I translated repetition, so central to

the damage inherent to post-traumatic states, into an action which can itself begin to enact reconnection between the ‘multiple hues of the present’ (Felski, 2015, p. 145) and past, using the domestic as a prism to build a bridge to a future not shut down by repetition as revictimisation. I also explored this through repetition of forms and visual motifs across mediums including drawing, ceramics and painting. I found that through these artistic processes, I could begin to turn traumatic repetition into a tool with which to create not only iterative works which begin to form an ecology of traces of the domestic but also using the spaces between repetitions for traumatic residues to be ‘approached, moved and transformed’ (2013, p. 4). This transformation is ‘not cure; it is *poiesis*: making’ (p. 4). The works created in this chapter – both the outcomes and the processes themselves – offer possibilities for traumatic repetition as *poiesis*, rather than calcification.

In this way, I found that the artistic processes I engaged in were as significant as the outcomes themselves in using repetitious techniques to extend the post-traumatic ecology of bonds in different dimensions: across two-dimensional surfaces using found photography and drawing, into space using ceramics, and through time by creating a painted dialogue with the work of Sigrid Hjertén. By pursuing traumatic repetition as an artistic modality in this way, I found I could also begin to build up a part-imagined post-traumatic home which would serve as an artistic structure for my research. Working with two-dimensional surfaces, I found that approaching found photographs with a repetitive cropping process and then translating them through drawing allowed me to begin to carve out spaces for narrative possibilities by forging new relationships between defamiliarised domestic elements repeated throughout the imagery.

By enacting these repetitious processes, I established that this domestic imagery could begin to be translated, visually breaking the literality of recollected traumatic personal-architectural bonds and reapproaching the haziness of normal memory (Leys, 2000, p. 148). In creating this space, through photographic grain and pencil

strokes, the imagery of the part-imagined post-traumatic home could be encountered as an unfolding space, where new personal-architectural bonds can be nurtured. Through the use of repetition as an artistic tool, narrative possibilities began to open up, countering the closed pattern of revictimisation associated with traumatic repetition (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011). The results of this investigation using two-dimensional surfaces show that the repetitious motion of the pencil develops a sense of movement beyond the stuckness of encounters between traumatic memory and domestic interior.

Furthermore, by introducing the panel as a visual structure for these drawn translations, I established a relationship to other narrative art forms including graphic novels, thus cultivating a sense of narrative possibility within the previously limited narrative path of traumatic repetition. I found that this structure also created opportunities to use a breaking of bonds with the original found imagery, which arises from small errors in the drawn translation process, to forge new personal-architectural bonds through pursuing these errors into the creation of new bonds. In this way, these repetitious drawn glimpses became sites of creation, applying through art practice Sedgwick's concept of the reparative position in which traumatically fractured personal-architectural bonds could be rebuilt into 'something like a whole – though [...] not necessarily like any pre-existing whole' (2003, p. 128).

By beginning to extend this burgeoning visual space into three dimensions, I established that by using repetitious techniques to translate drawn marks into ceramic pieces, in part by using pottery tools as drawing tools, these visual explorations began to create a sense of growing outwards from the confines of the internal experiences of the traumatic. I found that the repetitious processes I used began to create new depths of connection, breaking from the flat experience of dissociative traumatic memory (Breslau, 2009), by inviting exploration of embodiment and recollections of space. Furthermore, by using ceramic processes, I discovered I could apply the concept of tolerance for uncertainty, an important factor in post-traumatic repair (van der Kolk,

1985; Classen, Palesh and Aggarwal, 2005; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011), by working with pieces' uncertain fate while sequestered in the kiln.

Furthermore, I found that by repeating some of the forms I had explored on paper in three dimensions, additional nodes of connection began to emerge from the surface area of each sculpture, both through the way it took up space and the way the light interplayed with each plane. In this way, I showed that the act of translating imagery across two-dimensional surfaces and into three dimensions, approaching ceramic processes through the lens of drawing, created a heightened sense of movement, and through this movement between two- and three-dimensions, space for the forging of more fluid personal-architectural bonds. By applying Laplanche's theory of the necessity of the 'decomposition of [traumatic] signifying sequences' to enable their 'translation [into ...] less symptomatic' compositions through art practice (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213), I began to show the opportunities for such repair held within traumatic-architectural bonds, through the mechanism of traumatic repetition itself.

This sense of movement and (re-)connection between jumbled fragments of a larger whole of the visual language of the post-traumatic home also confirmed that through the act of translation, insights could be gained into the replenished visual landscape of this part-imagined post-traumatic home, just as Benjamin hypothesised about the relationship between translation and language itself (1997, p. 151), which I began to discuss, alongside Laplanche's concept of translation (2017), in *Chapter II: Literature Review*. I further established the relevance of translation to the process of repairing traumatised personal-architectural bonds by extending repetitious connections through time, engaging with the work of Swedish painter Sigrid Hjertén by creating painted dialogues between her domestic interiors and my own growing collection of glimpses of a post-traumatic home under repair. The results of extending this investigation through time in this way show that translating the visual language of domestic space, repeated across mediums and time periods, creates access to traumatised personal-architectural bonds so they might be translated and reforged into



'less symptomatic' bonds. Through repetition and translation, these bonds enter a state which begins to illuminate possibilities for, and the importance of, repair.

In this way, I found the processes, perhaps more than the outcomes, analysed in this chapter, served to reformulate, through repetition, fragments of the past into a part-imagined post-traumatic home which now entered the rebuilding process in earnest. Using traumatic repetition as a basis for creating artworks transformed it from a tool of revictimisation and into a tool which could generate connections through space, through its organic development into three dimensions, and time, through its connection with historical artworks. Furthermore, by reflecting on these works, I began to understand the space around the artefacts as a thing in itself, essential to the repair and translation processes and analogous to exploring these bonds through art practice as they are the space which holds the bonds. In the next chapter, I expand on these investigations by documenting and reflecting on the next phase of my studio practice, which explored transforming these in-between dwelling spaces. In these works, I use the gallery walls to create environmental space for transformation and reconnection, creating Bachelardian nests (1994, pp. 90-104) for these and further works, and exploring artists' compulsion 'possess [...] spaces through their personality as painters' (Schapiro, 1972, p. 269).

## V

# Dwelling: spaces, corners and nests

### 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I reflect on works which extend the studio practice explored in the previous chapter, *Chapter IV: Repetition*, beyond individual artefacts and into the domestic-architectural space surrounding them, in order to address my second research question. This question arose from explorations in *Chapter III: Literature Review* of 'home' as a concept in art history and beyond, especially considering philosophical and sociological approaches to the domestic sphere, with a particular focus on questions of home as sanctuary or dungeon, domestic abuse, and the meaning of housework and hobby crafts. Surveying this literature led to an exploration of the ways in which concepts of the home have been understood through art practice, and how they might be extended or reconsidered through the lens of post-traumatic repair. Through this exploration, the use of artistic practices to transform spaces stood out as a fundamental mode of human connection with the domestic environment, be that cave, villa, or council flat, and it became clear that expanding my studio practice to artistic transformations of the spaces my works inhabit would become an important pillar of this study. This led to the formulation of my second research question:

2. What effect does the artistic possession of spaces surrounding these artefacts have on developing visual networks which transform the traces of domestic trauma?

I went on to establish in *Chapter IV: Methodology* that the formation of constellations

of works which mediate the space they inhabit, by becoming part of the internal structure of the space at the heart of the post-traumatic home, would be important to investigating this second research question. Alongside this, I decided that creating large scale drawings directly on the wall, mediating the surface of the architectural container of a room by incorporating narrative and, I hypothesised, a heightened sense of temporality, would also become central to this second strand of artistic research. Using *Womanhouse* (Chicago and Schapiro, 1972) as a starting point, I intended for these processes create space upon which to reflect on the challenges and implications of creating large scale artworks and how these function within visual networks to transform traces of trauma. Throughout this chapter, I reflect on the ways in which these artistic processes invite the ecology of traumatic bonds (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011) to begin to develop around alternative nodes, moving towards the reparative, continuing towards escape from the fixed path of traumatic repetition through art practice, explored in sections 2.2.2-2.2.3 of *Chapter II: Literature Review*, and *Chapter III: Repetition*.

With this in mind, I begin the chapter by analysing a series of works which build the findings that emerged from the individual clay artefacts explored in 4.2.6 *Grappler, Offering* in the previous chapter, developing them into a constellation of works which artistically possess space through creating it within clay hollows. I then reflect on the process of using artistic processes to extend these ideas beyond individual works and into domestic-architectural space. Repurposing components of domestic structure, I build supports and enclosures for these constellations, reflecting upon the artistic reclamation of these elements and its impact on our understanding of these networks within artistically possessed sub-spaces. I go on to develop these findings through transforming the space around these artefact networks at a larger scale, creating iterative interventions on the surfaces of the walls themselves.

## 5.2 Vessel Spaces

### 5.2.1 Hand Building

I began investigating this second research question by building upon the ceramic tests I had begun to explore in 4.2.6 *Grappler, Offering*. I intended to use the three-dimensional forms, and the hollows within the vessels themselves, as microcosms of the larger spaces I wanted to engage with through artistic transformation in this phase of my research. In order to explore the artistic possession of these spaces, observed by Miriam Schapiro in her reflections on *Womanhouse* (1972, p. 269), I decided to find ways in which I could be led by the materials and artistic actions inherent to hand building ceramic vessels at each point in the making process: I would be led by the clay as it inches this way or that. In the previous chapter, I found that by translating traumatic repetition into artistic process, this mechanism for harm in post-traumatic states could itself be repurposed towards transformation of traumatic residues held in domestic imagery, with artworks centred around repetition beginning to enact reconnection between the ‘multiple hues of the present’, past and future (Felski, 2015, p. 145), inviting the post-traumatic home to begin to form a richer ecology of bonds which in turn branch away from traumatic repetition and revictimisation for its inhabitant. With this in mind, I used earlier experiments in ceramics which fed into the network of artefacts explored in the previous chapter, as a starting point for these more fully realised vessels.

In this way, I could begin to explore hand building ceramics in more depth as a means to create three dimensional spaces to possess through art practice. In the first phase of my research, analysed in the previous chapter, I set out to develop in clay shapes and forms which had emerged from *Taxonomy of Home Parts* with a focus on repetition, both through the process itself and through repeating this imagery. In this phase of my research, while I used these as starting points, I focussed on clay itself, and its capacity to form new spaces through artistic engagement with the material, through the lens of the artistic possession of spaces. With this delineation in mind, I decided to continue making hand built coil pots, partly because of their centrality to



Figure 5.1 Vessels in progress A

my own artistic practice, and partly because it is an ancient way of creating ceramic vessels (Arnold, 2009), and, as I began to explore in *Chapter III: Methodology*, I intended to analyse the ancient artistic connections made through ancient art practices between humankind and the space it inhabits later in this phase of my research, through wall drawings. To further add to this relationship to artistic-human temporality, I decided to continue using crank, which contains grog: many small particles of fired clay. The abrasions of the material's history are felt as the crank is worked, with clay that has already endured the intensity of the firing process adding plasticity and stability to the substance.

Due to the nature of raw clay, only a few coils can be added at a time: an often precarious balance between allowing the material to take the form it is edging towards, the degree of instability that must be encouraged to foster this process, and a total collapse that would devastate the vessel's progress. In response, I decided to work on six vessels at once, adding several inches of coils to each before moving to the next. For each vessel, I began by breaking off a piece of clay from the bag into a smaller piece that could be held in the hand. I went on to use both hands to create a ball of clay through repeated patting – gentle and continuous movements, so as to avoid air becoming trapped within and creating cracks in the firing process. I then dropped this ball with some force into the middle of the banding wheel: this would form the base of each vessel (figure a). I proceeded to massage the already somewhat flattened ball with my fists, intending to creating a base of about 10mm, displacing clay from the centre to the edges of the base, so that I ended up with a wall of about 20mm of clay at the edges, acting as a starting point for the vessel's wall (Figure 5.1). I then used a serrated tool to score this wall, in preparation for the addition of coils of clay. To begin the coiling process, I broke off further pieces of clay from the bag, squeezing each portion roughly into a length that would echo the existing circumference of the vessel's mouth-in-progress, before pressing the surfaces together, pinching and twisting the coil for stability, nudging each new layer into integration with the layer below,

and finally using a serrated tool to raise the latest thick and often uneven layer into a more stable wall for the vessel (Figure 5.2).

Where often ceramicists will use an extruder to create perfectly even coils for this process, I decided to be led by the material and its interactions with my hands as much as possible, squeezing rough and uneven coils so that each imperfection in each coil might lead me to an unexpected shape in the completed vessel: a hollow which could lead to new insights when I proceeded to transform the larger spaces surrounding the vessels. As each vessel increased in size, I found a sense of balance emerging between each form through the necessity for continual testing of the state of the unfired clay. It must be allowed to dry and stabilise somewhat, but never so much that it becomes totally unpliant and brittle. This led to a continual awareness of each work in the series, allowing for a balance to be struck between each piece's specific form and volume. I found this necessary awareness throughout the hand building process also emphasised the ways in which each coil itself become part of a visual network creating new spaces – new hollows – within the space in which I was making. Working in this way enabled me to explore not only the space within the hollow of each individual vessel but also the spaces between them.

Through this process, I began to consider that these hollows, contained as they were by layers of coils, physically held the space between artistic gesture, completed vessel, and eventual viewer. Using artistic possession of these hollows to transform this space, it then became part of a constellation of hollows. By being led by the materials and processes inherent to building these spaces, new 'signifying sequences' (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213) emerged, which could transform the traces of trauma inherent to the domestic resonance of their clay walls from a deadened traumatic force which compels its subject to continual return instead into a richer ecosystem which comfortably holds these traces. This transformation through artistic possession started to allow the post-traumatic home to move with its inhabitant into richer, less traumatic encounters with past, present and future, healing the domestic's traumatic (dis-)con-



Figure 5.2 Vessels in progress B



nections by complementing them. In this way, I found that by creating these ceramic hollows, and translating them into constellations which altered each interior space – as well as the space they are placed in – they could begin to counteract the deadening effect of the traumatic memory, which often flattens experiences of the present into the single register of the traumatic past (van der Kolk, 2000), as I began to explore in *Chapter II: Literature Review*. I would go on to explore this through the space the vessels were placed within once the pieces were fired.

Through the hand building process, I also began to consider the relationship between clay vessel and human body. One of the reasons I decided to work with clay, and have been seduced by ceramics as a central pillar of my artistic practice, is its ability to take on direct impressions of the embodied making process. This is further emphasised by its relationship to creation myths, in which ‘creation by clay’ lies ‘among the most ancient’ across cultures (Leeming, 1995, p. 60). In this phase of my research, being led by the material and the coiling process, I found that as the forms of the vessels were developing, they were also taking on bodily attributes: a neck here, a belly there. I felt that this was important for my second research question because the disembodied effects of post-traumatic states are notable as risk factors for revictimisation, particularly through the mechanism of dissociation. I began to consider that the networks of coils I was making within each vessel – the support structures for the artistic possession of these hollow-spaces – transform the traces of trauma as catalysts for re-embodiment through the domestic material of clay.

Working with clay to go ‘beyond representation’ (Pollock, 2013, p. 153) of the body and towards embodied ‘thought [as] genuinely the act of combination’ of body and material, ‘it is not the brain that thinks, nor a tiny subject within it – an imaginary homunculus – but also the hands, the body, its movements, and so on’ (Henke *et al.*, 2020, p. 270). Through these making processes – this artistic possession of materials – I began to create bodily vessels that offered not further disembodiment through externalising the body into clay forms, but rather records of thinking through every



Figure 5.3 *Tendril*, glazed stoneware, 2021 (Photograph: Demelza Lightfoot)

part of the body, offering spaces to create dialogue with the whole body as thinking organism (figure x). In dissociative states, the 'imaginary homunculus' (Henke *et al.*, 2020, p. 270) is divorced from its subject's material presence. Through the forms these vessels began to take, I found that the meeting of mind and matter in the body could be approached and celebrated as totems of re-embodiment, or re-association. For the sake of brevity, I will reflect on only one of these bodily vessels in detail, in the following section, before moving on to consider the network of vessels as a whole in 5.2.3.

### 5.2.2 Tendril

In the previous section, I reflected on the process of creating clay vessels using coils, and the traces of bodily engagement they held. In this section, I address the final form of one of these pieces, *Tendril*, in detail. I began *Tendril* (Figure 5.3) with a smaller ball of clay for its base, as I decided to create these vessels with variation in sizes so as to test the different effects of their artistic possession of space created by this variation. With the base's 20mm wall built, I began to add coils. Due to the size of the base, these coils immediately began to inch outwards, and I followed their path to create the belly of the vessel, before the walls began to become unwieldy due to their size in relation to the base and the moisture content of the clay. To bring them under control, I paused to work on another vessel, before returning to *Tendril*. While the walls were easier to manage now, I started working inwards to continue to bring the form under control. While in other vessels in the series, such as *Bottle* (Figure 5.6), this had the effect of creating a gradual incline back to the centre line of the vessel, in *Tendril*, the clay coils instead formed a flatter edge, with the central opening sitting off centre. Having established in the previous section that being led by the material is central to my exploration of the artistic possession of space, I used the direction in which the clay was moving to guide the final form of the piece. With this in mind, I began to build smaller coils upwards from this off-centre opening, and I decided to keep adding these small coils until the structure became too unwieldy to continue.

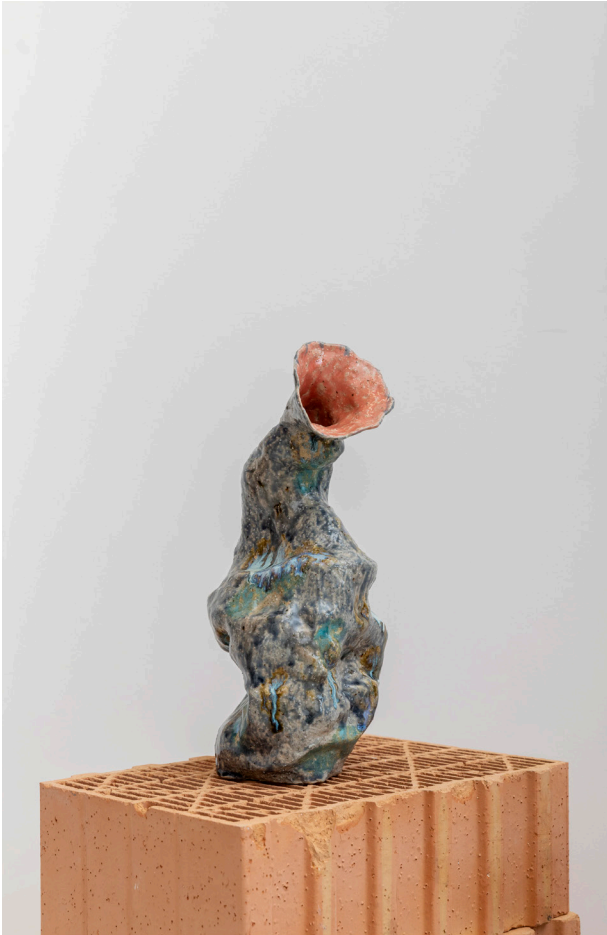


Figure 5.4 *Gullet*, glazed stoneware, 2021  
(Photograph: Demelza Lightfoot)



Figure 5.5 *Tendril* (in progress), greenware, 2021



Figure 5.6 *Bottle*, glazed stoneware, 2021

The resulting form bellies out from a sturdy base into a bodily cavity which nips in dramatically to a somewhat caved in, yet not quite flat, undulating layer of ceramic surface out of which a tendril grows, exceeding the height of the central hollow of the piece. This tendril twists and turns, and I was pleased to find that the small protrusions emerging from the strain of my trying to support the coils in the building process echoed the form of a trachea. This was an important discovery because it connected with Pollock's gasp at Bernini's *Daphne and Apollo*, and her proposal of shared affective experiences through shared facial expressions as both acts of repair and acts of transformation of trauma from a stuck, unchanging point which must be continually returned to into something which can be moved and brought into shared understanding which develops through a shared sense of temporality (2013, p. 47). That I found *Tendril* also beginning to speak to this gasp through its trachea led me to consider the belly of the form as not a belly at all but a lung. Lungs, essential to oxygenating the networks within our bodies, but also to facilitating dialogue which itself can transform our relationships to one another – our ecologies of bonds – offer a space through which dwelling spaces themselves can be transformed. By allowing the clay to create an artistically possessed space which itself resembled a lung, then, I had forged a key site for the transformation of the traces of trauma within domestic dwelling spaces. I decided to develop this finding both through making other vessels in this series, including *Gullet* (Figure 5.4) in particular. I go on to explore the lung further through other artistic possessions of spaces in *6.4 Hands/Feet/Lung/Head*, later in this chapter.

Having considered *Tendril's* raw form, I went on to glaze and fire it. I glazed all of the vessels within this constellation when they were in this greenware state, rather than first bisque firing them. This enabled me to continue to be led by the material, and the raw clay's interaction with the glazes I applied, offering up control of the artistic process to the interaction of glaze, heat, and clay – water, fire, earth – in the kiln. Similarly, I decided to apply glazes to *Tendril* in layers so that I could not be quite

sure how they would interact with one another, and so that they would slide down the form when heated, creating a sense of liquidity to emphasise their bodily qualities, while also extending the application of the concept of tolerance for uncertainty as a mode for post-traumatic repair (van der Kolk, 2000, p. 15) through working with ceramics I began to explore in the previous chapter. However, because of the enhanced fragility created by working in this way – the wet glazes mingling with the unfired clay, reducing stability – the neck of the form broke cleanly from its lung as I attempted to move it into the kiln (Figure 5.5).

At first I was disheartened. I went to reattach the trachea-tendrill to the vessel, carefully scraping back the layers of glaze before gently wetting the clay on each part-vessel, returning to my serrated tool to create cross hatchings in each broken surface and then using cool, fleshy slurry to create a surface I hoped would be conducive to reattachment. As I replaced the trachea on to its lung, taking a wooden modelling tool to coax the re-dampened clay into renewed bonds, I considered that this incident had offered an opportunity to reflect on repair, a key theme throughout this research. This vessel had broken – it became two part-vessels – and this created an opportunity for mending. By being led by the material, there was a chance to create something new from these broken parts, just as in the depressive position (Klein and Mitchell, 1987). A fresh node was created at the core of this vessel, which offered additional time to care and attend to it, as well as an additional point for connection and reconnection. The reparative process functioned not as a return to a previous whole but as a catalyst to create anew.

I fired the piece, and found that the layers of glaze had worked their way across its surface, working together with my careful repair to form a united vessel. By allowing the process to take control of the final surface, the making process had possessed the space within and around the piece, the chaotic and contingent aspects of this process harmonised by virtue of the process itself. I found that I could embrace the uncertainty of what exactly takes place within the kiln, hidden from view. The interactions of

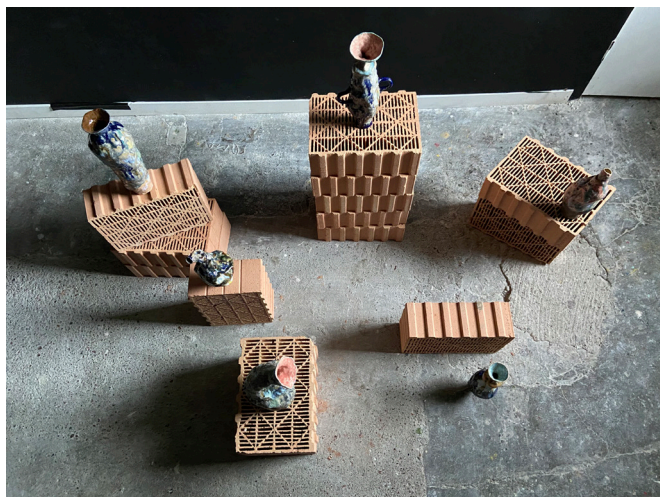


Figure 5.7 *Shared Glances* (tests), installation, 2021

colour between each layer of glaze were beginning to form their own constellations, through a layer of glass, itself evoking elements of the domestic: clay and glass working together to highlight the tension between interior and exterior. I decided to hold this tension that had emerged in mind as I considered each vessel in relation to the other, and with the space in which I placed them. I decided to continue investigating these constellated relationships, and the extent to which the vessels could be considered artistic possessions of space, and I reflect on this in the following section.

### **5.2.3 Shared Glances**

Having explored this potential for the genesis of each vessel's walls to be an artistic possession of space, reflected on in the previous two sections, I began to work with the shared glances between each piece to ascertain what their relationship and meant for the capacity of the artistic possession of space to transform the traces of trauma in the post-traumatic home. I wanted to use these collected vessel-spaces in concert to create a constellation of artworks which would in some way alter the domestic space they inhabited. First I should mention that throughout this thesis, where I would have liked to situate its different strands within domestic spaces to investigate artworks' relationship to different dwellings, this was not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions, and so instead I have mostly used the project space attached to my studio as a stage on which to rebuild my part-imagined post-traumatic home. With this in mind, I set to work placing vessels within the project space so that I might develop insights about the relationship of the many artistically possessed spaces amassing inside them to the wider space itself. Placing them on the ground was not particularly effective in evoking a sense of the project space – or, the part-imagined post-traumatic dwelling space – being artistically possessed, and so I set about looking for other ways to introduce them to the space.

I considered placing them on plinths, but I felt this would be more evocative of an exhibition in a gallery space than an artistically possessed domestic space. Happily,





Figure 5.8 *Shared Glances*, installation, Wilder Gallery, London, 2021 (Photograph: Demelza Lightfoot)



Figure 5.9 *Shared Glances*, installation, Wilder Gallery, London, 2021 (Photograph: Demelza Lightfoot)

I managed to acquire a collection of large ornate bricks from a set designer. I decided to use these bricks as supporting structures for the vessels I had created, and began to experiment with different layouts (Figure 5.7). I found that the domestic qualities of the ceramic pieces were only heightened by the repurposed bricks holding them up. When I had the opportunity to test the installation at a gallery space in London, COVID-19 restrictions were still in place, so while I did not have the opportunity to test these spatial interventions with an audience, I was able to transform the space through the domesticity of the bricks and the vessels themselves. This created the opportunity to test ideas explored in *Chapter III: Methodology*, that these installations would begin to build ‘bridges between art and life’ (Obrist, 2001, p. 96). The space changed: the vessels began to possess it (Figure 5.8; Figure 5.9). The qualities of clay, redolent of earth itself as well as domesticity, began to appear watchful alongside the bricks which, wrenched from their private sphere within the wall worked with the vessels’ openings to adopt a sense of transformation through dialogues generated by the works’ collective efforts to possess the space.

Supported by the bricks to possess the space, I observed that each hidden hollow began to work with its siblings, but also with its intrusion into the space itself and the new hollows it had created between these strange structures, making up a series of containers through which it is possible to observe the transforming traumatic resonances associated with the domestic (Pollock, 2013) and, further, to allow new connections and attachments to be forged between these hollows. The vessel-structures became guardian and anchor of the space they were possessing, while also urging transformation, growth, and rebuilding through their alteration of the space’s dynamics. Through the resonance of these hollows, the artistic possession of this space began to transform the traces of trauma inscribed in the domestic materials, the clay and the bricks, which made up the installation, into an ecology of bonds which began to create an environment of repair (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011). These new spaces also developed findings from in *4.3 After Hjertén*, by beginning to relate

the body to space. These cavities, captured by fire at the point of imminent collapse, began to cultivate a constellation of embodied gasps within and between one another. I decided to pursue the spaces created by this network of gasps by investigating the artistic possession of space using more figurative imagery, by exploring painting on surfaces that would work together to create another network of crevices, and I reflect on this process in the following section.

### 5.3 Screen

In the previous section, I analysed the process of using clay vessels to possess – and build – a larger, part-imagined, domestic space. In this section, I extend these findings through the medium of painting. Having begun to explore structural interventions in space using domestic materials, I decided to create a further structural intervention, this time based through painted surfaces. By starting with small spaces – the hollows within the vessels I had made – and going on to consider the spaces in between the vessels – I was able to build my artistic research incrementally towards transformation of spaces themselves through artistic possession. I began to find that each stage of gradually working into these spaces equipped me with findings which I could take forward into larger, more adventurous spatial interventions, continuing to build on Obrist's observation, which I began to explore in *Chapter III: Methodology*, that working at 'the scale of an apartment, of one's living environments and surroundings' forges 'bridges between art and life' (2001, p. 96), as well as Perry's positioning of installation art as the creation of a feminine space (2014, p. 120), which I discussed in *Chapter II: Literature Review*. With this gradual movement into the space in mind, I chose to create a larger scale work that spoke to the things we surround ourselves with in our dwelling spaces, that would act as transformers of these spaces, but was still mobile. This decision was also influenced by ongoing lockdown restrictions, which meant it was not possible to enter many spaces that could be transformed wholesale through my artistic practice, and this necessitated creating more mobile works. I was not sure

at this time that I would be able to exhibit any of these pieces at all, and audience interaction had been central to my initial research plan. I came to the idea of an additional structure which could itself create subdivisions – rooms – within my imagined post-traumatic home: a moveable screen. Bridging Anni Albers' division between weaving and building, this screen would form portable walls (2012, p. 45).

I happened upon a set of three tall canvases, attached together with hinges, and brought it to my studio to begin work. I was pleased that the nature of these canvases meant I could continue working in three dimensions, allowing me to continue to develop these findings in the space between two- and three-dimensional art-making. I decided to continue exploring the themes of embodiment that emerged from working with vessels, related in the previous section, and working with the canvas surfaces allowed me to consider what this meant when translated into painting. Since the surface of the canvas was smooth, I settled upon two ways of continuing these themes: colour and texture. In this vein, I decided to use a restricted colour palette of blue and red: the colours of the oxygenated and deoxygenated blood flooding the body of this part-imagined post-traumatic home's inhabitant. I intended that this would allow for a continued artistic exploration of the relationship between embodied thought and domestic dwelling space in the context of its repair.

To explore texture, I decided to build layers of paint, adding a sculptural quality to the screen's surface. I set out to use heavily diluted oil paints first in order to stain the surface, enabling the pigments in the paints to flow and interact freely, forming their own connections and offering paths forward for the painting (Figure 5.10). In this way, I found further connections to the ways in which I had been working with clay: I continued to allow the materials to lead the process of artistic transformation in order to be able to examine artistic possession of the spatial intervention I was creating. While led by the pigments, I also used brush strokes which echoed the forms of the vessels explored above to introduce them to the canvas, in order to continue the network of vessels into this new format. The shapes created in the pools of pigment,



Figure 5.10 *Screen* (in progress), oil on canvas panels, 2021

sometimes resisting the gravity exerted on the nascent piece by its upright structure and sometimes drawn to follow it, formed the basis for the continuation of the network of vessels, and I was pleased to find seeds of a return to the more figurative imagery explored in the final section of the previous chapter. This imagery would begin to allow me to create a visual narrative through these networks of spatial interventions, and I was excited to find where the pigments would lead this emergent story.

Finding that the pigments from this first layer were beginning to merge into cave-like pools, I decided to use these caves as dwelling-spaces within a landscape that would meander across the panels. By representing the domestic through caves, I was able to introduce an important basis for my pursuit of the artistic possession of spaces into the imagery itself. As I began to explore in *Chapter III: Methodology*, cave paintings are one of the earliest examples of humans making sense of the world around us through artistic possession of spaces (Saltz, 2015), and this imagery began to allow me to create a foundation for the remaining artistic works explored in this chapter through this relationship. In this way, within the screen itself, I found emerging the beginnings of a landscape which constellated with our ancestors through not only the screen itself as a possession of space but also through its imagery. That a landscape was emerging also led me to the notion of a visual narrative which examined the journey, the quest. This would add a further layer of connection with human experience through time by echoing themes of ancient human storytelling. I found these connections to human history important because it could mean that the visual networks, the constellations of artefacts and the transforming spaces around them through artistic possession, were also visibly connected through time to our ancestors, and that this might offer further means of countering dissociation, which, as I have explored, is both life-limiting and a risk factor for revictimisation (Classen, Palesh and Aggarwal, 2005; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011), by not only re-embodying but re-embedding the post-traumatic subject within the rich tapestry of human existence.

With this intention of finding a visual narrative based around journeying in mind, I began to select further individual shapes which could blossom into more recognisable forms. Gradually, pigment collected at the base of the structure, forging a solid ground for under our journeyer's feet. At the top of each panel, the pigment in this initial layer was more sparse as it had been pulled towards the ground. I began to use thicker layers of paint to build up forms here which echoed those that had begun to form and could carve out a more defined space for this journey, offering shelter from the stuck memories inhabiting the imaginary domestic space. As I built up this layer, I decided to include additional sites of time by visually referencing the drawn works explored in the previous chapter, using brush strokes to build up forms with a paintbrush in a similar way to how these earlier pencil works developed. Over the course of the panels, the forms created through increasingly confident brush strokes evolved from the shapes I had made with the pooled pigment as starting point. I captured and developed plant-like, tendril figures above ground, with the caves developing among their roots into womb-like forms. I was pleased to find visual relationships forming between these emergent womb-cavities and the hollows within the vessels I explored above. The crimson and the blue began to weave together; control over mark making was sacrificed for the sake of growth of the landscape. All the while, I was conscious that the wooden frame of the canvas supports were structuring these flourishing connections.

In this way, working from diluted paint, which bonds to the canvas with far less certainty, towards thicker and more assured marks, I was able to capture a journey of growing confidence and solidity through the painting process itself. I was pleased to find the painting process captured in this way, through the development of the screen's landscape, as it reinforced something of a process of development and repair, which is a key aim of pursuing this second research question through the artistic possession of spaces. When the landscape began to emerge, I had envisaged a visual narrative which might incorporate a protagonist. Instead I had created, through the



painting of *Screen*, a backdrop for the process of transformation and repair I was exploring through my practice in response to this research question. I was pleased that this had emerged instead as, upon reflection, the visual language of landscape in three panels still contained the suggestions of a narrative due to the panels' relationship to sequential art, whether in fresco, triptych or graphic novel form, developing findings explored in the previous chapter, but the lack of obvious protagonist began to create a space which could be moved through, rather than a depicted protagonist having a fixed route, and this had resulted in a final piece which was more open and receptive to the development of visual networks through works and viewers placed in its orbit (Figure 5.11). By fully making use of this narrative progression, it became possible to use this artistic possession of space to facilitate imagining a future that remained connected to the past but also developed roots from the ground, to the subterranean, and to the possibilities of a future that has not yet been shut down by dissociation and drifts into revictimisation (Classen, Palesh and Aggarwal, 2005; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011).

Furthermore, having observed the importance of the three panels which make up the screen in communicating a sense of narrative possibilities, the significance of the possibilities held within each corner of its concertina of panels became recognisable. I had chosen to work with a screen so that I could use artistic processes to possess the space the artefacts were inhabiting, transforming the traces of trauma within the post-traumatic home into something resembling repair. I was pleased to find the folds of this screen served also to increase the surface area around these works. These corners acted not only as nodes for the genesis of many other imagined domestic spaces, but also as chrysalis-like opportunities to hide and then re-emerge (Bachelard, 1994, p.138). This is important because in rebuilding the post-traumatic home through art practice, these corners offer an opportunity to imagine, and go on to embody, a future which is not only tied to traumatic fragmentation but instead transforms the traces of trauma into a fully realised life beyond the effects of dissociation and beyond the risks



Figure 5.11 *Screen*, oil on canvas panels, 2021

of revictimisation. I found that these important, transformational corners exist not only between each panel but are also created in the relationship between the screen and the space it inhabits. They also alter the dynamics of the space – they must be paced around – and in *Screen's* translucency in certain lights, the viewer's perception of the room itself. This artistic possession of the space, then, also creates more spaces for reparative roots and reconnections to take hold, with more hiding spaces on offer, in which the reparative position can be assumed, while also opening more spaces from which rebuilt futures might emerge. Perhaps, the screen can also be understood as a shelter.

In this way, painful threads can be woven into life's complex tapestry, rather than excised or repeated – and in this way, they can become points of growth within the visual network of the rebuilt post-traumatic home, by applying through art practice the concept of the ecological perspective to post-traumatic repair (Classen, Palesh and Aggarwal, 2005; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011) with Laplanche's concept of creating new syntheses of traumatic 'signifying sequences' (2017, p. 213), both of which I explored in *Chapter II: Literature Review*. While I had initially planned to take these findings and begin to work directly on the walls of my part-imagined space, I decided instead to create larger, moveable, panels that would still, through their scale, artistically possess the space around the artefacts I had made, while also being transportable, with the COVID-19 restrictions still excluding me from the different domestic spaces in which I had initially hoped to create interventions. I go on to explore this process in the following section.

#### **5.4 Lung/Head/Hands/Feet**

In the previous section, I reflected on the process of making *Screen*, a portable, painted, spatial intervention. I found that through its narrative, corners, and the way it inhabited space, it could offer both shelter and space for repair, while also creating tendrils of narrative possibilities which reached through time. In this section, I investigate



Figure 5.12 *Hands/Feet/Lung/Head* (in progress), oil on canvas, 2021

large scale painted narratives further, as a means to possess space. I had found through the making of *Screen* that the sense of journey emerging both through landscape and botanical imagery and through the progression of panels was key to creating artistic possession of spaces which offered opportunities for the transformation of the traces of trauma. This built on findings from the creation of vessels explored in 5.2 *Shared Glances* that being led by artistic process also created space for these transformations. With the artistic experiments explored so far in mind, and limited in the spaces I had access to by COVID-19 restrictions, I decided to fill one wall of the project space adjoining my studio with canvas panels, so that I could develop the methods emerging in response to this research question at a larger scale, almost working directly with the walls that structured the hollows of this space (Figure 5.12).

Building on findings from the process of making *Screen*, I started by selecting a limited colour palette. I decided with these works to use earthy tones so as to continue with the theme of journeying through a wilderness within the post-traumatic home that began to unfold in the making of *Screen*. Later, as relayed in the next chapter, I would begin working with the threshold between interior and exterior worlds, and I also wanted to explore this emerging reconnection between the home's innards and the world beyond its doors. I began again with diluted formulations of the paints I had selected – greens, yellows, browns – so as to be led by these pigments towards forms that would make up this narrative heavy landscape. However, rather than working across the canvas panels as I had with *Screen*, I decided instead to try allowing each panel to be its own, self-contained, juncture in the narrative. To ensure that there was still a sense of journey between these panels, though, I worked between panels rather than completing one at a time. Led by the pooling of pigments, I again began to describe cave-like forms at the top and edges of the each panel, with the intention that they would in the end act as signals of that each panel evokes part of a landscape that is obviously of the same world (Figure 5.12).

Here I was also building on the importance of the cave imagery which emerged



Figure 5.13 *Cavities* (detail), soft pastel on wall, 2019



Figure 5.14 *Lung/Head/Hands/Feet* (in progress), oil on canvas, 2021

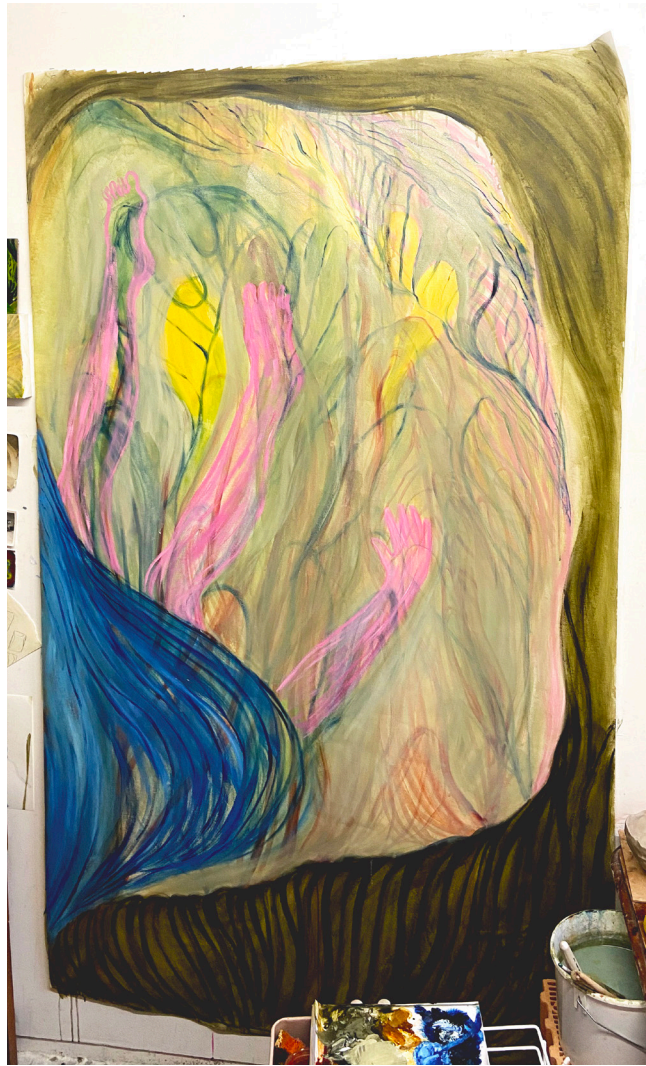


Figure 5.15 *Feet (in progress)*, oil on canvas, 2021

from *Screen*, and I ensured the ground within each panel also worked in a similar way to communicate a journey through a part-imagined world. As I built up the layers of paint across each panel, I was pleased to find that they led me towards four central figures: a lung, a cage, a womb, and a set of limbs emerging from something like a chrysalis. Once these central forms emerged, I went on to develop them into figures which spoke to each other from one panel to the next. The lung and the caged being both took on a similar form, using similar colours – I had moved on from the earthy tones of the setting to use blue here, creating a relationship between the colours of *Screen* and the lungs and tracheas explored above in 5.2 *Vessel Spaces*. The womb with its snatching hands built on imagery I had used in earlier wall drawings (Figure 5.13; Figure 5.14), as well as creating a space for the caged figure in the second panel to repair herself, ready for the final panel where I created an inverse form for her to emerge from into a part of this journey landscape filled with botanical imagery. I decided to use this imagery here because it began to emerge from the way the paint was interacting with the canvas, and created a visual echo with the limbs sprouting forth, but it also emphasised the sense of journey between the domestic interiors of the first and second panels and the end point for this visual narrative in the fourth panel. In addition, it offered an opportunity to develop some of the botanical tendrils which had begun to appear in *Screen*, initially in a similarly limited colour palette.

I struggled with this final panel, and after my allotted time in the project space, I re-pinned it to the wall of my studio (Figure 5.15). As described, I had initially stuck to a translucent formulation of paint and a limited colour palette. While the use of brush strokes as something analogous to the tentative, searching nature of the drawn line was intentional, the panel felt neither confident nor complete. In response, I began to use thicker and more opaque layers of paint, in a larger array of colours, to force a sense of confidence in my own artistic process. At first I found this to be too jarring, and so I began to wipe back these additional layers of paint. These not completely wiped areas developed into experiments with showing and hiding – just



as the translucent quality of *Screen* had also enabled the beginnings of an exploration of these actions – and so worked back into them, increasing the opacity of the paints while reducing the contrast which had led to the initial wiping away by adding white. I continued to work in this way, and found a sense of depth emerging from these layers of plant-life. In the end, I was pleased that this increased depth, and wider palette, worked with the first three panels to create a journey from a claustrophobic world of limited colour to a more boundless one, emphasising the sense of development through the panels' narrative arc. I found that this resonated with the need for cognitive flexibility and the ability to form complex social and environmental bonds in recovery from post-traumatic states (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009).

I also found that this had the effect of creating a more triumphant feeling to the final panel in this visual narrative, which I was pleased to find as it allowed me to return to the question of possessing a space through art making to develop visual networks which transform the traces of trauma into something that can be moved through, moved beyond. To further explore this emerging journey, I took my experience from painting in response to Sigrid Hjertén in 4.3 *After Hjertén* and introduced domestic patterns, transforming what had initially been a cave wall into a curtain in the first panel (Figure 5.16), adding diamond patterning to the floor to delineate the domestic setting in the first two panels from the wilder landscapes in the final two (Figure 5.16; Figure 5.17), and introducing elements of the curtain pattern to the background of the second panel (Figure 5.17). Led by a desire to forge a narrative journey through painting in these large scale panels, I had come upon a story which led glimpses of a figure from domestic interiors into a fantastical botanical world. I was not completely sure what to make of this, as I had intended the rebuilt post-traumatic home to be a return of the home to a state of sanctuary, as discussed in *Chapter II: Literature Review*, and at first glance I had instead made a series of paintings about escape from sanctuary and into the wilderness.

However, I reframed this response by returning to the research question I was



Figure 5.16 *Lung*, oil on canvas, 2021

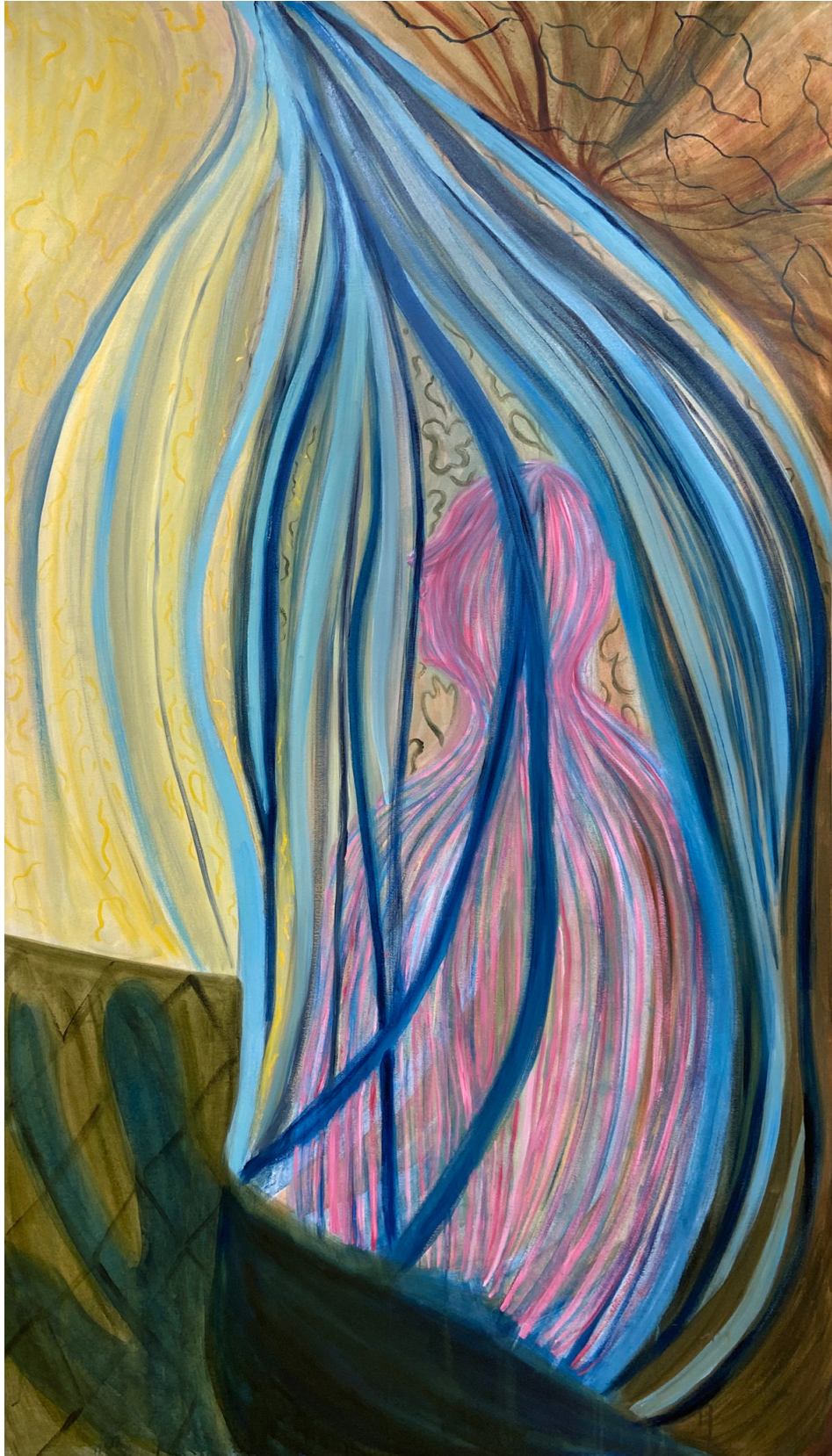


Figure 5.17 *Head*, oil on canvas, 2021



Figure 5.18 *Hands*, oil on canvas, 2021

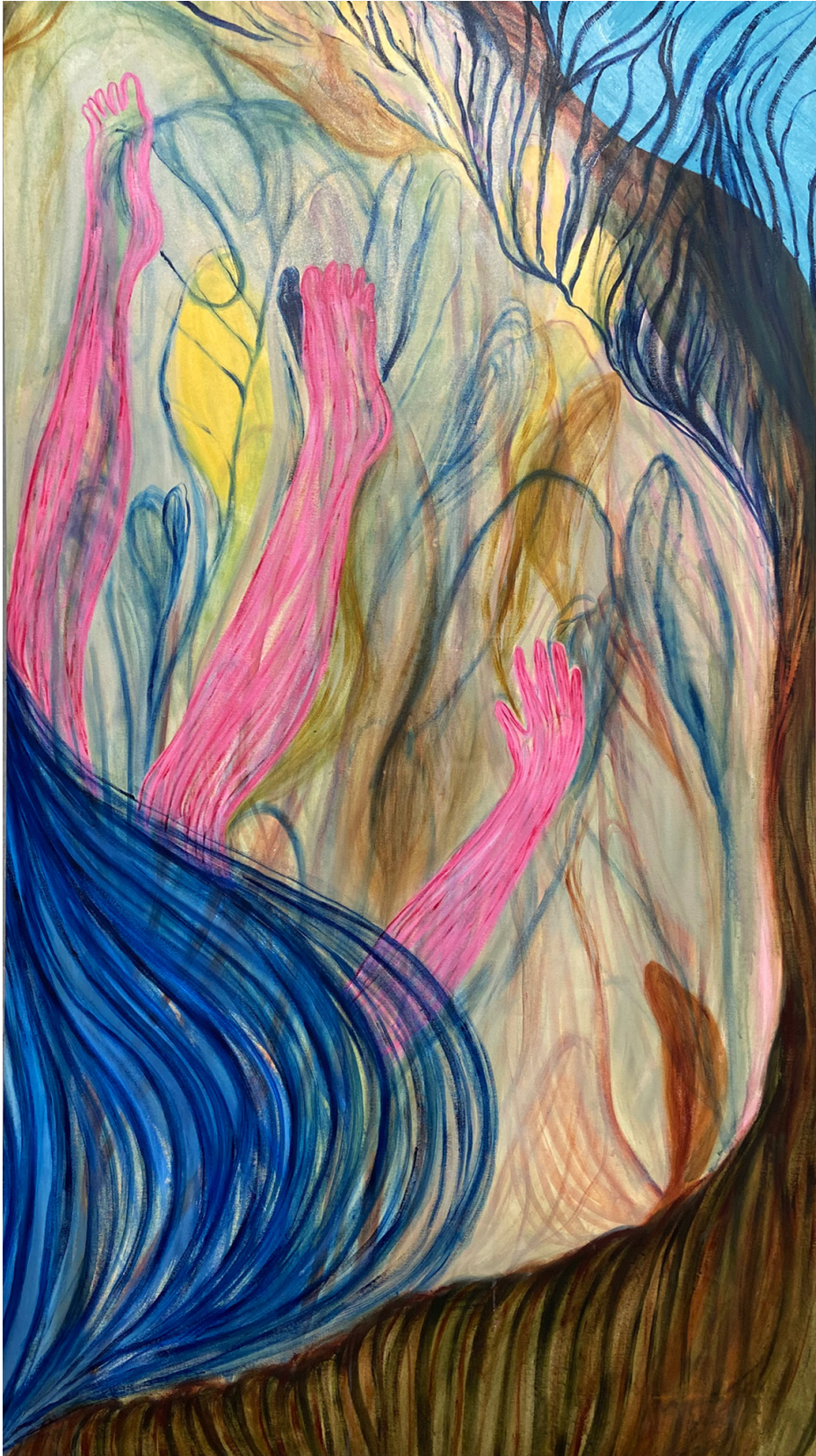


Figure 5.19 *Feet*, oil on canvas, 2021

addressing: *what effect does the artistic possession of spaces have on developing visual networks which transform the traces of domestic trauma?* I had created a series of large paintings, and through the painting process, a narrative had emerged which used the containers of the space – the walls – alongside signifiers of the domestic – patterns and drapery – to draw a figure from an enclosed space in which she is trapped towards a world of colour and life into which she can re-emerge. This story uses these traces of the domestic to engineer a freedom while remaining cocooned within it. By using artistic processes to possess this space, elements of the domestic, encoded with trauma, began to coalesce around a final panel which sings with a replenished ecology of bonds through its connections between interior and external worlds (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 225). No longer is the domestic a trap or a cage, as it appears in the second panel, and as I discussed in *2.4.1 What is 'Home'*. Instead, it can indeed become a sanctuary again, the traces of trauma transformed.

The home, the place that once felt safest, transformed through trauma into nightmarish prison for victims and survivors, and in a prolonged trauma reaction, the sensation that everything is unsafe not only strips the world of its wonder when the danger has passed, but also reduces the ability to recognise real danger, increasing the propensity towards revictimisation (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 199). The introduction of wilderness via botanical imagery, in the final panel, came to symbolise the ability to form a full range of connections with the world, first with domestic dwelling spaces and their accoutrements, and then with the vast world beyond its doors by bringing the natural world inside. By artistically possessing domestic space in this way, it becomes possible to reintroduce complexity to relationships with the world through a sanctuary which brokers the full range of human emotions and experiences, safe to engage with the world, free to roam, and confident in the knowledge of where to retreat and where to approach. Safe to let people in; safe to let the world in. With COVID-19 restrictions temporarily eased, though not to the extent that experimental artistic interventions in other people's houses were welcomed, and the

opportunity to explore artistic possession of a gallery space, I was glad I had been able to respond to the period's uncertainty by building up a body of research I could now develop on the surface of architectural space. I relate the development of this artistic research on to the walls in the following section.

### 5.5 Climbing The Walls

In the previous section, I reflected on the process of creating large narrative paintings which were portable to an extent, but which also groped towards directly possessing the walls of our part-imagined domestic space. In this section, I discuss the process of finally getting my hands on some walls. By the time I was able to create artistic interventions in a more public space, I was thankful that I had the opportunity to build, through the artistic possession of larger and larger spaces, a process through which to illuminate the effects of the artistic possession of space around the network of artefacts I had created. Through iterating these processes, I had already found key insights into the repair of the post-traumatic home's structure using its corners, and bringing the natural world inside. Now, presented with the opportunity to transform a public wall in the Daphne Oram Gallery in which the rest of these artefacts would be exhibited, I could extend my explorations of the ways in which pigments from the earth, alongside imagery from within and beyond domestic dwelling spaces, could be used to possess the architectural structure itself. I decided to do this by drawing directly on its walls. I used drawing for this process because it is central to my practice but also because it would allow for a temporary artistic possession of the space – fleeting, ephemeral – which could be erased after my residence in the gallery was over, but which was also at risk of being erased unintentionally by other users of the space, echoing the uncertainty and impermanence of the post-traumatic bonds I began to explore in *2.2.2 Ecologies of Trauma*. Drawing using soft pastels would also allow a more direct, tangible connection with the pigments which I had found to be significant in my reflections on earlier experiments in this phase of my research, relayed



Figure 5.22 *Palm to palm, the backs of hands, the backs of fingers, the thumbs, the tips* (in progress), soft pastel, 2022



Figure 5.20 Wall tests, soft pastel, 2022



Figure 5.21 *Palm to palm, the backs of hands, the backs of fingers, the thumbs, the tips* (in progress), soft pastel, 2022



above. Furthermore, by working directly on the wall, I could extend the connections that had begun to form in both *Chapter III: Methodology* and in the work explored earlier in this chapter between my artistic research and humans' artistic interaction with space since prehistory (Arnold, 2009; Saltz, 2015).

Working in this way would also enable interaction with the public because I would draw during times when others were using the building, which also houses study spaces and rehearsal rooms. I was interested in the ways in which my artistic process might respond to these interactions, and to the sensation of being watched. It had not really been possible to use interactions in this way in my research thus far due to COVID-19 legislation, although I would find that it remained difficult to foster engagement in this way due to ongoing fears, and advice to work from home. While I had made large scale wall drawings before, the pristine quality of this wall within the Daphne Oram Gallery was quite intimidating, and I found it more difficult to begin than I had, for example, with the large scale works on canvas explored in the previous section. With this in mind, I decided to first make test inscriptions on a corridor wall adjacent to the space (Figure 5.20). Working here had a different quality as it was far less open, far less public – it was like inhabiting one of the corners explored in *5.3 Screen*, and this must have helped the creation process because I began drawing on my memories of the works I had made in this research so far, from memory, revitalised by the possibilities of imagined worlds contained in the shadows of the corner (Bachelard, 1994, p.138).

Having used this corridor to establish that the blocks of bound pigment in the form of soft pastels that I would be using were indeed removable, using a combination of a magic sponge and the large packets of antibacterial wipes littering the building, I returned to the more open gallery space, revitalised. I decided to review imagery created through the artistic research I had undertaken so far, building on some of the connections which had begun to spark from memory in the corridor. This allowed me to relate the drawings I had made in the first phase of this research, explored in the

previous chapter, to the more recent paintings explored above, through heterogeneous approaches to making explored in *Chapter III: Methodology*. I intended that going through this review process would help crystallise the development of visual networks using the artistic possession of spaces surrounding the constellated artefacts I had amassed.

I would periodically return to this imagery, but relied mostly on memory to create my wall drawing, rather than fastidiously transcribing each element. I decided to work in this way in order to continue being led by the medium I was using and its interaction with its support, the wall, which had emerged as an important way of working. I intended also for working partly from memory in this way would to create opportunities to reflect on the nature of memory itself, and particularly of using artistic processes to allow memories to become unstuck from repetition through mediation via materials and processes, as I had been exploring in the previous chapter. As I began to work directly on the wall, I noticed that by allowing memory into the process, I could begin to transform the traces of domestic trauma inscribed in the drawings I had gathered using the energy emerging from the artistic possession of the space I was undertaking. I began in the middle of the wall, to try to break down its overwhelming blankness, with an abstracted shape drawn from the relationship between the shape of a shadow on a rooftop I had observed and some of the botanical imagery that had erupted from the final painting I reflected on in the previous section (Figure 5.21).

Because of the door residing in the centre of this wall, and the multiple uses of the space I was working in, it was quite difficult to add this centre piece. Perched atop a ladder, I tried to listen for movement on the other side of the door so that I might get out of the way before being flung to the ground. This was quite difficult because the rooms were music rooms, and sound proofed. However, the necessitated machinations with these rooms' inhabitants to ensure I remained safely at the top of the ladder, and the swinging back and forth of the door as I worked on the wall, created a deeper sense of collaboration with the space as I completed the drawing over

the space of a week. Becoming attuned to the space and its inhabitants in this way, alongside the rhythm of the door's movements as I possessed the wall with my drawings, began to create space for reflection upon the relationship between these kinetics – these everyday encounters – and the transformation of the traces of trauma. As I have explored, in post-traumatic states, dissociation between mind and body produces harmful effects, compounding the injury to the post-traumatic subject's ecology of bonds (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011). These interactions punctuating my artistic possession of the space began to impact the ways in which the pastels were engaged with the surface of the wall, the artistic process itself creating space for reconnection with the human world in a way that is not possible when sealed within the post-traumatic home: rich social environmental bonds must be rebuilt (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 226). So, by taking the network of artefacts to the public, and specifically through the process of artistically possessing this space, repair to these bonds was facilitated through the rhythms of public space.

Having completed this central form, I began to add more recognisable features of the domestic dwelling space to its left, based upon elements of *4.2.2 Taxonomy of Home Parts*. The contrast between these elements – a balustrade, a piece of turned wood atop a post – and the abstracted form I had started with created an energy which began to propel a kind of narrative across the wall (Figure 5.22). To further capitalise on this energy, I decided to begin using my pastel marks to enlarge some of the rich texture captured in some of these early drawings, and I was pleased to find that this created a sense of each element of the drawing being connected to each other and, through this mark making, some of the other artefacts which were ensconced within the space. Once I had possessed a good portion of the surface with these drawn glimpses of domestic interiors, I decided to add a figure to connect to the protagonist which had begun to emerge in the large scale paintings explored in the section above. I settled upon a drawing from a decaying Venetian fresco I had made in preparation for my delayed British Council Venice Research Fellowship, which I explore in more



Figure 5.23 *Palm to palm, the backs of hands, the backs of fingers, the thumbs, the tips* (in progress), soft pastel and glazed stoneware, 2022



Figure 5.24 *Palm to palm, the backs of hands, the backs of fingers, the thumbs, the tips* (detail), soft pastel and glazed stoneware, 2022

detail in the next chapter (Figure 5.24).

I used this figure because her role in adulterating the façade of a building far away had a direct relationship with my possession of this space, and began to invite her into this developing visual network. This movement across the wall from abstract domestic folds, to recognisable structures from the interior architecture of the home, to a figure seen and lost in a fresco on the outside of a building in Venice, allowed a dynamic relationship to form between dwelling space and post-traumatic subject. I found that this dynamic became important through its making visible the ecology of bonds so important to rebuilding and repairing in post-traumatic states (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 226). In this way, it drew out the rhythm, the dynamic, between post-traumatic subject and post-traumatic home. Through artistically possessing this space, the translations I had made of individual elements of the home, explored on in the previous chapter, united with the journeys within the space I had made throughout this chapter, and the inhabitant of the post-traumatic home became re-embodied through these connections.

To further explore these themes, I decided once again to work into space, applying findings from *Chapter II: Methodology*, where I discussed Betty Woodman's use of ceramics with painting to create theatrical artistic possessions of space that also evoke the domestic sphere, animating their environment through the dialogue between two- and three-dimensional elements and fostering a sense of wonder and enchantment which counteracts the emotional deadening and dissociation of post-traumatic states (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 226). With this in mind, I began to add spatial elements to the surface of the drawing by creating ceramic fragments which resembled shapes found in the drawing I had made. I intended for these to take steps towards connecting spatial interventions with the network of artefacts I had created, as well as reintroducing clay to my work in the latter sections of this chapter, since it is such an important material for this research due to its connections to both the domestic and to the earth (Figure 5.23). I hung these using the gallery hanging system,



Figure 5.26 *Palm to palm, the backs of hands, the backs of fingers, the thumbs, the tips*, soft pastel and glazed stoneware, 2022



Figure 5.25 *Cavities* (detail), installation, 2019

first using epoxy putty to attach D-rings to the reverse of each piece, and once they had cured, making sure to hang them in spaces where they could become part of the wall drawing, bringing it alive through the introduction of three dimensional works which reached into the space itself. Indeed, I was pleased to find that by reintroducing these elements of the domestic through clay, a more direct relationship between the network of artefacts I had made and the surfaces containing the space they inhabited could be revealed (Figure 5.26).

However, on the whole, I was somewhat disappointed in this work when I compared it to earlier wall drawings. I tried to work out why this was. My earlier forays into climbing the walls with pigments, were within the project space attached to my studio as part of a 2019 exhibition (Figure 5.25) and the walls of this unheated space are damp and uneven. This meant that my pigments mingled much deeper with the domestic materials – the plaster – covering the wall itself, recording traces of errors, and a deeper engagement with the surfaces. The wall bore marks not only of human interaction with the space but of the natural world encroaching, which itself was an important factor in my research proposal for the British Council Venice Research Fellowship, explored in the following chapter. This new work, in a modern, insulated gallery space within a university building, did not seem to connect in the same way, although this was alleviated somewhat by the addition of the ceramic fragments, and through the interaction with audiences necessitated by the making process. There was less opportunity for marks to become embedded in the wall, and to be led by the opportunities for connection through time through its own network of human-forged blemishes, which might have connected effectively with the network of artefacts it was ensconcing. With all this in mind, I took the significance of the addition of ceramic fragments to the drawing as its success point, and decided to carry over something of this way of working in responding to my final research question, which is concerned with thresholds: these pieces had opened up the wall as a threshold. Before reflecting on artistic research carried out in response to this final research question, I go on to



summarise my key findings from this chapter below.

## 5.6 Summary and Key Points

In this chapter, I reflected on the effect of the artistic possession of spaces on developing visual networks which transform the traces of domestic trauma. I began by analysing ceramic sculpture, an area of my artistic practice I touched upon in the previous chapter, gradually scaling iterative interventions in space towards working on its very walls. In so doing, I responded to the second research question which arose from *Chapter II: Literature Review*:

2. What effect does the artistic possession of spaces surrounding these artefacts have on developing visual networks which transform the traces of domestic trauma?

I began by establishing that the process of creating vessels was itself a means of possessing domestic space, and the domestic associations of clay enclosing a hollow. I found that by being led by the material in creating these hollows, the coils of clay acted as a visual network which began to transform traces of domestic trauma by reassembling 'signifying sequences' of the domestic (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213). These findings were compounded by the extension of the vessels' visual network through time, both through the ancient practice of hand building clay vessels (Arnold, 2009) and through the use of grogged clay, because ground up pieces of previously fired clay worked to support the clay structures that emerged. The effect of artistically possessing these hollow spaces led by the clay created a visual relationship between each vessel and my body, which began to offer a counterweight to the disembodiment, dissociative effect of the traces of trauma (Breslau, 2009).

Furthermore, I found being led by the material, thus working on many vessels at once, intensified these effects by creating a constellation of hollows which began to exist as an ecology of bonds even as they were being made. The artistic possession of this network of spaces transformed the traces of trauma held in the clay's domestic resonance, into a flourishing ecosystem of gasps, countering traumatic disconnection

by applying the concept of the importance of repairing an ecology of bonds, both environmental and social (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011). This discovery led me to extend this network further into space using found bricks as platforms through which a stand-in space for this part-imagined post-traumatic home began to be transformed. I found this compounded the effects of using material connections through time to repair the disarray of traumatic memory (van der Kolk, 2006, p. 289), as well as enhancing the vessels' possession of the space. I found that this intervention in the space served to amplify the resonance of each vessel's hollow, artistically possessing the space to transform the traces of trauma inscribed in these domestic materials, the clay and the bricks. This confirmed that the possession of the space could begin to transform the traces of trauma into an environment of reassembly and repair.

Building on these findings, I began to work with a moveable three-panelled screen in oil paint, continuing to be led by the medium. I found that by allowing diluted paint to form pools on the screen's surface, they began to collect into cave-like forms, amplifying the growing visual network's connections through time to the origins of the artistic possession of human dwelling spaces (Saltz, 2015). I identified the corners formed between each panel of the screen as the most significant area in this work, as, after Bachelard (1994, p.138), they created spaces to imagine many alternative narratives than those contained within the traces of domestic trauma which are so often confining and life-limiting through the dissociation and cognitive inflexibility they inculcate (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011). The simple backdrop for a journey through these alternative encounters which emerged on the screen served to emphasise this sense of possibility, transforming the traces of domestic trauma into encounters with a more open future. In this way, I found that the artistic possession of the space in, around and between the screen developed into a narrative journey which transformed the traces of trauma into spaces where reparative roots and reconnections could take hold through narrative. Through the artistic possession of the screen's space, and the additional corners

it created within the larger space it inhabited, traumatic threads began to be woven into narratives full of complexity, rather than excised, repeated, or hypervigilantly examined.

Another key finding from the completed *Screen* was the significance of the botanical imagery which emerged from following and developing the pigments' journey. By pursuing this at a larger scale in *Lung/Head/Hands/Feet*, I found that possessing the walls of the space with large canvases transformed the traces of trauma held in the domestic into tentative connections with the world beyond domestic dwelling spaces. Using artistic processes to possess this wall-space, elements of the domestic, embodied in elements of pattern within the paintings, function to transform the traces of trauma through a journey which leads to a final panel visually exploring a replenished connection between interior and exterior worlds. In this way, I found that through artistic possession of the space, the traces of trauma held within the domestic were transformed, and the part-imagined post-traumatic home returned to a state of sanctuary through the reintroduction of complexity into relationships with the world beyond the dichotomous safe/unsafe.

I found that developing these processes into drawings directly on gallery walls introduced an unexpected element of performance due to the public facing nature of the space. Consequently, working in public altered the artistic possession of the space because it allowed the piece to evolve in conversation with the space's inhabitants, mirroring the re-embodiment effects of a rich ecology of social bonds (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011). Significantly, the artistic possession of the space began to transform the traces of trauma bound up in dissociative states (Breslau, 2009) into a medium of re-association by creating spaces for reconnection with the human world, opening the doors of the post-traumatic home to rebuilding in the community. I showed that by developing imagery that had emerged from the research process so far into a more cohesive, communal, piece which artistically possessed the space, the traces of trauma, embedded in these artworks when they were disparate pieces, were

transformed into nodes for reconnection.

By reintroducing ceramic work into this piece, I found these three-dimensional elements began to work in concert with the marks on the walls as a network of part-objects, bringing the work on the wall alive as they danced with their shadows. I found that through engaging with different scales, materials, and modes of artistic possession of the space, the conversation within and between the drawn and ceramic elements of the piece is in turn expanded and created anew, ready to be brought into a reparative approach to the post-traumatic home. Taken together, the findings from this final work analysed in this chapter show that the works animate their environment and are reanimated in turn (Felski, 2015, p. 175), reconceptualising the traumatic fragment's network and reminding the viewer that 'above all, this enchantment arises by the grace of the attunement between living beings' (Despret and Buchanan, 2016, p. 4). I found that this expanding network fills the space with possibilities for regeneration and repair, eventually leading to the threshold between interior and exterior worlds. Through the relationship between drawing and clay in this artistic possession of space, the traces of trauma were transformed into spaces for reconnection. I decided to pursue the sense of journey that began to emerge from these clay fragments at the threshold of the artistically possessed space further in responding to my final research question through art practice, and I reflect on these works in the following chapter, which brings the research I have undertaken so far to the threshold of interior and exterior worlds.

## VI

# Thresholds

### 6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I reflected on the process of investigating the artistic possession of domestic-architectural spaces, building on the constellations of artworks explored in *Chapter V: Repetition*, by developing visual-spatial networks which explore transforming the traces of trauma. In this chapter, I reflect on the development of artworks which bring the three phases of artistic research in this thesis to a conclusion by extending the scope of the artistic research explored so far up to and beyond the threshold of the rebuilt post-traumatic home. Just as the first research question I addressed drew on interdisciplinary approaches to understandings of trauma in the context of domestic abuse, and the second research question emerged from explorations of the concept of 'home' in art history and beyond, this final research question arose from returning to concepts of repair and translation, alongside understandings of the domestic threshold from philosophy and cultural studies, and the window that nestles within this threshold in particular. While the first two research questions I explored through art practice also drew on these areas of the literature, they address repairing and rebuilding the interior of this part-imagined post-traumatic home. In the final phase of this study, I begin to address the relationship between interior and exterior worlds formulating the question as follows:

3. How can artistic exploration of the threshold between interior and exterior worlds be used

in the forging of a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door?

In exploring this research question through reflecting on my practice, I build on the importance of dialogues established in reviewing the interdisciplinary literature on post-traumatic repair, and the relationship between these sociological studies and the concepts of post-critique and the reparative in the fields of literary and cultural studies. Just as adapting Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective (1977) to understanding and abating revictimisation risks among victims of violence against women draws attention to the significance of 'person-environment interactions' (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 229) at micro- and macro- levels over time, so to develop understandings of rebuilding the post-traumatic home, its relationship to the world beyond its threshold – not to mention the threshold itself – must be investigated. Similarly, in the fields of post-critique and the reparative, the question of reattachment is paramount: relationships to artworks, fragmented by suspicion, become re-enchanted, ready to reform into a 'something like a whole [...] to offer one comfort and nourishment in turn' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128), replenishing these ecologies of bonds. Finally, through media and cultural theory, the window can be understood as a mediator not only between interior and external worlds, but also between analogue and digital worlds, which enables the navigation between different tasks, and now, conceptions of selfhood (Friedberg, 2005, p. 232).

Using this literature as a foundation, I can begin to build on the findings of the previous two chapters. First reflecting on attempts to forge a path through art practice between the post-traumatic home's interior and its threshold, I return to the notion of the home as a vessel for the soul, and the importance of the repair of internal subjecthood through its relation to the wider environment (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009). With this in mind, I begin this chapter by reflecting on the process of artistic engagement with the materials that make up the threshold of the rebuilt domestic fortress, building on discussions in *Chapter III: Methodology* of the origins of the word

'symbol' in *symbállein*, based on the action of reuniting shards of broken pottery when a journeyer returns home (Pollock, 2013, p. 22), before using these findings to pursue the use of discarded clay, external to the sanctuary contained within the ceramic vessel, as a mechanism for uniting interior and exterior worlds. I go on to take these fragmentary artworks on their own journeys into the natural world, reflecting on the process of bringing these small, precious artworks into dialogue with the world beyond the threshold of the post-traumatic home. Developing findings from these journeys, I go on to re-explore the threshold itself using these ceramic fragments. To conclude the chapter, I explore the use of analogue and digital windows as framing devices for encounters between interior and exterior worlds, both psychic and architectural. In this concluding phase, I introduce moving image in order to explore the role of the virtual window in mediating internal and domestic worlds and the world beyond.

## **6.2 Symbállein**

### **6.2.1 Shards**

In setting out to investigate the threshold between interior and exterior worlds as a site of dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door, I decided against an abrupt leap into the outside world, instead first pursuing a path between the interior of the post-traumatic home and its threshold. I decided to approach this final research question in this way because it arose from the notion of a healthy ecology of bonds between subject and environment as protective against continued post-traumatic injury and revictimisation (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 229). By first forging a path between interior and threshold, I intended to explore the overcoming of dissociation between subject and environment inherent to post-traumatic states (Breslau, 2009) by carving out a journey through repair without leaping from renewed sanctuary of the domestic shelter and immediate exposure to the natural elements to be found beyond its threshold.

With this in mind, I began by beginning to translate the found bricks I had used

as support structures for the ceramic vessels reflected on in *6.2 Shared Glances* in the previous chapter into ceramic forms made of my own hand, with the intention to eventually bring these iterated forms towards the outside world in order to observe their shifting impressions in shifting environments. I decided to use porcelain white stoneware clay, which is a porcelain-like clay with some of the properties of porcelain, including its delicate appearance upon firing, and the care which must be taken not to contaminate its hue. I made this decision both because of the plasticity of this clay with its porcelain content, which I anticipated would capture and emphasise these shifting impressions and shifting environments, as well as the white of the clay being able to reflect the most light from its surroundings. First I rolled the clay into a slab, using an old pillow slip as the rolling surface so as to avoid the clay sticking to the table. The loosely woven linen fabric making up this pillow slip created an unexpected impression on the surface of the slab due to the creases it had formed in storage and the loosely woven quality of the linen (Figure 6.2). Pleased, I decided to retain these creases in the final form rather than smoothing them as I usually would, in order to create an additional impression of domesticity on the clay's surface, and so add depth to the relationship between the domestic interior and the exterior worlds I intended for the piece to eventually encounter. Furthermore, these retained traces I hoped would add to the slow journey between interior, threshold and beyond, again countering dissociation by creating a visual path through time, embedded into the pieces themselves.

Meanwhile, I proceeded to carve slices of the slab and attach them together in a simplified interpretation of the pattern contained within the found bricks I was working from. First I laid out the strips in a formation echoing that of the found bricks, allowing the shape of the clay to dictate how closely I adhered to the original form. I then created slip from the clay by mixing it with water in an old glass yoghurt pot, before carefully scoring each end of each piece, as well as the area I hoped to affix it to, with a cutting needle, and using my index finger to apply the slip in each of the



scored areas. Finally, I joined each piece first by gently pushing them together by hand, and then by using a wooden modelling tool, to merge the body of each piece with its counterpart. This was a painstaking process due to the fragility of the clay, the intricacy of the pattern, and the discrepancy in the length of each piece.

I found that this forced me to slow down, and due to this shift in temporality, become more conscious of each bond I created, which had the effect of emphasising this process as artistic application of an antidote to dissociative states, especially in the leap from newly rebuilt sanctuary to the world beyond its doors. Where the joining process went awry, with pieces breaking off or not reaching their intended destination, I decided to reuse the piece of clay involved by pressing it into a new form, postulating that this might emphasise the plasticity of the raw clay and so echo the sense of movement I was beginning to create between interior and exterior worlds. This sense was further emphasised by the grid-like pattern of the original brick's structure, and the inability to conform to the grid's rigidity stemming both from a soft, plastic clay and the hand building techniques I decided to deploy (Figure 6.1). As I reflected upon the process, I found that this breaking of the grid imposed by the found bricks I was working from had the effect of creating a record of the journey from the rigid return to traumatic memories inhabiting domestic structures in the form of signifiers which break the subject from the present, returning her to initial sites of trauma, and the creation of movement between these memory-fragments so essential to repairing her sense of time (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213). These ideas emerging through the practice in this way would become increasingly significant as I progressed with these forms.

Weighing the significance of these forms breaking free of their assigned pattern, I decided to add small amounts of coloured glaze to further highlight them. I then went to move the two completed brick panels to one side to allow them time to dry prior to firing. Once this interval had passed, I went to move and wrap the pieces in bubble wrap, ready for transportation to the kiln room. However, in their bone dry state, they were far more fragile than they had been during the building process – and



Figure 6.2 Impression of pillow slip in clay slab, 2021



Figure 6.1 Clay brick (in progress), greenware, 2021



Figure 6.4 Shattered brick, greenware, 2021

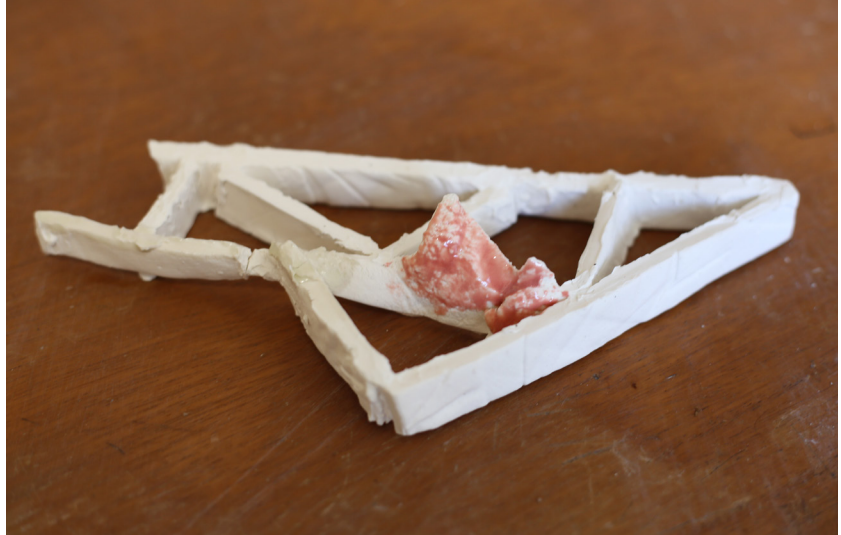


Figure 6.3 Fired sherd, glazed stoneware, 2021

as I discussed, they was quite fragile then – and the pieces split back into fragmented forms, maintaining some bonds while others were severed (Figure 6.4). At first quite disheartened, as I had been pleased with the fragility and the rhythm communicated by the completed form, I attempted to reconstruct this network of clay fragments. Unfortunately, the more I attempted to reconstruct them, the more the fragments broke apart, and so I had to take pause and reflect on this key moment in the initial making processes towards addressing my final research question.

At first I was reminded of a concept from the early stages of this research: the etymology of the word symbol, from *symbállein* – ‘to put together or unite’, based upon the ‘ancient practice of breaking a single piece of pottery in two so that a traveller, carrying one part, might be recognised on his/her return’ (Pollock, 2013, p. 22). I considered this act of breaking pottery to facilitate a quest, a journey, as significant in these artworks’ own journey towards dialogue between the interior and exterior worlds which I was exploring in this final strand of artistic research. Now, rather than having one artefact – embedded with traces of the domestic through the materiality of clay itself, imprinted pillow slip, and the form of the artefact itself as an echo of the found bricks I had been using in my explorations of domestic-architectural space in the previous chapter – I had many pieces that could now be united and reunited as they travelled beyond the threshold of interior space. With this in mind, I decided to fire the fragments as they were, ready for their journey beyond this threshold (Figure 6.3).

Although some of the pieces experienced further fragmentation on their journey to the kiln, I was pleased that the final pieces became much less delicate in the firing process, while retaining a sense of their fragility through the porcelain-like qualities of the white clay, the delicacy of the broken network of bonds, and the way that when viewed together they were clearly pieces of a greater whole. The dialogue beginning to form between these fragments, and the ability to position them as parts of a greater ecology of bonds, also began to enable a move towards conceptualising the repair of

the fragmented ecology of bonds central to the harm of the post-traumatic experience (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009). In this way, by being able to transform these traces of the post-traumatic experience through art practice, I found that the nature of this fragmentation began to become something which could be approached, and looked upon for its delicate beauty, with the viewer – and indeed the environments in which the artworks were placed – positioned to act as reparative mediator, allowing the spontaneous development of ‘a new synthesis or translation’ (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213) which makes way for reconnection rather than being repeatedly drawn to, haunted by, the traumatic incidents imprinted upon it. The spontaneous decomposition of the signifying sequence in the artistic process which occurred here – speaking to the domestic architecture, strength and structure, the building block of the post-traumatic home – had begun to create space for the journey for reconnection between interior and exterior worlds. This effect was compounded by the way in which these precious sequence-elements could accompany a subject on a journey through the outside world and offer a semblance of renewed sanctuary throughout this journey. I decided to pursue this emerging idea through my practice by developing further ceramic fragments, and reflect on this process in the following section.

### **6.2.2 Leftovers**

In the previous section, I reflected on the process of rebuilding bricks that might make up our part-imagined post-traumatic home’s threshold in porcelain white stoneware clay. Before bringing these ceramic sanctuary shards to the threshold of the post-traumatic home, I decided first to pursue the opportunities for repair which had begun to arise from decomposition and recomposition of domestic signifying sequences explored above. I decided to focus on the reparative significance of that which would otherwise be discarded as superfluous to the main vessel I was making, and so set out to save offcuts from a series of bowls I was making – standard domestic fare – which I would then use to create new forms. These offcut-forms would not be reintegrated



Figure 6.6 Pinch pots (in progress), 2021



Figure 6.7 *Leftovers* (in progress), greenware, 2021



Figure 6.5 *Leftovers*, glazed stoneware, 2021

into the vessels I was making but instead become strange clay beings in their own right, acknowledging their origins in waste and, building on the findings of 6.2.1 *Shards* above, I intended to imbue them with their own sense of preciousness: shards of treasure to accompany our journeyer beyond her threshold and into the wilderness.

With this in mind, I decided to continue using porcelain white stoneware clay as I anticipated it would emphasise the precious fragility I was pursuing both through its nature and through the historical connotations of porcelain as precious material, as well as offering a blank canvas through which shifting and growing environmental bonds could become attached. I began to make simple pinch pots by gathering balls of the clay, using my thumb in the centre and my hand on the exterior to fashion bowl shapes (Figure 6.6). Through the process of refining these shapes, I was able to collect offcuts, which I eagerly gathered together, enjoying the plastic qualities of this particular clay and pushing and pulling each offcut to form elements which could be built into their own treasured artefacts (Figure 6.7).

As I attempted to push the smaller offcuts into becoming expansive forms by manipulating them with my hands, I noticed two things. Firstly, in working towards creating surface area, I had made very thin slices of the clay, which again emphasised qualities of fragility and preciousness I had begun to explore through these portable sanctuaries. This in turn had made the edges of each element begin to undulate. As I began to join each piece with cross hatching and slurry, I found that these undulating edges began to speak to the natural world, and its vegetation in particular, both because of the qualities of the individual elements and the way they were interacting with each other when brought together. I was pleased with this as it meant the material itself, with its traces of domesticity, was already beginning to reach beyond the threshold of the post-traumatic home to the wilderness beyond its walls. To further emphasise this connection, and begin to draw these pieces into a wider conversation with the interior and exterior of the post-traumatic home itself, I decided to use glazes which resembled the natural world I would be introducing them to: ultramarine

for the sea, fig ash for the seaweed, pink for the Thanet skies (Figure 6.5). I intended for these simple colour connections to contribute the cross-threshold dialogue I was building once the pieces were in the outside world.

By drawing on these connotations, I found that the fragile and precious qualities of these leftovers began to come together and invite recomposition and re-integration between interior and exterior worlds, as well as offering a treasured pocket reminder of the sanctuary of the rebuilt post-traumatic home on its inhabitant's journey beyond its threshold: a tool for translating and resynthesising Laplanche's traumatic 'signifying sequences' (2017, p. 213). The way that the clay I used to forge these forms was that which could not be contained by the ceramic structures I was creating began to work together with the form these pieces were taking to echo the post-traumatic subject's own journey from a controlled, enclosed environment to one where anxious control can be relinquished. These leftovers, translated into pieces in their own right, created a microcosm of the final phase of this research: the leftover clay existed externally to the vessels I was creating and by translating it into treasure in its own right, a dialogue was beginning to form between the interior and exterior worlds of the ceramic vessels themselves. I wanted to further explore the relationship between these pieces and the world beyond the threshold, and decided to take them on a journey into the coastal wilderness. I reflect on this journey below.

### **6.2.3 Journey**

In the previous section, I analysed the process of creating precious sanctuary-pieces from discarded clay, and how this corresponded to the integration of repaired internal and external worlds and the threshold between them. In this section, I begin to journey with these pieces. While I would later return to making these part-objects by testing the repurposing of leftovers in different types of clay, at this point I was eager to continue their parallel journeys from internal to external of the clay vessels, and from interior to exterior of domestic worlds. I posited that this might also serve to ex-



pand the territory of the rebuilt post-traumatic home's inhabitant. With this in mind, I decided to bring the pieces on an initial journey through the outside world to scout for places to leave them: places where they might be found and reunited with other journeying souls, or indeed swept out to sea, enabling some sense of completion in the reassembling of post-traumatic bonds between the transformed domestic dwelling space and the world beyond its walls by way of becoming a part of the external environment. Small sanctuary pieces, absorbed into the world. I began by wrapping each sanctuary fragment in tissue paper, before setting out along the coast near my studio, where I had made them.

To examine the process of bringing these works to the rebuilt post-traumatic home's threshold and beyond, into the natural world, in detail, I paid close attention to each stage of our journey together into the exterior world. I decided to take them along the coast not only because of its proximity to their birthplace in my studio – my own artistic home – but also because I hoped the sea might take them on further unplanned journeys beyond our walk together, wresting control from me, their maker, and them, as pieces of rebuilt post-traumatic home. I found that this began to act as symbolic of the journey of repair by inviting exploration of uncharted dialogues. This exploration would also bring these repaired interior worlds together with the external world into a whole, unlike 'any pre-existing whole' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128): the sea becoming co-conspirator in countering traumatic attachments to the past by generating a new synthesis of traumatic memories' 'signifying sequences' (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213). As I started walking, I was intrigued to find that the rhythm of our steps together was compounded by the rhythm of the waves. I had not anticipated this, and was pleased to find an invitation to contemplate the nature of inhabited time, and the recomposition of signifying sequences into a more fluid present which is open to opportunity and not yet shut down.

As I continued to walk, I noticed the autumn wind imposing itself fiercely upon the series of sandy bays that make up the coast between Margate and Westgate-on-

Sea. The tide also poured in, whirling around each inlet with great crashes of salty, life-filled water: full of opportunities for expanding, nourishing networks through space and time in which the ‘signifying sequences’ (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213) of sanctuary fragments could be reassembled. At this point, I decided also to record our journey using the video function of my camera, and thought back to the many clips I had taken of the movement of the tides I had moved beside throughout my research as I wrestled with the material and with the research objects I was forging in my studio. These would eventually come together to form the final piece of artistic research that makes up this thesis, which I relay at the end of this chapter in *6.4 Window’s Edge*. For the moment, I continued to gather additional material which documented the journey of these pieces as we walked together towards an appropriate nestling place, not yet sure where the footage would eventually nestle.

Searching for dwelling spaces for these part-objects within nature – for counterpart sanctuaries in which these artworks might rest – I began to pay attention to the seaweed swimming through each swell of the tide as it deposited a crust of carpet along the water’s edge. I observed that the seaweed, through no conscious process on my part, echoed the final forms these pieces had found. I noted that by being led by their material in this way, an approach I had begun to develop in previous chapters, dialogues were emerging organically between the domestic and natural worlds. While I had at first intended this walk to be a scouting mission, I was beginning to find that as I captured the immensity of the waves, a crescendo of these potential attachments was emerging and inviting the pieces I was carrying to inhabit it. As I moved through the bays, I was overwhelmed by the smell of the slowly rotting piles of seaweed which accumulate during the summer months, reaching their peak in July before yellowing and reintegrating with the sea by the end of September. This scent, combined with the wind’s caress of ears and exposed skin, created impressions of this sea-wilderness through multiple senses and this engagement of all senses created a sense of grounding in nature, which I found acted to repair dissociative states. Having

found my senses moved in this way, I came to decide to leave these artworks to rest here now, rather than continuing to frame this walk as a scouting mission for future depositing, as additional rehearsal might counteract the sensations of re-embodiment I had decided to capture. With that said, that this walk was one I had made regularly throughout this research to carve out space for reflection on my artistic research, and so in a way was already intertwined with the question of a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door.

I witnessed the repeated pattern of the green, yellow and grey fronds of seaweed amassing into a plush but rotting carpet, interspersed with decaying sea life. The sea, foaming from the rot, pooling in its depressions, embedded a sense of contingency and of threat. The sense of danger emerged from the sense that these fragments, which I both wanted to let go of and to hold on to, might be lost, and I recalled discussions from *Chapter II: Literature Review* in which it becomes difficult to synthesise traumatic memories through a perverse sense of comfort in their familiarity (van der Kolk, 2000). I so wanted to hold on to the fragments of these hand-thoughts, their familiarity, and their relationship with the ecology of bonds within my artistic practice, and this sense of existing with them and the sea in a snatch of time before the beach was covered in ocean again, ocean which embraced and churned the rotting seaweed and spat it out again at low tide, which would not fall until the middle of the night. They were indeed almost snatched away as I was recording these final moments together (Figure 6.8). Between each shot I became covered in sand fleas. Feeling life in the decay and the threshold between decay and rebirth within this tornado of little beasts trying to take me with the seaweed, with my fragmentary ceramic hand-thoughts, into the tide. I was glad to be among them at this point, and to feel my shoes sink into the carpet rot and to see the foaming, shady waters approaching my pristine hand-thoughts and trying to embrace them. As I walked back, the creatures left my legs and torso, but I continued to smell the rot until I returned to the studio to further examine the thresholds which had emerged from this journey. To do this, I decided



Figure 6.8 *Leftovers*, digital photograph, 2021

to bring some of the pieces back in order to explore the ways in which each part-object both embodies and invites dialogue across thresholds. I reflect on this process of exploration, first in different types of clay, and then using elements of the domestic threshold to draw out these relationships, in the following section.

## **6.3 Return**

### **6.3.1 Chamber**

In the previous section, I reflected on a journey into the world exterior to my part-imagined rebuilt post-traumatic home. In this section, I return to the project space to consider, through these pieces, thresholds themselves. I had used photography to capture these ceramic shards at the threshold between holding on and letting go, and found in each a piece of portable sanctuary which extended the threshold of the post-traumatic home through this portability. Better equipped to explore the dialogues emerging between these thresholds between interior and exterior worlds, I decided to return to my studio, to further probe each of these ceramic pieces as thresholds in themselves, and to extend the dialogues they were beginning to facilitate. I decided to explore the encounters I had found between interior and exterior worlds within each ceramic part-object, as well as the dialogues they began to foster, through the site of the threshold itself. To do this, I decided to first create further pieces using the same method, this time with different types of clay. I felt that by using clays which would act in contrast to the porcelain white part-objects I had originally created, I could use my practice to foster additional dialogues, not only between interior and exterior worlds but also between materials. With this in mind, I selected leftover grogged clays in grey, black and red which I had saved from my studio practice.

These clays were more directly redolent of the earth beneath us, which binds together the foundations of the internal domestic and external environments. Their properties acted in contrast to the delicate fragility of the white clay in which I had created the initial ceramic shards. Indeed, I found that the quality of these clays, heavy

with the dust of already fired ceramic pieces, made the process of pressing together new forms qualitatively different. Where the porcelain white stoneware clay was very fine, and so liable to collapse, I had to press each leftover piece into a form whose edges were so thin as to be almost vanishing in order to achieve three dimensional structures from the leftovers I was transforming. With the clays I moved on to, the extra scaffolding offered by the ground up pieces of past vessels that made up the grog enabled me to create height with much thicker pieces of clay than I could previously. I found that this began to provide an extra dimension of contrast between the fragmentary works, facilitating a visual dialogue through these contrasting textures and colours.

In this way, I could begin, through the making process itself, to compare the relationships not only between materials but also between materials and their environments. I had initially hoped to determine which was more effective in forging dialogues between interior and exterior worlds. Instead, I found that the dialogue between the two – between heavily grogged, earthy red, black and grey clays and heavily purified, delicate white clay – began to make way for a more complex conversation between interior and exterior worlds than the white pieces alone. With that said, while the red, black and grey pieces I had created remained intriguing as parts of a dialogue once fired, the darkening that occurred meant that I felt they would not be as successful as the original porcelain-white pieces if I simply returned them to the natural world as I had with the original white pieces. This is because they were too similar in hue and texture to the natural and human detritus found beyond the threshold, and rather than offering a glowing sanctuary connection the rebuilt post-traumatic home, instead would become camouflaged – reduced again to waste objects. I was somewhat disappointed that when considered in the interior world, they instead retained the sense of preciousness which was central to the success of the white pieces, as I had hoped that like the original works, they would offer insights into repairing the threshold between interior and exterior worlds.

Noting this reinforced my conviction that I must find a way to explore the dialogues emerging between the pieces through a different manifestation of the threshold between interior and exterior worlds. I had originally hoped to be able to explore different domestic environments with these works, but ongoing COVID-19 restrictions meant this was not possible, so I considered how else I could use these works to investigate the threshold between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door. First I tried creating simple piles, networks of part-objects, in the corners of the project space adjoining my studio (Figure 6.10). This initial placement nestled in the walls of the space did begin to add a sense of movement and dialogue. I also noticed that the connections between repairing the post-traumatic home and feeling sanctuary in the natural world, which had begun to emerge in the previous chapter again came to the fore. The ways in which these fired pieces had begun to take on qualities of the botanical, or of the nest or chrysalis – nature’s sanctuaries, and two of the lenses through which Bachelard explores the domestic space (1994, pp. 90-135).

However, while there was an emergent sense of movement, it was more evocative of the outside being allowed in than the passage across thresholds I was investigating. With this in mind, I set out to find different settings for these pieces. I had found a piece of wall on one of my morning walks through parkland, and so decided to test this displaced container-fragment for the built environment as a transposed threshold which my ceramic shards could begin to inhabit (Figure 6.9). I previously had success with the more ornate bricks I had used as platforms for the works explored in 5.2 *Vessel Spaces*, and hoped I would find that the interactions between my works and these bricks would offer insights of their own. However, I found that these particular bricks instead formed an arrangement verging on artistic cliché, the bricks overpowering the delicacy of the ceramic shards. This began shutting down dialogues between the delicate pieces I had crafted from leftover clay, rather than facilitating them, instead acting merely as decorations for the utilitarian, disembodied part-structure I had brought into their sphere. Compounding this, there was not enough surface



Figure 6.10 *Leftovers* (test i), installation, 2021



Figure 6.11 *Leftovers* (test ii), installation, 2021



Figure 6.9 *Leftovers* (test iii), glazed stoneware on found bricks, 2021





Figure 6.12 *Chamber* (in progress), installation, 2021



Figure 6.14 Broken sculpture fragments, glazed stoneware, 2019-20



Figure 6.13 *Chamber* (in progress), installation, 2021



Figure 6.15 *Chamber* (in progress), installation, 2021

area to hold the many part-objects that now made up this network of ceramic shards, which reduced the sense of movement I had carefully captured in firing them at contingent states between interior and exterior to the vessel, and between fabrication and collapse. This sense of movement is, as I explored in *Chapter II: Literature Review*, important to countering the haunting stasis of post-traumatic states (Pollock, 2013, p. 4; Sontag, 2019, p. 72).

Frustrated, I returned to my studio to see if there was anything else that might offer a structure through which to explore these threshold-pieces. In the corner was a large window I had collected from a skip during one of the many refurbishments that happened around the town during this time. This seemed to be an ideal form through which to explore the relationships between the ceramic shards, and so I brought it out to the project space and set about creating a temporary installation. The window frame itself was thick enough that it created a chamber underneath when laid horizontally, so I chose to place it on the ground, the glass panes separating the architectural space, standing in as a domestic space, from the hollow beneath the repurposed threshold feature. In this way, I found the simple act of placement transformed the window from a disembodied part of an unknown building's threshold into a vitrine, creating visual connections through time between the installation I was building and modes of displaying not only artworks but also precious collected treasures. These connections were compounded upon considering the window itself, and its relationship to Alberti's conception of the canvas as a window on the world (Alberti and Grayson, 1972, p.55), a theme which first emerged in *Chapter IV: Repetition*: through artistic processes, thresholds between interior and exterior worlds are uncovered. In reflecting on the window itself in this way, alongside the vitrine, I was able to build on findings from the previous chapter of the effect of exploring connections between cave paintings and the artistic possession of space. The importance of the artistic exploration of the threshold began to enable exploration of the importance of temporality in emerging dialogues between interior and exterior worlds.

To continue investigating, I began by laying the porcelain-white pieces around the frame (Figure 6.12). I found that, in contrast to burying them within the seaweed carpet, as relayed in the previous section, the frame's white paint had a deadening effect on their sense of movement, and so the cross-threshold dialogues I could forge using them. While brimming with movement individually, they became subsumed into the threshold, rather than emphasising the sense of movement that had begun to offer a visual exploration of the dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door. I was pleased to find, then, that when I began to populate both the surface of the window and its chamber with the works made in different clays, a sense of movement and accompanying dialogue began to emerge between the pieces themselves and between the pieces and the environment they inhabited (Figure 6.13). The pieces began to work together to reanimate the window: layers of artefacts worked together to create a threshold space which was crawling with life. The found window frame already began to create a sense of movement through time, explored above, and the addition of this network of ceramic part-objects compounded this, particularly through the relationship between the grogged clay, thick with former vessels, and the fragility of the white pieces. It became clear that this movement through time was integral to the dialogue between the repaired post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door because this relationship, as I began to find in 6.2.3 *Journey* above, was itself fundamentally a journey.

To further pursue this sense of movement through time embodied by the journey, I recalled some pieces of ceramic sculpture created early on in my research which had not survived the kiln: they were reduced to fragments by the firing process (Figure 6.14). I had saved them in my studio rather than disposing of them, and now I found the opportunity to put them to use. By introducing them into dialogue with the ceramic part-objects I had made from waste clay, I created additional sites of time within the window chamber (Figure 6.15). These morsels of failed sculpture again caused me to reflect on *symbol's* root in *symbállein* (Pollock, 2013, p. 22), which had been a

catalyst for this final phase of my research in particular, and which I discussed both in *Chapter III: Methodology* and earlier in this chapter in section 6.2.1. The tension held in *symballein's* shards of pottery between departure and return is held at the threshold of the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door. Through artistic exploration of the threshold via these failed sculptures, I was beginning to forge such dialogues also through time.

In this way, I was beginning to find that the 'movement in time' emerging from the dialogues forged between this repurposed threshold and the network of part-objects inhabiting it, invited the '*decomposition* of signifying sequences, be they present or past, into elements to allow' the spontaneous development of 'a new synthesis or translation of them – one that is less partial, less repressive, less symptomatic' (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213). By using artistic processes to create possibilities for multi-directional movement through time and across the threshold of the post-traumatic home, fragments of the domestic could be recovered so that its subject can finally 'succeed in inhabiting', using her 'own resources to assemble or "repair" them, to forge 'something like a whole' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128). Each movement across or around this threshold began to act to expand her ecology of bonds, generating new sites for reconnection and dialogue.

Having established the centrality of time and the journey to forging dialogues between interior and exterior worlds through art practice, I decided to pursue the creation of additional sites of time to fold into this burgeoning installation. Through this, I intended to compound the vital sense of movement underpinning cross-threshold dialogues, and I spent some time considering how to do this. I observed that each ceramic fragment already began to animate the other through the dynamic established by the repurposed window threshold, but I wanted to push this sense of movement, which seemed to be integral to the multifarious dialogues beginning to emerge, further. I reviewed the artistic research I had undertaken so far, and came upon the drawings I had been making through windows in my own home throughout the research

process (Figure 6.16). I felt that these quick drawings, capturing the relationship between interior and exterior worlds in my life through a thresholds removed from my studio, could unlock the emergent sense of movement in *Chamber* via the ways in which they captured moments of encounter between interior and exterior worlds through drawing. I was not sure at first how to invite them into the space I had created in the window frame, until I began to consider a strand of my practice which I had not yet explored in the context of this research: animation. This seemed the perfect vehicle to activate the sense of movement through time that was beginning to emerge, and so fully extend my exploration of thresholds between interior and exterior worlds as progenitor of dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door. By adding a time-based medium to the installation, a continuous dialogue could be created between these drawn moments and the part-objects I had assembled. This would also make space for the introduction of a further window to the installation in the form of a screen, and I felt this might strengthen the exploration of thresholds within the piece. In the following section, I relay the animation process before reflecting on the relationship between completed animated short and the other inhabitants of *Chamber*.

### **6.3.2 (Re-)Animating**

In the previous section, I reflected on the process of beginning to construct an installation, and uncovered an important sense of movement through time. In this section, I reflect on extending these findings by documenting the process of creating animated sequences which will inhabit the burgeoning installation. Having settled on animation as the medium through which to introduce the additional sites of time captured in drawing, I settled in among the mostly graphite studies I had created throughout my research, to start to try to make sense of them through movement (Figure 6.16). Not quite sure where to begin, I added to the mass of window drawings some of the works on paper I had made in the first phase of my research, relayed in *4.2 Building*

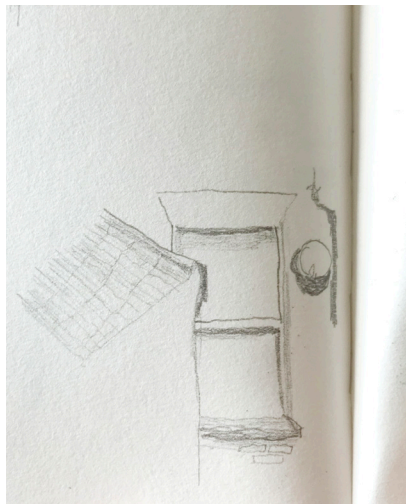
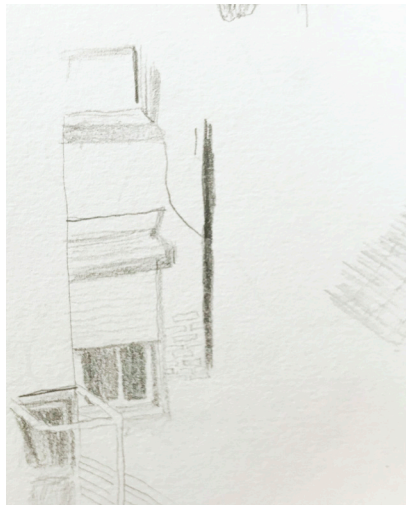


Figure 6.16 *Window drawings,*  
pencil on paper, 2019-21

*Her House*. Considering these works alongside one another, I decided to create the time-based piece using frame-by-frame animation, as I felt the frames, as they themselves amassed, would retain a more direct relationship with the piles of drawings I was confronted with. I decided to hand draw each frame, again to remain true to the existing drawings, but also to enable the observation of the slow evolution of each drawn mark on its animated journey. I would create the frames digitally on a tablet, which itself introduced an additional window to the process, and which would become significant later in this phase of my research as I went on to consider the window as digital threshold.

With all that said, I was still not sure where to start. I considered the idea that ‘drawing is always already a movement, is by its very nature nonstatic, vital so to speak’, and that by introducing animation to these existing lines, I could compound this vitality through ‘the animated line[‘s]’ possession of ‘an additional, an extra or hyper-movement perhaps, which brings in a different kind or degree of movement’ (Gfader, 2013, p. 62). This led me to consider structuring the animation as organically as the drawings had themselves emerged, so that I could be led by the medium in ways that had proved insightful throughout my artistic research so far. As discussed in *Chapter III: Methodology*, my intention in working in this medium was to compound the effect of ‘making something happen that solicits our elaboration as thought’ (Pollock, 2013, p. 159): by making static drawings come alive with animation’s ‘hypermovement’ (Gfader, 2013, p. 62), dialogues, and through them, social and environmental bonds (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009), would be not only repaired through art practice but also regenerated and elaborated. I had decided to introduce animation to *Chamber* in order to develop the sense of movement in time already created by the threshold and its contents, and with this and the desire to be led by the medium in mind, I decided to begin by simply selecting two drawings and animating the transposition of line from one into the next. As I began this process, I became conscious that through being led by the basic process of animation – drawing two frames and

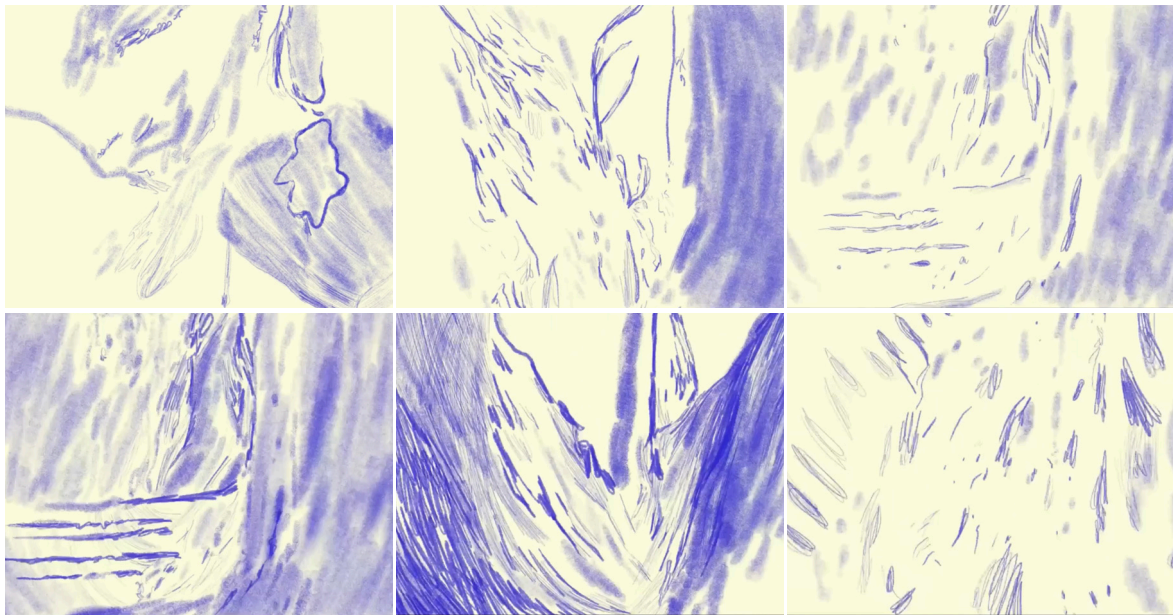
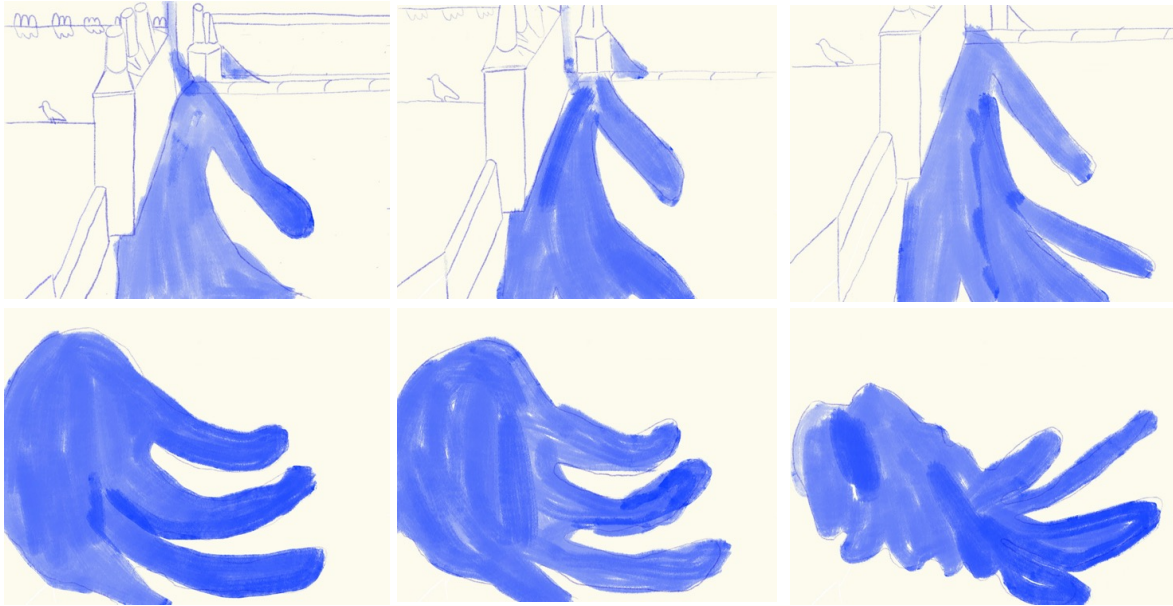


Figure 6.17 Animation tests, 2021



then animating the in-betweens – I was beginning to forge a new threshold between the drawings themselves, which I could then explore (Figure 6.17).

Approaching the drawings in this way also illuminated the ways in which drawing through my window facilitated the noticing of details that otherwise might be missed: the position of a chimney pot in relation to a telegraph pole, the shape of a mid afternoon shadow across a roof. I decided to use blue for these lines, to draw connections between this animation and architectural blueprints. To emphasise a sense of fluidity in the attachments emerging from frame to frame, I added digital water-colour brush strokes. The hypnotic encounter between the initial drawings and the digitised versions I was beginning to animate which resulted began to create spaces for the transformation of the traumatic through the thresholds between the drawings. Indeed, as I put these drawings together and began to make the lines dance towards the animated film, the attachments between drawing, seeing, and time became clearer.

Having begun to use repetition to draw the traces of trauma through time in the construction of a part-imagined domestic space, I now extended these ‘sites of time’ (Pollock, 2013, p. xxviii) by emphasising the drawn line’s life: (re-)animating them. The process of frame-by-frame animation which I used requires the slow repeat and evolution of this lively line, creating a sense of vibration with the potential to unstick the embedded and haunting nature of the traumatic. These connections, illuminated through time by the process of animation, began to create a dialogue of in-between moments. These movements already contain the germs of multifarious narrative possibilities: just as in ‘the simple repetition of a clock’s ticking is already the possibility of movement, of a narrative (we hear the actual and meaningless ‘tick, tick’ as ‘tick, tock’: a tiny story)’ (Dillon, 2003), so these animated lines serve to concentrate the narrative quality of the rhythm of their expanding network of attachments. In addition, I found that by using animation to fill the gaps between each drawing with movement, the ‘space between spaces’ (Pollock, 2013, p. 63) sealed away by traumatic memory began to move from a fixed point of return into something that can be moved, assimilated,



Figure 6.18 *Chamber*, installation, 2021

reassembled in order to co-inhabit the living world of experience. By forging these journeys between windowscapes through animation, I had illuminated the threshold between each windowscape with movement, carving out opportunities for dialogue between interior and exterior worlds.

When I positioned the screen underneath the window frame that made up the structure of *Chamber*, plugged it in, and used a media player to transmit the animated excerpts, I was pleased to find the ‘hypermovement’ (Gfader, 2013, p. 62) of the animation created the heightened sense of journey and movement I had expected. I had not anticipated, though, that simply playing these excerpted observations together on a loop would also create a sense of limitlessness, with each individual frame of the animation offering relational dialogues not only with the rest of the film but also with each ceramic work inhabiting the window frame. Rather than an unreachable ‘space between spaces’ (Pollock, 2013, p. 63), through animation nestled within clay part objects crawling over and underneath this window frame, I had begun to open a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its doors. Intrigued by the possibilities of the screen acting as a window which activates these threshold-dialogues, I decided to create a more sustained piece of moving image work which would allow me to further interrogate the animated window as threshold. I examine this final strand of my artistic research in the following section.

#### **6.4 Window’s Edge**

[Link to watch film: vimeo.com/676264159](https://vimeo.com/676264159)

In the previous section, I began to work with animation, finding its ‘hypermovement’ (Gfader, 2013, p. 62) key to unlocking the traumatic threshold’s unreachable ‘space between spaces’ (Pollock, 2013, p. 63). In this section, I examine my work to extend this moving image practice by combining animation with film footage. I had decided to create a more sustained exploration of the ability of moving image to create

opportunities through which to explore the points of connection which were emerging through the dialogues which I began to forge between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door. The window had emerged as an important threshold-structure earlier in this final phase of my research, and I wanted to continue pursuing it, not only as a threshold of the domestic, or as an artistic threshold, but also as a digital-architectural threshold. I intended this also to enable me to explore the screen's role as virtual mediator between interior and external worlds. Mindful that I had had success in *Chamber* using different types of clay to create dialogues within and across mediums, I hoped that I might be able to develop this effect here by using different forms of moving image. With this in mind, in making this film, I resolved both to develop the fragments of animation I had created, and introduce pieces of live action footage I had captured throughout my research process.

The footage to which I returned fell into three strands: firstly, recordings made on my mobile phone while walking along the coast reflecting upon my research (Figure 6.19), and footage captured more formally using a digital SLR in the process of completing *6.2.3 Journey* (Figure 6.20). A second strand took the form of a recording of a window made on a digital SLR back in 2015. The final strand had not yet taken shape, but I would eventually include additional shots taken while returned to my childhood home, which I will relate later in this section. The footage captured on my walks, and in the process of completing *6.2.3 Journey*, consisted mostly of waves in varying states of calm. It spanned different years, seasons and times of day, the rhythmic lapping of the waves offering a canvas through which to explore time and the dialogue between interior and exterior worlds, by confining the wildness of the sea into a digital window within my phone, and then within a larger screen as I worked on the film.

The recording I made in 2015 was captured around the time when the ideas and themes which eventually developed into this thesis were first germinating, though even by the time I came to make this film, I had not had a chance to make use of the footage. Interested in the ways in which people made sanctuaries from fractured

conceptions of the home, with a group of fellow filmmakers I had interviewed a woman in her makeshift home within a warehouse space, which her husband had constructed for her. As I was recording establishing footage for this piece, I managed to capture the motion of the wind in her handmade curtains (Figure 6.21). Realising I had been looking for an opportunity to use this footage since I shot it, I felt pleased that I could now use it to fold additional sites of time into this final film, not only to facilitate points of dialogue but also to create a sense of harmony between the genesis and completion of this project.

This final piece of artistic research I explore in this section was, in part, a response to the British Council Venice Research Fellowship I had hoped to undertake in person, but international travel was not possible for the majority of my research period due to restrictions imposed in response to COVID-19. My original hope for research in Venice had been to explore the artistic compulsion to transform space (Schapiro, 1972), as well as interactions between built and natural environment, through pursuing decaying frescoes in the city and their conservation. I was particularly interested in the methods of conservation at the threshold between artistic intervention in built space and the encroaching salt water of the canals. Conservators use wisps of silk to strengthen damaged frescoes with a view to repair, alongside injecting plaster in the walls of the city to encapsulate salt crystals migrating into these structures (Taubert, 2019). In response to travel restrictions, the Fellowship was moved online, and I had fruitful engagements with my study group, who were conducting research relating to the British Pavilion through the concept of the virtual mediator. Unable to carry out my original plan, I instead began to use the virtual window of the tablet to conserve and explore some of the imagery from the city.

With the concept that selfhood becomes a ‘fractured subjectivity’ (Friedberg, 2006, p. 235) when it is mediated through multiple panes within our virtual windows in mind, I first reflected on how this phenomenon has only amplified since the turn of the millennium, and increased exponentially since 2020, with the advent of unprece-



Figure 6.19 Film still, mobile phone footage, 2021



Figure 6.20 *Journey* (film still), DSLR footage, 2021

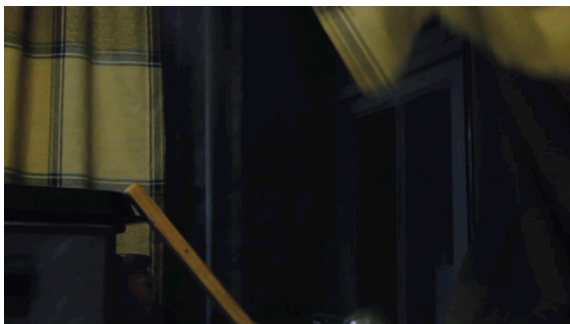


Figure 6.21 *Home Stories*, film still, 2015

mented restrictions on face-to-face contact which, arguably, would not have been possible without this underlying technology. I framed the circumstances in which I found myself as an opportunity to explore how creating planes of identity via virtual windows into different spheres, including domestic interiors, seascapes, and ancient frescoes, would enable a space for reflection on experiences of psychic identity through place and the bonds that exist between self and place through the virtual window's threshold. This would also allow me to apply the concept, discussed in 2.2.1 *The Emergence of Trauma*, that 'people spontaneously come to fit their categories' (Hacking, 1984, p. 161), and that transcending the category of traumatised person through replenishing social and environmental bonds can generate post-traumatic repair (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009), through art practice at the threshold between interior and exterior worlds. With this in mind, I began to explore the British Pavilion, the wider Biennale, and the city of Venice via Google Maps through a browser window on a computer, while capturing in drawing these often distorted images on a digital canvas through the window of the tablet (Figure 6.22).

Through this process, I began to find that the window as threshold was increasingly significant, both as a virtual iteration of an architectural feature which frames the world beyond our walls, and as a digital framing device, which contains and offers a portal to visual information intangible in person (Friedberg, 2006). Led by the same animation technique I had developed in creating *Chamber*, described in the previous section, once I had a mass of images, I began to animate the thresholds between them. To develop this technique, with this set of images I used different colours, evocative of the hues within the built environment of Venice – earthy browns and canal-esque blues – as well as playing with different transitions between images. Where in the original animated fragments, explored in the previous section, I had used the process to forge a journey for each line of each drawing, here I started to create transitions by making frames which moved drawings themselves around the frame. I found this allowed some of the new scenes to appear more suddenly, inviting exploration of the

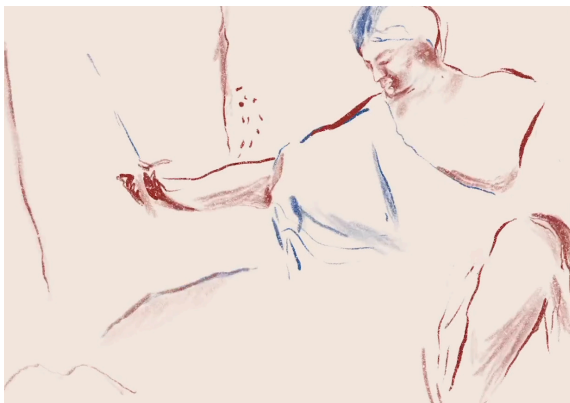
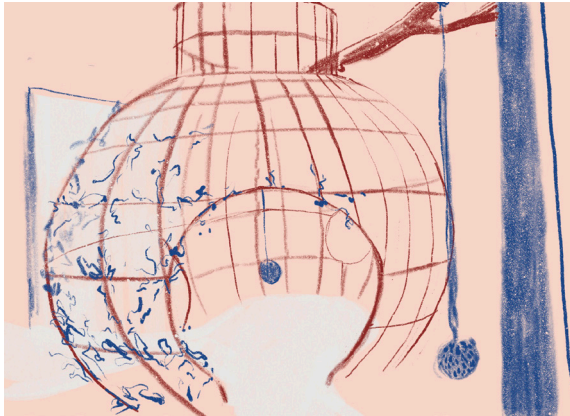


Figure 6.22 Virtual encounters with Venice, digital drawings, 2021

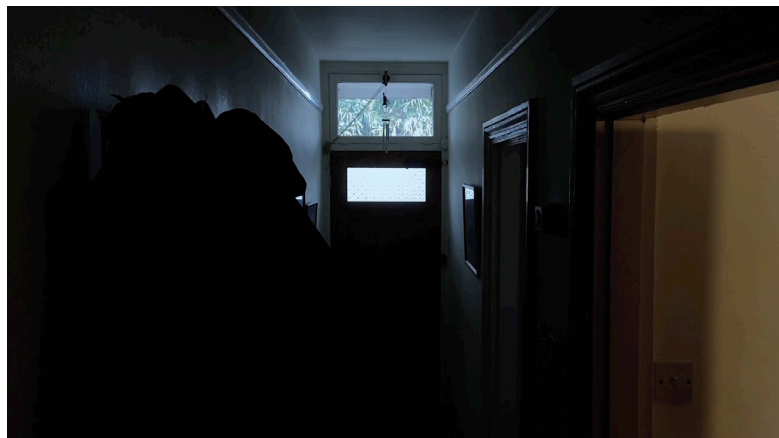


Figure 6.23 Film still, mobile phone footage, 2021



window pane itself by moving imagery around its surface rather than only within each frame. This began to add complexity to the dialogue between interior and exterior worlds I was exploring.

Circumstances dictated that as I worked on animating these new scenes, I found myself ensconced within the walls of my childhood home, supporting a family member. While it was not possible to create new works during this period, I captured some footage of the translucent window which sits above the front door as I was sitting on the stairs, waiting, one morning. Also captured in the recording was the muffled sound of Radio 4 – continuously emitting, with a slight lag, from each radio dotted through the house. Listening back to the audio, I found that rather than being grating, as it occasionally verged on in the flesh, it offered a sense of continuity of inhabited time, and a connection with the world beyond our walls.

These observations led me to decide to include in the final film the sound from this moment, captured while I observed the beauty of the early winter light as it cascaded through the adorned window pane (Figure 6.23). By extending it throughout the final film, I found I could evoke a sense of the persistence of inhabited time, and its relation to other worlds, virtual experiences, memories of the world outside. Furthermore, reflecting on my sole use of audio in this research project, I was able to explore more deeply questions of rhythm as they relate to temporalisation and narrative. The repetitious nature of the sound, which extends throughout the piece rather than changing as the different shots switch and repeat, creates a sense of continuity through a barely audible rhythm which remains the same.

In this way, I found the pieces – the personal connections to the home and the ever evolving mesh of interhuman bonds we inhabit – began to create a reflection of where my research was located at the beginning of this project and where it was as it came to a close. The multifarious sites of time inhabiting the film I was making were also enhanced by the addition of this imagery because the process of growing up in my parents' house and returning to it in adulthood created new possibilities to explore

the nature of translation, repair, and relation to domestic environments and the worlds beyond their walls. Through my practice, I had brought together the affective sensations of confinement encoded in the relationship between post-traumatic home and inhabitant due to fear of the world beyond its walls (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 226), with sensations that could also be considered a kind of confinement, but encountered out of choice. This choice, to embrace unchosen bonds in order to maintain the ecologies of human relationships so important to human thriving, is something which I have also created encounters with through my artistic research. The additional sensation of confinement resulting from pandemic restrictions only served to amplify this effect in the final film.

These emerging findings seemed at the time quite far removed from my initial subject matter, but I would argue that in creating artistic explorations of my subject matter, my own experience of the world acts as a mediator, and it was beginning to become clear that this question of networks of bonds was much larger than my initial research question, and is something ripe for further study, as I begin to explore in the concluding chapter of this thesis. With these networks of bonds still in mind, I initially combined the film footage with the animation in alternating panels, but the effect of this was of discontinuity rather than the multiple panes of fractured selfhood in which I had become interested, in response both to fixed points of traumatic memory preventing fluidity of movement – or translation – between future, present and past and the screen as a mediator of relationships between interior and external worlds. I decided instead to reassemble them as frames-within-frames, which seems to better create a space for exploring the notion of the edge of the frame, and of inhabited time, and of translating part-memories and not-even-personal memories – of Venice, which I had only visited through the virtual mediator's threshold .

The final film, rather than making peace with the tension between internal and external worlds, rather emphasises the tension, the trappedness, and the confinement of the post-traumatic home, despite its rebuilding. It is unresolved, but creates a space

for considering such tensions. Loading this tension on one side of the virtual window creates such a feeling of confinement that it begins to beg for dialogues across this threshold. By using windows within windows, and using moving image to introduce multiple sites of time to the video work, these tensions begin to be addressed. In this way, it is successful in exploring thresholds across which dialogues could be forged between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door. In the following section, I relate this finding to conclusions to be drawn from the work explored throughout this chapter.

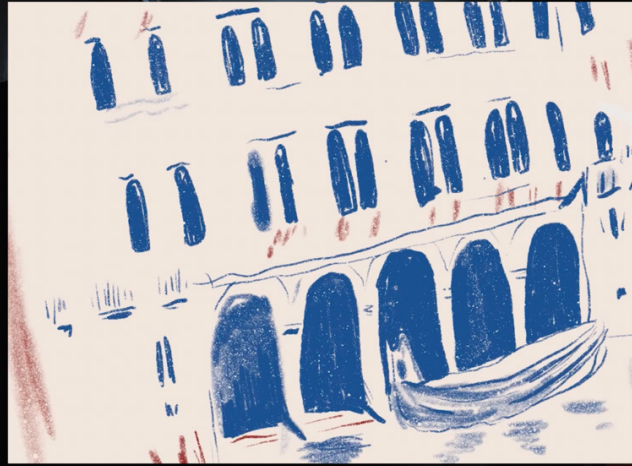
### **6.5 Summary and key points**

In this chapter, I surveyed artworks made in the process of exploring the threshold between interior and exterior worlds, uncovering how they might be used in forging a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door. To apply a counterweight through my practice to the dissociative experiences that can make up post-traumatic states, I decided to gradually venture up to and beyond the threshold of the domestic space, using ceramic fragments which developed those I had used to bring life to the walls of the gallery space at the end of the previous chapter, to enact this journey. To map the journey I reflected on in this chapter, I used the third and final research question to emerge from *Chapter II: Literature Review*:

3. How can artistic exploration of the threshold between interior and exterior worlds be used in the forging of a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door?

I found that the artistic exploration of the threshold between interior and exterior worlds took place as an enactment of the narrative journey which emerged in the latter half of the previous chapter. Through this journey, I also established that by continuing to be led by artistic processes in exploring thresholds through remaking their constituent parts, namely the ornate bricks I found and used as platforms in 5.2.3 *Shared Glances*, the process itself could carve out spaces for repair. That is, through the

# WINDOW'S EDGE



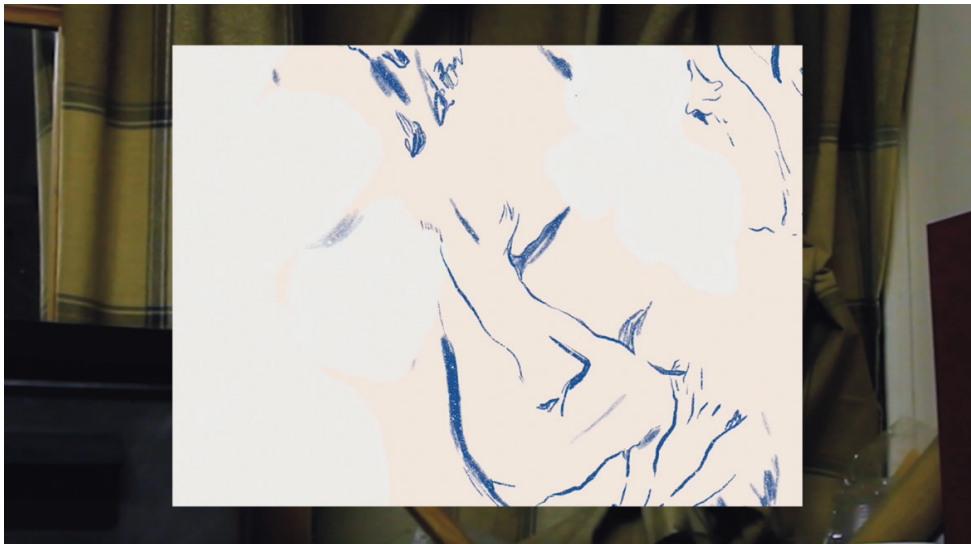
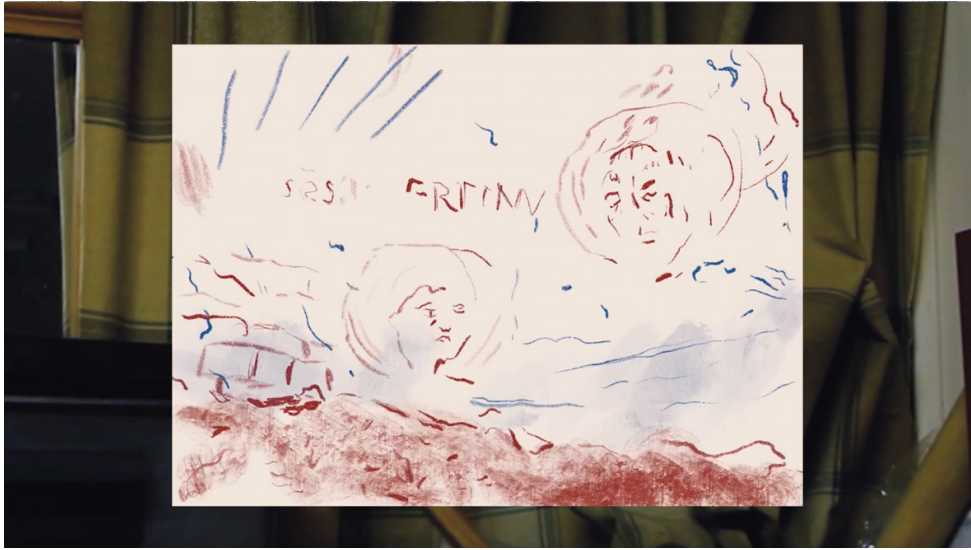




Figure 6.24 *Window's Edge* (stills), artist film, 2022

unexpected, spontaneous fragmentation of these clay echoes of the threshold, I could apply Laplanche's concept of the significance of the '*decomposition* of signifying sequences [...] into elements to allow' the traumatised subject to 'spontaneously develop a new synthesis or translation of them' (2017, p. 213) in order to repair the ruptures created by traumatic memory by allowing her to move through the world unencumbered by jarring and unpredictable traumatic resonances springing from her environment. This took my research in a different direction, returning to the ancient practice of using broken pottery, one morsel kept at home and one taken with a journeyer, to identify her upon her return (Pollock, 2013, p. 22). Through this process, I developed the notion of the ceramic fragment offering a sense of continuity, of portable sanctuary, across the threshold of the post-traumatic home, which became central to the progression of my artistic research in response to this final research question.

In this way, I found that the fragmentation of these ceramic works created a network of beautiful, fragile, beings, which began to create spaces for reconnection and dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door. With this new direction in mind, I found I could develop this dialogue by creating a new network of more intentional fragments, or 'part-objects' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128), which embedded the notion of the threshold by repurposing waste pieces of clay that would otherwise have existed externally to a primary vessel. Through this process, I established the walls of the vessel began to act as a threshold in itself, because the waste pieces I began to repurpose could not be contained within this primary structure. These experiments also confirmed the significance of inviting wilderness across the threshold of the repaired sanctuary of the rebuilt post-traumatic home by taking on forms which spoke to the natural world, while their material quality retained its domestic aura. In this way, I found both the process and its outcomes invited dialogue between interior and exterior worlds.

By conducting a parallel journey to these pieces' journey across the threshold of vessels' interior to their exterior, wandering with them along the coast near my

studio, I found that the rhythmic act of walking into this comparative wilderness came to symbolise the journey of repair. I established that by bringing these domestic sanctuary-fragments, these ‘part-objects’, from the rebuilt post-traumatic home into dialogue with the world beyond its doors, they could enter into a whole unlike ‘any pre-existing whole’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128). Furthermore, by inviting the sea to be these pieces’ new home, I found I could leave them in permanent dialogue with the exterior world, and that the waves wrested control from me, their maker. This created an opportunity to apply the concept of the importance of cognitive flexibility (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 199) and the ability to connect to the environment beyond fear and anxiety (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 226), states which by their nature centre on the fear of losing control of these connections, and which can be understood as a reaction to the control perpetrators often wield over victims’ lives, which itself is a risk factor for revictimisation (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 211). In this way, I found that journeying with these threshold objects began to create space for narrative possibility in a world not shut down by revictimisation.

Another key finding to emerge from the works explored throughout this chapter came when I used this constellation of ceramic threshold objects to reanimate another threshold: the window. I found that when I populated this repurposed window frame with these original ceramic pieces, alongside additional *Leftovers* in grogged red and black clay, fired and unfired, as well as elements of ceramic sculpture which had fragmented in the kiln, the tension between each of these elements and the window frame itself began to forge dialogues across the window’s threshold. Furthermore, through this work, *Chamber*, I established that the additional ‘sites of time’ (Pollock, 2013, p. xxviii) contributed by the manifold pieces populating it, intensified the dialogue between interior and exterior worlds across the window-threshold.

By extending this finding through the introduction of moving image to *Chamber*, I found I could introduce an additional threshold in expanding, through animation,



the thresholds between drawings of the world through my own window. I found that animating in this way allowed me again to be led by the medium, as well as creating a sense of ‘hypermovement’ (Gfader, 2013, p.62) which became embedded in the repurposed window I used as my threshold site. Moreover, when I added a screen to this window in order to display the animation, I discovered that I had also compounded its effect as a threshold by introducing another kind of window, which this time framed these hypermovements, creating additional sites of threshold as well as a sense of journey. This sense of journey in turn created a dialogue between these works and those I had taken out into the world with me. The resulting installation showed that the animation, when played on a loop, created a sense of limitlessness. Each frame forged relational dialogues not only with its sibling frames but also with each inhabitant of the window. In this way, by using moving image, I translated the unreachable ‘space between spaces’ (Pollock, 2013, p. 63) of the traumatic into a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door, its windows.

When I pursued this sense of dialogue across thresholds, illuminated through moving image in *Chamber’s* window-within-window, by creating a more sustained piece of time-based work in the final piece reflected on in this chapter, I found it compounded by the effect of overlaying animation and video footage. I found this in itself began to create a dialogue across the virtual threshold within the screen, while also creating a space to reflect on the digitally mediated ‘fractured subjectivity’ (Friedberg, 2006, p. 235) experienced through these virtual windows. By working with audio in this piece, I also began to establish a sense of inhabited time, despite the fracturing effect of overlaying these thresholds. I found this opened questions of rhythm and its relationship to the temporalisation of our subjectivities through narrative (Laplanche, 2017). I had expected to find through the expansion of this moving image work an open, unfolding dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its door, with the accompanying sensation of release and freedom I had found through the journey I reflected on at the beginning of the chapter. Instead, these di-

alogues began to act in tension with one another, with the sensation of confinement within the footage and animation of domestic interiors extending into footage of vast tides which appeared at intervals. Perhaps this tension between wonder in *Journey*, and fear at the great, uncertain world beyond the sanctuary of the rebuilt post-traumatic home in *Window's Edge*, is most significant in its revealing of the complexity of the path of repair.

In this chapter, I unearthed a significant overarching dialogue between the sensation of freedom and release experienced in the dialogue between interior and exterior worlds in *Journey*, and the tension and confinement in the dialogue between these worlds in *Window's Edge*. I found that in pursuing this dialogue, I was able to build on the artistic research journey I undertook throughout this study, reflecting on the process of rebuilding the post-traumatic home, before building bridges between the sanctuary to be found within its walls and the sanctuary which might also be found in the frightening, uncontrollable world outside. In the following final chapter, I bring the findings made throughout this thesis into conversation with one another.

## VII

# Reflections on Practice & Some Conclusions

### 7.1 Introduction

I began the artistic research in this thesis with an exploration of the nature of traumatic bonds forged with – and within – domestic spaces as a result of violence against women, and the role of ‘home’ as a philosophical space that acts as a repository for such bonds. In this way, I interrogated the home as a vessel for traces of the soul, using this as a paradigm through which to question what happens when the relationship between home and inhabitant is ruptured. Over time, this research evolved into an investigation of how these ruptures might be repaired. This shift occurred largely in response to a key finding made early on in my research, and relayed in *Chapter II: Literature Review*. In this chapter, I discovered that while in the field of art practice there are many representations of, and art historical writings on, the traumatic event and the victim-perpetrator relationship, as well as the concept of ‘home’ both more generally and through a feminist lens, there is space for additional artistic research exploring the post-traumatic relationship between victim/survivor and the home environment, which remained under explored.

Furthermore, research in other fields, including public health and social psychology, had sometimes avoided studying risk factors for revictimisation out of care and

solidarity with victims/survivors, and a wish to avoid ‘victim blaming’ (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011, p. 215). I found that this could mean some pathways to repair, were also under explored. Key repair pathways I focussed on included the restoration of a sense of safety so that victims/survivors can discern true threats from ‘the haunting, irrational fears’ bound up with post-traumatic states (van der Kolk, 2000, p. 19), the mitigation of dissociative states (Breslau, 2009), and the restoration and replenishment of an ecology of healthy social and environmental bonds (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009). With this in mind, and approaching revictimisation through the lens of traumatic repetition (Freud and Breuer, 1975, p. 7; Leys, 2000), I shifted focus towards repairing and rebuilding fragmentary bonds haunting the domestic dwelling space through art practice, and I began to explore the possibility of ‘*transform[ing]* [...] the traces [...] of trauma’ (Pollock, 2013, p. xxi, original emphasis) held within it. Through this lens of rebuilding, I invited a narrative of reconnection and repair both within the domestic dwelling space and, eventually, beyond its threshold.

Using drawing, painting, animation and ceramic works to transform spaces, I began to weave stories of reconnection and repair, reframing the world as the ‘home for the spirit’ described by Vladimir Nabokov: the ‘lovely and loveable world which quietly persists [...] during the darkest and most dazzling hours of physical danger, pain, dust, death’ (2017, p. 373). Drawing on notions of the reparative through engagement with artistic explorations of visual narrative, my research began to focus on art’s ‘ability to recontextualise, reconfigure, or recharge perception’ (Felski, 2015, p. 17). Through these processes, I began to translate monstrous part-memories, moving beyond their propensity to continuously haunt while remaining inaccessible, and towards the forging of constellations of complementary, reparative bonds through visual storytelling. Through the artistic examination of these often ossified bonds between the interior and domestic worlds, I found they could become reanimated and rebuilt into ‘something like a whole – though [...] not necessarily like any pre-existing whole’

(Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128). In this way, I worked to understand the capacity of drawing, painting, ceramic sculpture and animation to explore three research questions which emerged from the literature. I explore the findings that resulted from responding to these questions through art practice below, before going on to address limitations of the study, and future interests.

## **7.2 Reflections on Practice**

### **7.2.1 How can the concept of traumatic repetition be explored through different making processes to break, forge and translate traumatic personal-architectural bonds?**

In this section, I reflect on the first phase of artistic research explored in this thesis in *Chapter IV: Repetition*, conducted in response to this first research question, above. A key contribution of this phase of my research was the finding that by translating imagery through drawing, ceramics, and painting, I could repurpose repetition so it became a tool of repair. Repetition came to be a site of ‘transformation’, of ‘*poesis*’ (Pollock, 2013, p. 4). In this way, I also found that in responding to this research question, artistic processes were as important as outcomes. Particularly significant was the finding early in developing these processes that where I had intended to use repetitive cropping while working with found photographic imagery to begin breaking down fragments of the germ of my part-imagined post-traumatic home, instead each crop caused networks of visual bonds to proliferate. This took my research in a different direction, in that the breaking of bonds appeared to be indistinguishable from their creation. The resonance between these fragments enabled the part-imagined post-traumatic home to be experienced as an unfolding space, creating a foundation for my artistic research as it continued.

Similarly, while each individual process was important to exploring the concept of traumatic repetition, the translation between mediums also proved fruitful in forging and translating traumatic personal-architectural bonds. By seeking first to trans-

late glimpses of personal-architectural bonds between mediums and then to create opportunities for the temporal interactions between these bonds to move in between past, present and future states, I found a space emerged for considering how traumatic repetition can be transformed and integrated into repair itself, rather than simply repeated in a way that further compounds traumatic incidents experienced. In this way, approaching repetition as poesis cultivated narrative possibilities beyond revictimisation. I found that translation was a particularly important concept here, in that its gaps and slippages (Morra, 2000, p. 136) were central to generating these sites of reconnection so that personal-architectural bonds could repair, proliferate and flourish.

The '*decomposition* of [traumatic] signifying sequences' (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213), which occurred as a result of these slippages in the process of translating domestic imagery across two-dimensional surfaces through drawing, into three-dimensional space through ceramics, and through time via painted dialogue with Sigrid Hjertén's domestic interiors, allows traumatic signifiers to be translated into 'less symptomatic' (ibid.) sequences which offer an exit from the path of traumatic repetition. The significance of movement to these slippages and their regeneration of personal-architectural bonds also contributed to creating a visual counterweight to the deadening and stasis of post-traumatic states I explored in *Chapter II: Literature Review* (Breslau, 2009; Classen, Palesh and Aggarwal, 2005, p. 121; van der Kolk, 1985). Overall, analysis of this phase of my research strengthened the idea that repetition can become a tool of repair, particularly through the lens of translation. In the following section, I reflect on the key findings which emerged from practice conducted in response to my second research question.

### **7.2.2 What effect does the artistic possession of spaces surrounding these artefacts have on developing visual networks which transform the traces of domestic trauma?**

In the previous section, I reflected on the studio practice I conducted in response to

my first research question, and outlined some key findings. In this section, I bring together conclusions from contributions made in response to a second research question, above, which extends my artistic research into the spaces surrounding these artefacts, the results of which can be seen in *Chapter V: Dwelling Spaces*. The first discovery I made was that hollows within clay vessels could themselves be considered artistically possessed spaces, and this allowed me to pursue the domestic and historical associations of the clay as it possessed these hollows. As the vessels grew, I found the coils of clay extended reflections from the first phase of my research by acting as a visual network which reassembled traumatic ‘signifying sequences’ (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213) embedded in the domestic, transforming traces of trauma by possessing these internal spaces. Through the hand building process, I found sequences extended not only through space, but also through time, by emerging from an ancient method of creating vessels (Arnold, 2009). Furthermore, when I considered the outcomes of this process, I found the clay not only embedded a sense of the domestic in these vessel-spaces, but also traces of my body as I made them. This suggests that approaching clay vessels as artistically possessed spaces also transforms the traces of domestic trauma by countering the dissociative and disembodiment effects of post-traumatic states (Breslau, 2009).

Having considered the significance of the artistic possession of the spaces within and between these vessels, particularly through the narrative possibilities cultivated between a network of spaces which serve to transform the traces of trauma via connections in time and space, I found corners to be an important space for transformation of trauma’s traces in the domestic. Just as the vessels’ hollows forged connections through space and time within and between them to transform the traces of trauma, the corners within *Screen* created surface area for limitless narrative possibilities (Bachelard, 1994, p. 138). Through this work, I further established the significance of the generation of safe places through which the imagination can lead journeys through alternative futures to those limited by the dissociation, fear, and resulting cognitive inflexibility of post-traumatic states (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009; Kuijpers,

van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011), all of which also increase the risk of revictimisation, as described in *Chapter II: Literature Review*.

With this in mind, I discovered that by pursuing some of the wilderness imagery which emerged from the pigments I was led by in making *Screen* as part of a large scale narrative journey which transformed the walls of the space it inhabited, I could transform the traces of trauma held in the domestic imagery developed in the first phase of this research into tentative connections with the world beyond this part-imagined post-traumatic home. In this way, through the artistic possession of the space through large paintings on canvas, I found I could transform the traces of trauma by reintroducing complexity, through visual narrative, into relationships with the wider world beyond the ‘intense splitting’ of safe/unsafe (van der Kolk, 1985, p. 369). Furthermore, by extending these findings through working with the domestic imagery I had developed beyond the private sphere, directly on the walls of a public space, I found the developing visual network impacted by interaction with the space’s inhabitants. I considered the impact this had on my artistic possession of the space created an opportunity to apply the theory of the re-embodiment effects of a rich ecology of social bonds (Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011), and its transformation of the traces of trauma, reorienting them towards repair, through art practice. Just as repetition became a tool for repair in *Chapter IV: Repetition*, the artistic possession of public space through the domestic imagery I had been developing transformed traumatic personal-domestic bonds into nodes for reconnection through the engagement of co-inhabitants. To this degree, the artistic possession of the spaces explored in response to this second research question created opportunities for inhabitants to build deeper connections – deeper relationships – with not only the artworks but with the spaces themselves. In the following section, I reflect on key findings from the third and final phase of this research, which developed my practice up to and beyond the threshold of the part-imagined post-traumatic home.



### **7.2.3 How can artistic exploration of the threshold between interior and exterior worlds be used in the forging of a dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the world beyond its windows?**

In the previous section, I reflected on, and drew some conclusions from, the second phase of my artistic research. In this section, I go on to analyse and draw some conclusions from the third and final strand of this research, which I relayed in *Chapter VI: Thresholds*, and which was made in response to my third research question, above. I made an unexpected and significant finding at the beginning of this phase of my research through attempting to recreate in ceramic the ornate bricks I had used in the previous phase of this research as a way into exploring the threshold through my practice. The unintentional fragmentation of the unfired brick set the direction of my work in response to this research question because through it, I found my practice returned again to Laplanche's concept of the '*decomposition* of signifying sequences' (2017, p. 213) and to the ancient practice of using two fragments of broken pottery to identify a journeyer upon her return (Pollock, 2013, p. 22).

I found that by developing more intentional ceramic fragments which repurposed waste pieces of clay from vessels' thresholds, I could both embed the threshold I was exploring in each piece and, due to these works' size, enact the journeys across the domestic threshold which emerged within the narrative paintings developed in response to the previous research question. By journeying with these works beyond their dwelling space in my studio and along the coast, I established a dialogue between the clay's domestic properties and the world beyond the threshold of the part-imagined post-traumatic home I had been developing in the artistic research conducted throughout this thesis. I found this journey paralleled their journey from vessel threshold to works in their own right. Significantly, by setting them in a new dwelling space along the coast, I found that through this dialogue they began to form a new whole, unlike 'any pre-existing whole' (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128).

I found that when I investigated these ceramic *Leftovers* as Sedgwickian 'part-ob-

jects' (ibid.) further by developing their making process to include black and red grogged clay and placing the growing collection of threshold-pieces in dialogue with a found threshold structure in the form of a window frame, this cross-threshold dialogue increased. Indeed, I drew on findings from earlier in this thesis and introduced time as an artistic factor in the burgeoning dialogue by re-introducing unintentional fragments of ceramic that had not survived the kiln. The results of this process cemented findings from earlier experiments in reaching through time, whether by reanimating Sigrid Hjertén's domestic imagery or by using ancient methods of pottery (Arnold, 2009) and for artistically possessing space (Saltz, 2015). In this way, I established that introducing additional 'sites of time' (Pollock, 2013, p. xxviii) intensified the dialogue between interior and exterior worlds across the window-threshold. The chronosystem, of course, is also a significant factor in the ecological model of post-traumatic repair (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009, p. 229).

I found I could pursue the significance of time as a factor in the post-traumatic ecosystem further by working into the threshold between drawings, which generated 'hypermovement' (Gfader, 2013, p. 62) in the form of animated sequences. The results of these experiments, when introduced to the window-threshold, showed that through animation, each drawing began to forge relational dialogues both with each other drawing and with each fellow inhabitant of the window. In this way, by pursuing these 'sites of time' (Pollock, 2013, p. xxviii), I found the unreachable 'space between spaces' (p. 63) in which trauma resides itself became a threshold which ignited dialogue between the rebuilt post-traumatic home and the exterior world. I discovered I could compound this effect within a more extended piece of moving image work, independent of the physical window frame, by overlaying animated sequences with captured footage. Through this process, dialogues began to proliferate through the virtual threshold within the screen, while also bringing the concept of a digitally mediated 'fractured subjectivity' (Friedberg, 2006, p. 235) into dialogue with my explorations of the post-traumatic home and its repair. Through this film, I had expected to locate

an extended sense of the sanctuary evoked by my journeys with ceramic ‘part-objects’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128) explored at the beginning of this final phase of research. Instead, I found a sense of anxious tension. Significantly, the overarching dialogues between these two works, and the tension held at the threshold between them, began to reveal the complexity of the path to post-traumatic repair: the discomfort of leaving the category of post-traumatic subject (Hacking, 1985). In the following section, I develop the reflections and conclusions which emerged from responding to these research questions, drawing out their relationship to one another.

### **7.3 Conclusions**

During the period of this thesis, the concept of trauma has received increasing attention, and the category of traumatised person has proliferated. It is very difficult to escape our categories (Hacking, 1985). It is especially difficult to repair traumatic ‘signifying sequences’ (Laplanche, 2017, p. 213) so that each new moment of possibility is not shut down by what has gone before. Indeed, once we inhabit post-traumatic states, they can become both comfort and prison (van der Kolk, 1985), which can make the concept of repair itself monstrous. This thesis has provided a deeper insight into how post-traumatic repair might be approached through art practice. Through diverse artistic methods, it has contributed to current literature and practices by approaching the space uncovered in *Chapter II: Literature Review* for artistic exploration of the repair of the relationship between victim/survivor and the home environment in the aftermath of traumatic events, including violence against women and sexual assault, beyond the traumatic event itself.

In this way, this research has contributed to our understanding of trauma via translation and repair of the post-traumatic subject’s ability to be-in-the-world through art practice, using traumatic traces in the domestic environment to create opportunities for a forward trajectory in the narrative of the post-traumatic state in its context within the domestic space. Through this process, this research has also established an

artistic framework for repurposing traumatic repetition as a tool of repair, in which the concept of translation became particularly important as a lens through which to comprehend repetition across surfaces, through space and time, and between mediums. Furthermore, it has shed new light on the emerging concept of the reparative within cultural analysis (Felski, 2015; Pollock, 2013; Sedgwick, 2003) by applying it to acts of cultural production. By focussing on repair, monstrous ‘part-objects’ (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 128) can be translated, moving towards a resolution of trauma’s propensity to continuously haunt while remaining inaccessible. These acts have also served to complement existing practice and art historical writing which explores trauma in art by showing that trauma can be approached not only through confronting, disturbing imagery and performance relating particularly to the traumatic event(s) itself, though this too is important, but also through the reparative.

These findings in turn contribute to our understanding of the significance of countering harmful symptoms of post-traumatic states including rumination and dissociation (Breslau, 2009; Classen, Palesh and Aggarwal, 2005), by exploring the replenishment of social and environmental bonds (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral, 2009; Kuijpers, van der Knaap and Lodewijks, 2011) through art practice. Similarly, through this research journey, I have become more attuned to the complex tension between the wonder located in wandering, and the comfort of confinement. This attunement first became apparent through the process of working on *Palm to palm, the backs of hands, the backs of fingers, the thumbs, the tips*, which I related in *Chapter V: Dwelling Spaces*. I felt discomfort at working so publicly after making most of the other works explored in this thesis in the confines of my studio and its attached project space, partly due to restrictions imposed in response to COVID-19. I found, however, that this very discomfort compelled the transformation of traumatic personal-domestic bonds through art practice into possibilities for reconnection through engagement with the space’s co-inhabitants. This tension appeared again in the dialogue between *Journey* and *Window’s Edge*, which I relate in detail in *Chapter VI: Thresholds*. Taken together,

these tensions within the overarching journey of the artistic research analysed in this thesis highlight the complexity of post-traumatic repair, the difficulty of rebuilding the post-traumatic home as sanctuary, and the discomfort of stepping over its threshold.

#### **7.4 Limitations of study**

While working with ceramics grew to be important processes for my research, this work was limited by the size of the kiln I could access. Similarly, filmmaking and animation became significant in the latter phases of my research, and this work was limited by equipment I could access. The size of my studio also served to limit my artistic research to a degree, although I tempered this by making use of the project space for larger scale works, when it was available.

#### **7.5 Future Interests**

##### **7.5.1 Virtual Mediators**

I began to explore the opportunity of the barriers to physical interaction with people and spaces in my work, *Window's Edge*. This is something I could explore further, beyond the realms of post-traumatic states: how can the impacts of disconnection created by interacting predominantly through screens, first due to growing cultural trends and then enforced by restrictions from 2020 onwards, be explored through art practice, and what impact is it having on the ecology of bonds so central to human thriving?

##### **7.5.2 Bonds**

Through this project, both due to the research material, my own practice, and my family circumstances, I have become interested in the nature of unchosen bonds and the value they are ascribed. The kinship networks to which we belong stand in contrast to

the virtual networks we establish, and while the topic of atomisation has been explored in theoretical contexts, this role of the fleshy ties that bond us together, whether we like it or not, has potential for further exploration. While one of the striking areas of literature I reviewed at the beginning of this thesis involved the collapse of in-person networks and their importance to resilience in the face of trauma, and adversity more broadly, this ecology of bonds seems to be growing weaker.

### **7.5.3 Transportable shelters**

The notion of comfort through shared physical connection can also be explored artistically through extending Anni Albers' concept of the 'transportable shelter' (2012, p. 45), through which weaving is counterposed with building, the former as a means for 'a life of wandering', the latter for 'a settled life' (ibid.). This was an artwork I was unable to realise during the course of my research, but the focus on interwoven threads as a site of portable, and endlessly translatable, shelter also echoes both Bachelard's nest, a concept through which the experience of 'well-being takes us back to the primitiveness of the refuge' (1994, p. 91), and Laplanche's repeated references to interwoven threads of time (2017), which would make an artistic enquiry into the fabrication of portable shelters ripe for dialogue with theories I have begun to explore here.

### **7.5.4 (Dis)repair**

One of the findings from reflecting on my wall drawing in 5.5 *Climbing the Walls* was that spaces in states of disrepair offer more opportunity for artistic intervention, by creating spaces for repair. To further pursue this research, it would be fruitful to seek out a space that has fallen into disrepair and use not only interventions in the walls, but perhaps ceramic structural interventions, to make the space whole again, through cultivating and replenishing visual connections.

## Epilogue: In and Beyond Things

In this section, I explore the role of audience – or lack thereof – in relation to my practice and exhibition-making. My own work, and the Ingoldian webs it was able to weave (2011), were impacted by lockdown measures introduced in response to COVID-19. The intuitive and emergent practices explored in 3.2.4 did not get a chance to fully flourish through their further connections with audience as they had in my practice leading up to 2020. In the end, I was thankful for the impact this had on my thinking around the significance of reconnection with the world beyond our walls, as well as with the walls themselves, having spent extended periods alone with my cat on the third floor of a converted building on what is perhaps the area's most notorious road, variously described at the time as a 'war zone' and a road of 'last resort', with six violent or sexual and five antisocial behaviour offences committed in December 2020 alone (Collier, 2021). Still, this was the also place where I relished the beautiful light that poured through my large windows every morning, and the views I drew out over the alleyway which runs behind this road and perhaps the second-worst road in Thanet, and where I repaired my relationship with my own walls, even as I scurried past the various criminals whose activities had become increasingly brazen during the lockdown restrictions of those times.

Indeed, my exhibitions during the height of this research were also significantly impacted by restrictions imposed in response to Covid-19. During the first lockdown, ceramics and drawings I had begun making during the early months of my research – a particularly fruitful time creatively, towards the end of 2019 – remained stranded on their plinth, adjacent to a window at the top of Hastings Contemporary, until late

summer, in an exhibition that opened at the end of January and should have remained so until May. These beings, alone and audience-less in that beautiful and exciting space, became emblematic of my relationship with real-life, fleshy audiences during this period. One painting, which shares the title of this thesis, *The House Was Like Her* (figure 4.36), broke through the restrictions as they lifted in September 2020, to be viewed by six audience members at a time who had booked slots at 155a Gallery in Dulwich. By the time January 2021 swung around, I was again confined by renewed restrictions to Limbo's project space to create imaginary installations including *Chamber* (Figure 6.18). This was followed by more lonely ceramic sculptures at Wilder Gallery: in May 2021, the gallery still closed to the public except by appointment, I made my way to see them, nestled between the gaze of two painters' paintings.

Previously, being able to observe and engage with audiences through my work was important to understanding and further developing it. With my ways of working, this became particularly important because the space created for chance in the making process would be complemented by the chance encounters audiences fell into with my practice. Through this process, conversations emerged and then this could be fed back into the studio: watching as a making practice. I find working on the walls so exciting because these spaces must be engaged with and inhabited by audiences, and I am touching surfaces that have themselves been touched by so many: being able to then invite these audiences to touch – either purposely, accidentally or simply with their presence – continues developing the ecologies of bonds so central to this research and my practice more broadly.

I had some success in recreating this when I held my final exhibition of the research period, in early 2022 at the University's Daphne Oram gallery (Figures 5.21-5.26), although audiences remained nervous of interaction, and communication remained hindered by masking practices. I must admit that I look back on this time with a sense of sadness at a momentum in my practice which seemed to become increasingly frustrated by struggles with reaching a real life audience despite being





Figure 8.1 *Listener*, glazed stoneware, installation view, Limbo Project Space, 2023



Figure 8.2 *Receiver*, glazed stoneware, installation view, Limbo Project Space, 2023

cradled by notable galleries. However, as I mentioned at the beginning of this section, this frustration created opportunities to frame the important third and final section of my research, explored in *Chapter VI*, based around reconnection with the world beyond our walls. This may not have been illuminated in the same way had it not been for such a lack of audience. The lack of audience also enabled me to better understand a longstanding sense of ambivalence about the role of audience in my work. Painfully shy, I remember refusing to put my name on the wall at my foundation year final exhibition, which had somewhat set the tone for the rest of my artistic career.

With that said, throughout my career, I have created progressively more immersive spaces which I delight in audiences stepping into. When I first made a wall drawing, I felt that the audience was looking quite directly into my soul, which was both exhilarating and unnerving. Creating points at which connection and reconnection can occur is, perhaps, the same as cultivating space for chance and intuition to take over the making process, and the ambivalence is perhaps drawn from the differing levels of trust between myself and my materials, and a sense of trust that is more uneasy between artefacts and audience. My works are never designed to illustrate but to embody the research as it has settled in my bones, to move it forward, to resolve in some way, as it unfolds: to quietly mend the relationships between self, dwelling-space, and world. Through this process of movement, making and proliferation, they become the engine of the research. In this way, the works become totemic sense-makers of the material and my embodied responses to it, and the audience responds in kind, creating a journey and a proliferation of some trace of this embodied knowledge into the wider world. Some sense of this movement became particularly important in *Leftovers* (Figure 6.1) – the lack of movement within real-life audiences became something I tried to imbue the work itself with, allowing the sea to become the audience which wrests control from me in the dissemination process.

This became clearer to me in a small, and, finally, public, intervention I made in the project space at my studios in Margate as I awaited my viva voce. *In and Beyond*

*Things* served to bookend my research, alongside the exhibition I made in the early autumn of 2019, also in Limbo's project space, briefly discussed in the introduction to this thesis (Figures 1.6-1.7), but, in fact, open to a much wider audience, owing to Margate's hosting of the Turner Prize at that time. These new works seemed to work to allow the pent-up audience-less energy which had accumulated throughout my research period to begin to circulate more freely, which was especially evident through the making and display processes themselves. Finding myself drawn to the question of the tension between the unknowable interiors of a vessel and their undulating surfaces, I made several further iterations of *Gullet* (Figure 5.4; "Figure 8.1 Listener, glazed stoneware, installation view, Limbo Project Space, 2023" on page 265, "Figure 8.2 Receiver, glazed stoneware, installation view, Limbo Project Space, 2023" on page 265), originally discussed in 5.2, exploring the relationship between breathing and gut apparatus – inflation and deflation, solidity and collapse. I was reminded also of Annette Messenger's *Inflated, Deflated* (2005-6), part of her exhibition *The Messengers* (2009), which I found completely spellbinding when I visited it as an 18 year old and which remains an important touchstone in my practice. Inhabiting the project space alongside my works, and the occasional pigeon, allowed me to explore the soul of these new works through the relationships they built with audience members.

One conversation was particularly important in the context of these new breath/digest works. I met a musician who trained at the Royal College of Music and who on this day had felt drawn to the seaside from his usual haunts in North London, where he plays piano for a ballet school, as well as playing organs in churches across the city. Somehow he had stumbled across the project space, tucked behind KFC on Margate's high street, and as he walked into the space – with drawings climbing the walls and ceramic sculpture dotting the floors – he described the experience as an echo of his organ playing. Beneath the tall, echoing ceilings of the project space resided my ceramic sculptures which for him spoke to the souls of the instruments in these historic spaces. He explained that organs must be played regularly to breathe into their souls

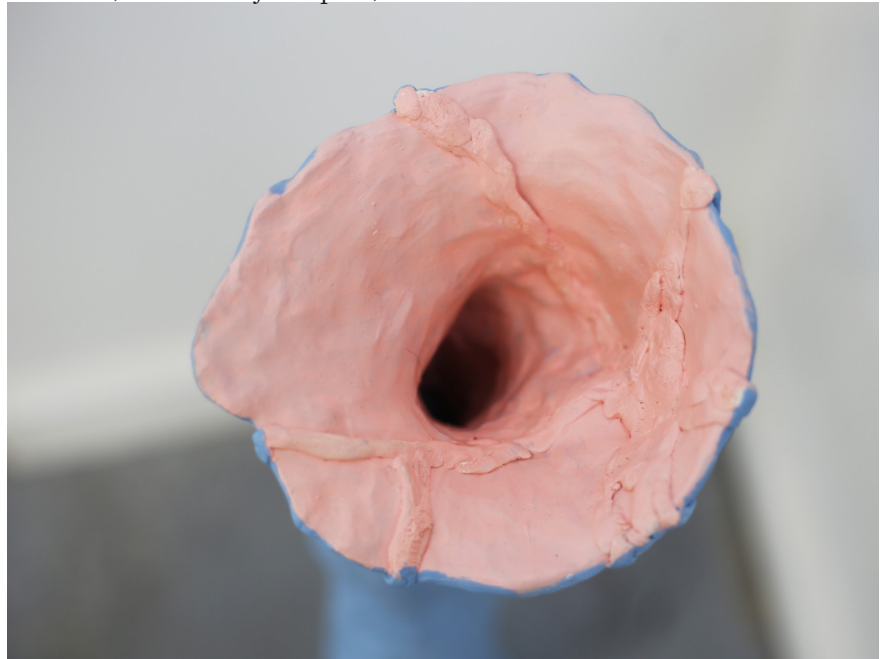


Figure 8.3 *Umbilicus*, earthenware with acrylic and epoxy, installation view, Limbo Project Space, 2023



Figure 8.4 *Umbilicus* (detail), earthenware with acrylic and epoxy, installation view, Limbo Project Space, 2023

Figure 8.5 *Umbilicus* (detail), earthenware with acrylic and epoxy, installation view, Limbo Project Space, 2023



and keep them alive, thus keeping the spaces they inhabit alive as well. This meaningful encounter helped to anchor the storytelling within my own works, extending their ecologies of bonds beyond the project space, through cityscapes and perhaps into the realm Nick Cave speaks of, and which I discussed in 3.2.4.

A second conversation which has embedded itself into my practice since, was with a woman who found the exhibition and was struck by a work which at the time had no title, and I subsequently titled *Umbilicus* (Figure 8.3-Figure 8.5). The work had actually begun life in 2019, an early experiment in following the clay as it grew taller and taller, winding here and there and acquiring gorges and gulleys through the hand building process. At the time I had access to a large kiln, and the piece underwent an initial firing, before being trapped for months on end during the aforementioned restrictions. When I eventually retrieved the naked sculpture, on a very hot day in September 2020, I felt I did not wish to part with it again, so it sat in my studio for three years, before I decided to paint it using acrylic and Flashe paints. Having only been subjected to an initial bisque firing, the work was rather fragile.

As I was playing with plinths – in this case, a wobbly woven footstool – I became rather foolhardy, admiring the tall and long-in-the-making vessel from a little too much of a distance. She toppled, and the delicate opening shattered. I may have emitted a small shriek. I had grown rather fond of the work, sitting as it had beside me throughout this research process, and so I set about mending her with epoxy putty. At first, I tried to be subtle and gentle about it, but as the mending process progressed, I began to admire the scar tissue blooming from each join, and so began a more playful, sculptural approach to the process. When I invited the public into the space, with the work as rooted as it could be on the uneven floor, I was delighted to be approached by a woman with her story about this piece. She explained to me that it conjured for her a practice in her husband's culture whereby grandparents press and preserve the umbilical cords of their grandchildren.

That this vessel, with its long neck and unfurling mouth, of course made sense as a



Figure 8.6 *Listening Vessel*, glazed stoneware with epoxy putty, installation view, Art in Romney Marsh, 2023



Figure 8.7 *Listeners*, slip-decorated earthenware made with wild clay, installation view, Art in Romney Marsh, 2023

manifestation of that fundamental bond, the umbilical cord, allowed me to draw ever more connections from the work. Indeed, its chance toppling, alongside this fleeting conversation, helped to shift my practice towards a new direction, in which joining processes emerged as an important part of the encounters with chance that make each work, and this piece went on to become the basis for a commission I would complete later in 2023 (Figure 8.6, Figure 8.7). In this way, both the embrace of the accidental, and the importance of repair, could be consolidated as my practice moved forward. Through these encounters with audience members, I understood more deeply that fundamentally, just as with the church organs, the key to repairing stuck memory is movement, and audience provides this essential component in a potent form, ready to disseminate a thousand impressions in the world.



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## Appendix: Index of Works

Figure A.1 Taxonomy of Home Parts I, found photographs, 2019



Figure A.2 Taxonomy of Home Parts II, found photographs, 2019

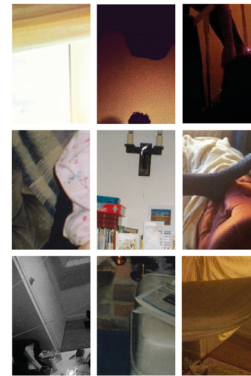


Figure A.3 Taxonomy of Home Parts, pencil on washi paper, 2019

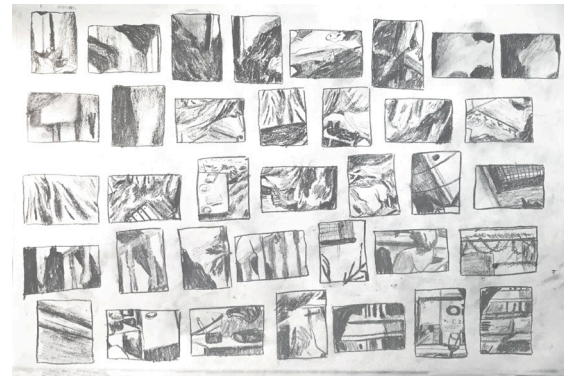


Figure A.4 Taxonomy of Home Parts, pencil on washi paper, 2019



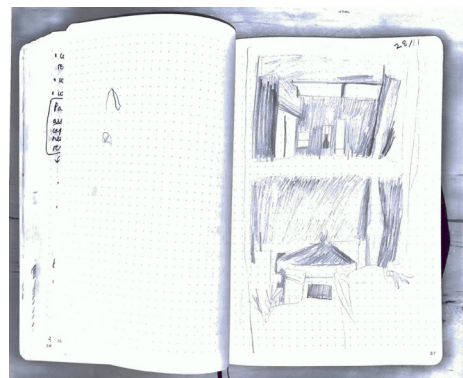
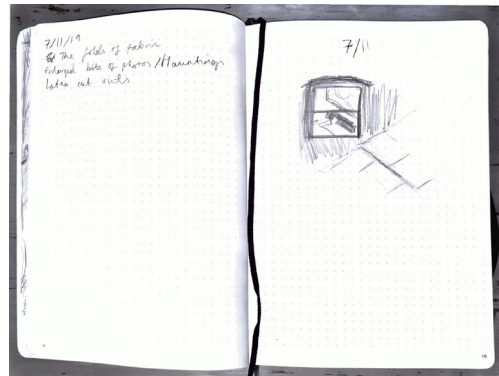
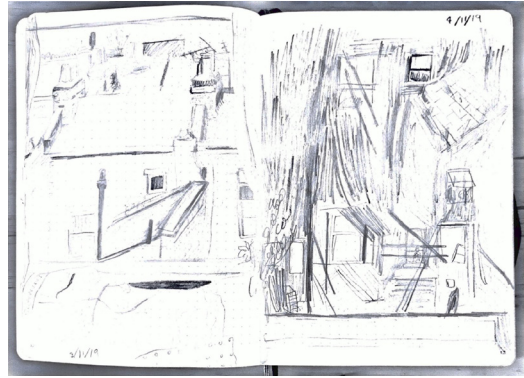


Figure A.5 Selected sketchbook pages, 2019

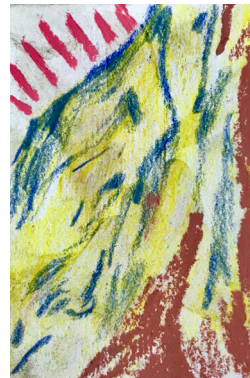
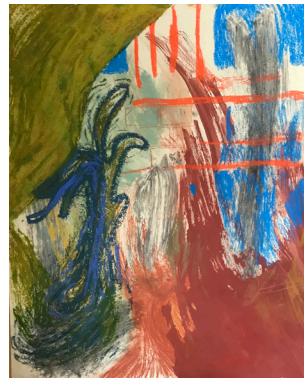
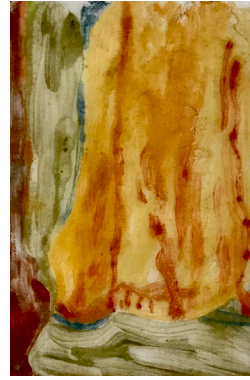


Figure A.6 *Taxonomy of Home Parts: Colour*, mixed media on paper, 2019-20

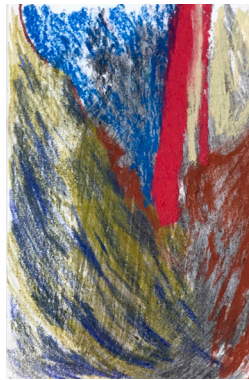


Figure A.7 *Taxonomy of Home Parts: Colour*, mixed media on paper, 2019-20



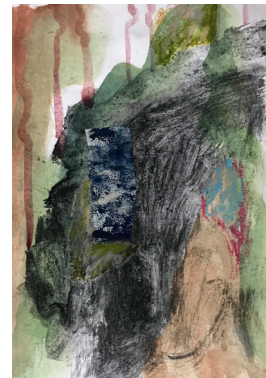


Figure A.8 *Taxonomy of Home Parts: Colour*, mixed media on paper, 2019-20

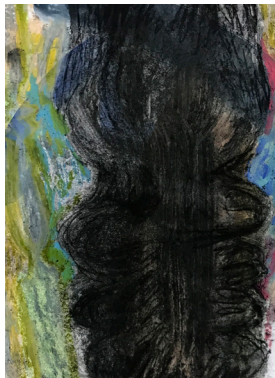


Figure A.9 *Taxonomy of Home Parts: Colour*, mixed media on paper, 2019-20

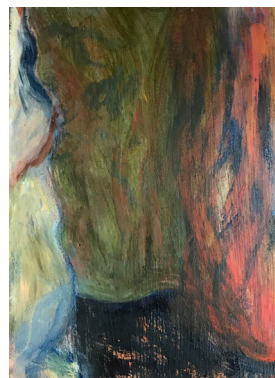


Figure A.10 *Untitled*, Oil on board, 2020

Figure A.11 *Untitled*, oil on board, 2020

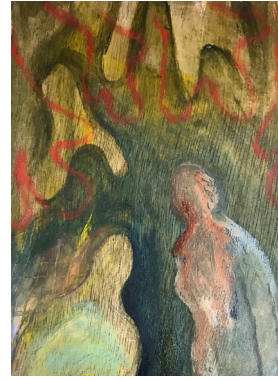


Figure A.12 *View To*, oil on board, 2020



Figure A.13 *Untitled*, oil on board, 2020



Figure A.14 *Untitled*, acrylic on paper, 2020



Figure A.15 *Untitled*, acrylic on paper, 2020



Figure A.16 *Graze*, oil on board, 2020

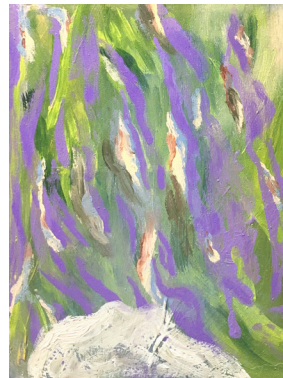


Figure A.17 *Note*, lithographic crayon on found paper, 2020



Figure A.18 *Egg*, oil, shellac and charcoal on found paper, 2020



Figure A.19 *Mangle*, soft pastel, lithographic crayon and acrylic on paper, 2020



Figure A.20 *Curtain*, oil on board, 2020



Figure A.21 *Untitled*, monotype, 2020



Figure A.22 *Fall*, Acrylic, oil, soft pastel and collage on paper, 2020



Figure A.23 *Untitled*, acrylic on paper, 2020



Figure A.24 *Darling, Be Home Soon*, glazed stoneware tiles, 2020



Figure A.25 *Untitled*, glazed stoneware tiles, 2020



Figure A.26 *Offering*, glazed stoneware, 2020



Figure A.27 *Grappler*, glazed stoneware, 2020



Figure A.28 *Untitled*, Glazed stoneware, 2020

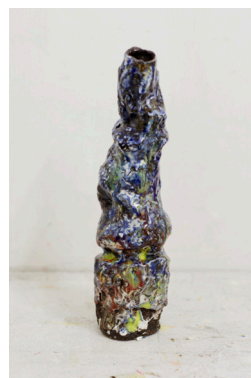


Figure A.29 *Untitled*, Glazed stoneware, 2020



Figure A.30 *Untitled*, fabric collage, 2020



Figure A.31 *Untitled*, fabric collage, 2020

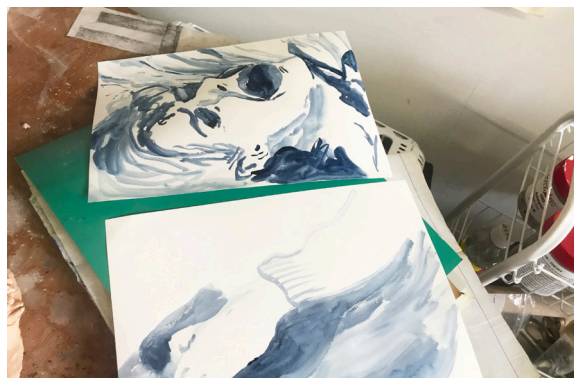
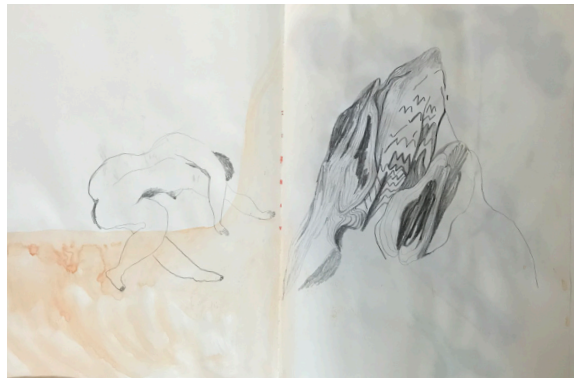


Figure A.32 Preparatory drawings, watercolour and pencil on paper, 2020



Figure A.33 *Wraith*, soft pastel and oil on canvas, 2020



Figure A.34 *Flames*, oil on canvas, 2020



Figure A.35 *The House Was Like Her*, oil on canvas, 2020 (Photograph: Warbling Collective)

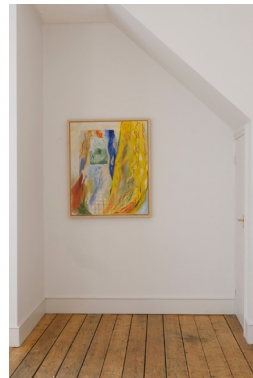


Figure A.36 *The Studio at 4 a.m.*, exhibition at Hastings Contemporary, 2020

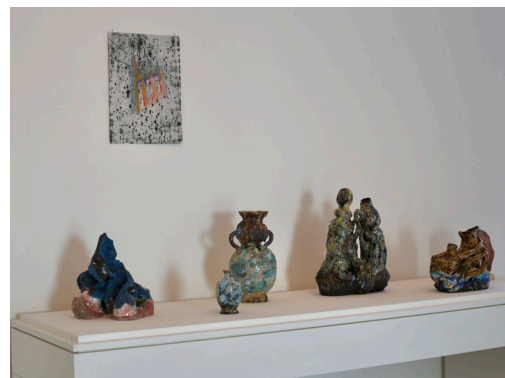




Figure A.37 *Shared Glances*, installation, 2021



Figure A.38 *What I See I Will Never Tell*, Wilder Gallery, 2021 (Photographs: Demelza Lightfoot)

Figure A.39 *Octopus*, glazed stoneware, 2021



Figure A.40 *Squid*, glazed stoneware, 2021

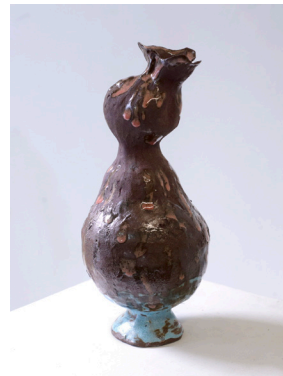


Figure A.41 *Untitled*, glazed stoneware with oil bar, 2021



Figure A.42 *Untitled*, watercolour on paper, 2021



Figure A.43 *Untitled*, watercolour on paper, 2021

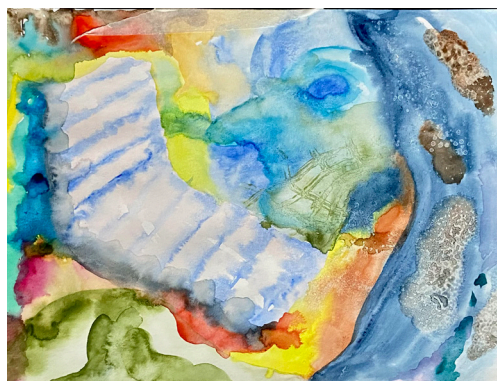


Figure A.44 *Untitled*, watercolour on paper, 2021



Figure A.45 *Untitled*, oil on paper, 2021



Figure A.46 *Screen*, oil on canvas, 2021



Figure A.47 *Lung*, oil on canvas, 2021



Figure A.48 *Head*, oil on canvas, 2021

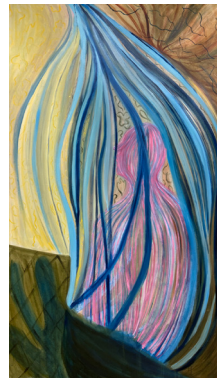


Figure A.49 *Hands*, oil on canvas, 2021



Figure A.50 *Feet*, oil on canvas, 2021



Figure A.51 *Place I*, glazed stoneware, 2021



Figure A.52 *Place II*, glazed stoneware, 2021



Figure A.53 *Place III*, glazed stoneware, 2021



Figure A.54 *Untitled*, glazed stoneware, 2021

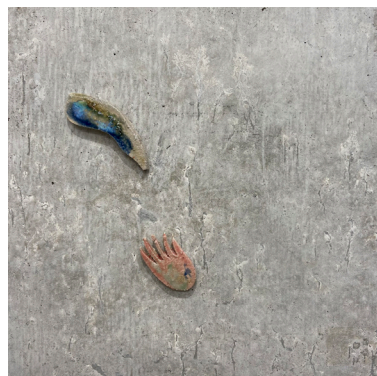


Figure A.55 *Palm to palm, the backs of hands, the backs of fingers, the thumbs, the tips*, soft pastel and glazed stoneware, 2022



Figure A.56 *Untitled*, greenware, 2021



Figure A.57 *Untitled*, glazed stoneware, 2021



Figure A.58 *Leftovers*, glazed stoneware, 2021





Figure A.59 *Leftovers*, digital photograph, 2021







Figure A.60 *Leftovers (tests)*, installation, 2021



Figure A.61 *Chamber (in progress)*, installation, 2021



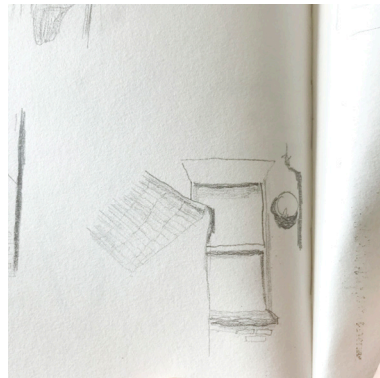
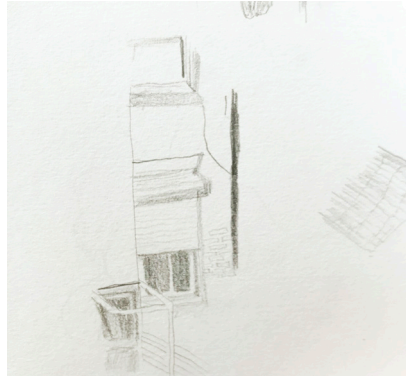
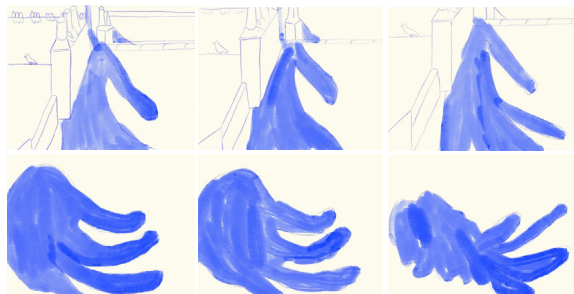


Figure A.62 *Window drawings*, pencil on paper, 2019-21



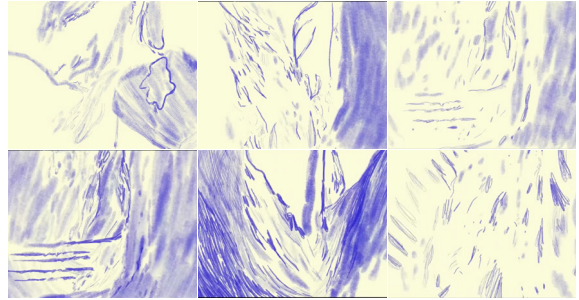


Figure A.63 *Untitled*, animation stills, 2021



Figure A.64 *Chamber*, installation, 2021



Figure A.65 *Window's Edge*, film, 2021  
[Link to watch](#)



Figure A.66 *Supple Octopus*, exhibition (with Coral Brookes), The Tub, Hackney, 2022

Figure A.67 *Listener*, glazed stoneware, installation view, Limbo Project Space, 2023



Figure A.68 *Congregation*, Installation, 2023



Figure A.69 *Fight*, Oil, acrylic, soft pastel, charcoal, thread on canvas, 2023



Figure A.70 *Exhaust*, glazed stoneware with found chimney pot, 2023





Figure A.71 *Mounds*, glazed stoneware, 2023



Figure A.72 *Umbilicus*, earthenware with acrylic and epoxy, 2019-23



Figure A.73 *Receiver*, glazed stoneware, 2023



Figure A.74 *Listeners*, slip decorated earthenware made with wild clay, 2023

Figure A.75 *Listening Vessel I*, glazed stoneware with epoxy, 2023

