

ZQ-II: '16-'22

BY CHRISTIAN NEWBY

ABSTRACT>>

This practice-based research project redirects the function of a hand-held carpet-tufting gun from its origin as a manufacturing device and explores its more mutable and itinerant capacities. It couples drawing with publishing, performing as complementary nodes within a textile practice concerned with the activities of assemblage and re-assemblage, capturing key moments within this process. Together these disciplines offer a speculative and sideways glance at the industrial applied art of carpet tufting.

The machine, the ZQ-II from Dayang Carpet Machinery, oscillates between the high-volume anonymity of commercial production technologies and the emboldened mastery and skill equated with artisanal handicraft. Its uniqueness as a portable and technologically articulate piece of equipment separates it from other, more stationary means of tufted carpet fabrication. It resembles other tools such as the sewing machine and the electric power drill. Still, even more so than these, it possesses much more gesticulatory equivalences to the pencil, the spray can, the paintbrush, or the tattoo needle.

ZQ-II: '16-'22 employs mark-making, carpet-tufting and self-publishing. It is a broadsheet newspaper-cum-operating manual-cum-artist book drawing an autoethnographic line around the jetsam of art and craft production. The large-scale tufted artworks, Post-It-Note doodles, workshop demonstrations, scripts, travel diaries, and homespun technical pamphlets track an artistic process aimed at thinking through the obscurity of carpet manufacturing and its relationships to other forms, techniques and bodies of knowledge.

This thesis looks at the tufting gun as a mark-making tool that bypasses textile as a terminal state of objecthood and looks at it more as enacting states of formation. This research consists of a series of tufted works and a user handbook: a glossary of terms, artworks, artefacts and anecdotes documenting the expanded components of practice beyond the hierarchies of form and exhibition. It puts the ZQ-II device at its centre, moving from one drawing enterprise to the next. As the tool's actions and contingencies are accounted for, it undergoes a process of subjectification, mutating into a theme or motif in its own right. Reports become rants, footnotes become anecdotes, and writing exercises become lyrical mini-manifestos.

This thesis summons the role of the diarist, integrating personal conflicts exclusive to one maker's technique. This project plots a course of reflective experimentation, encountering the machine rather than simply operating it. The manufacturer's tool is fashioned into acts of portraiture; the ZQ-II becomes *ZQ-II* through the conditional permutations and figurations taking place in the studio or workshop. It attests to a process of transformation where textile-making extends beyond cloth and stitch and into a system of dynamic personal

compositions on and off the printed page. It offers a means of viewing beyond the frontier of the determined edges and tidy piles of the finished carpet-form and into a speculative and reactive mode of material and textual play.

This broadsheet, this operating manual, this diary is textile. It is a record of activities performed with and alongside the ZQ-II carpet gun between 2016 and 2022 that serve the question what happens when you use a carpet gun as a drawing tool? Its function lies not within a divorced position as observer but instead within its accumulating and fallible collection of first-person episodes. To be a tourist or to tour can often suggest a negative pursuit, an imposition or lack of knowledge, but a tour also denotes an overall sum of movement, a sum that traces the body's negotiation with tools and materials, as well as the articulation of knowledge from one format or location to another as it happened. *ZQ-II: '16-'22* is a procedural inventory of instructions, travelogues, concrete poetry, anecdotes, reflections on failure, micro essays, lists, carpet drawings, diagrams, reading aloud, the flipping of pages, collages and fieldnotes. Its assorted voices carry the viewer in and out of the phenomenon of artistic practice, codifying an index of multivalent tools, materials and encounters into a novel methodology that prioritises the devising of form.

This research imagines textiles as documents, as accounts of muscle ache, travel, myopia, flowers, and mutation.

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ZQ-II: '16 -'22
(OPERATING HANDBOOK)

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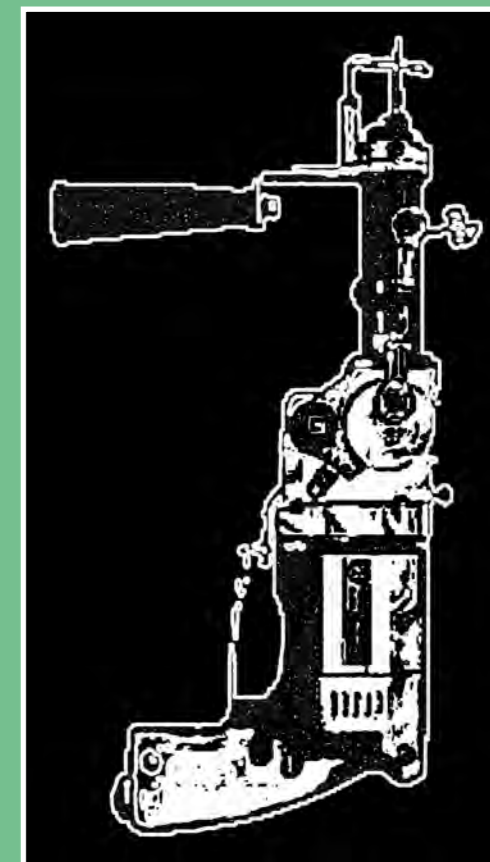
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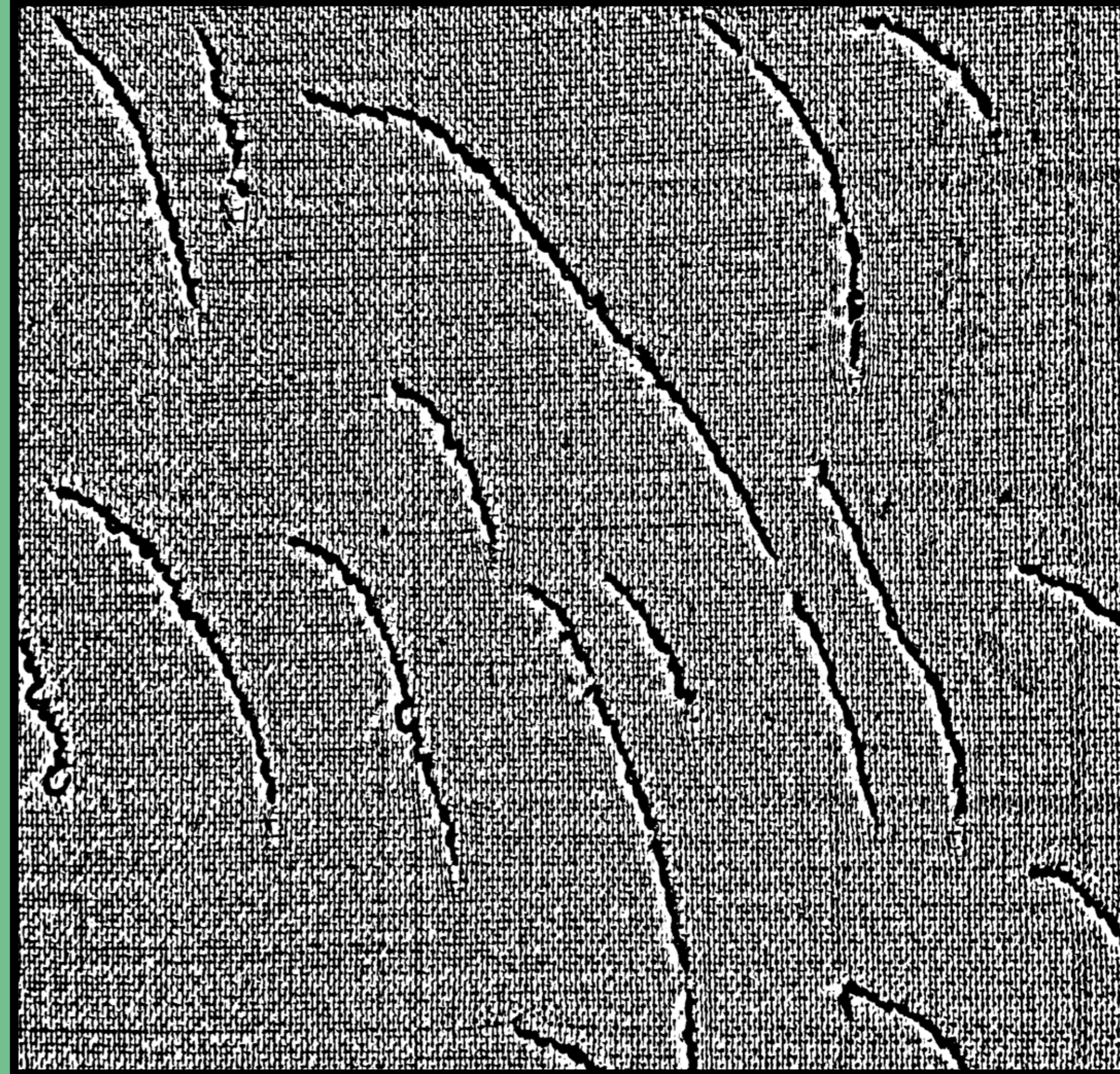
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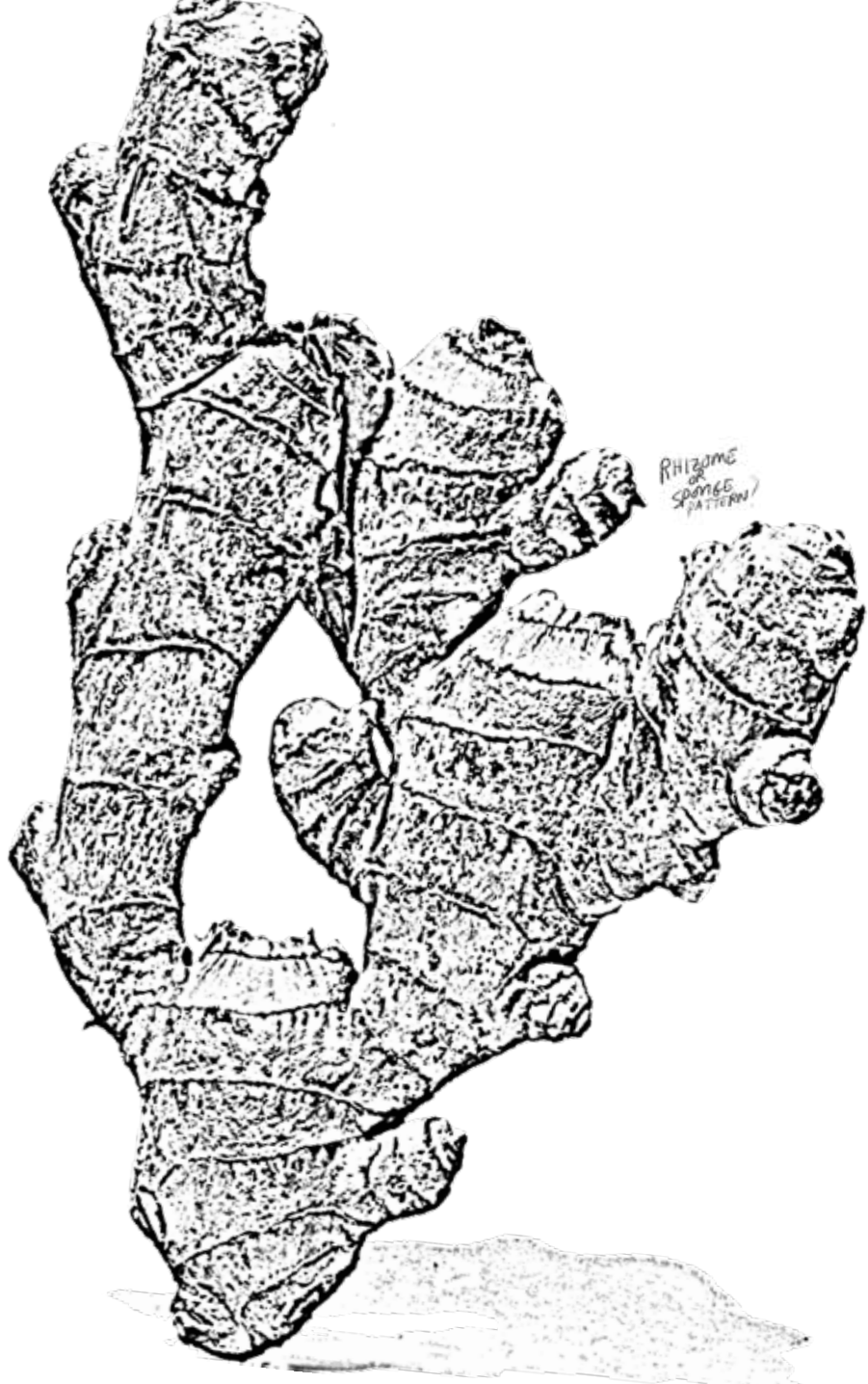
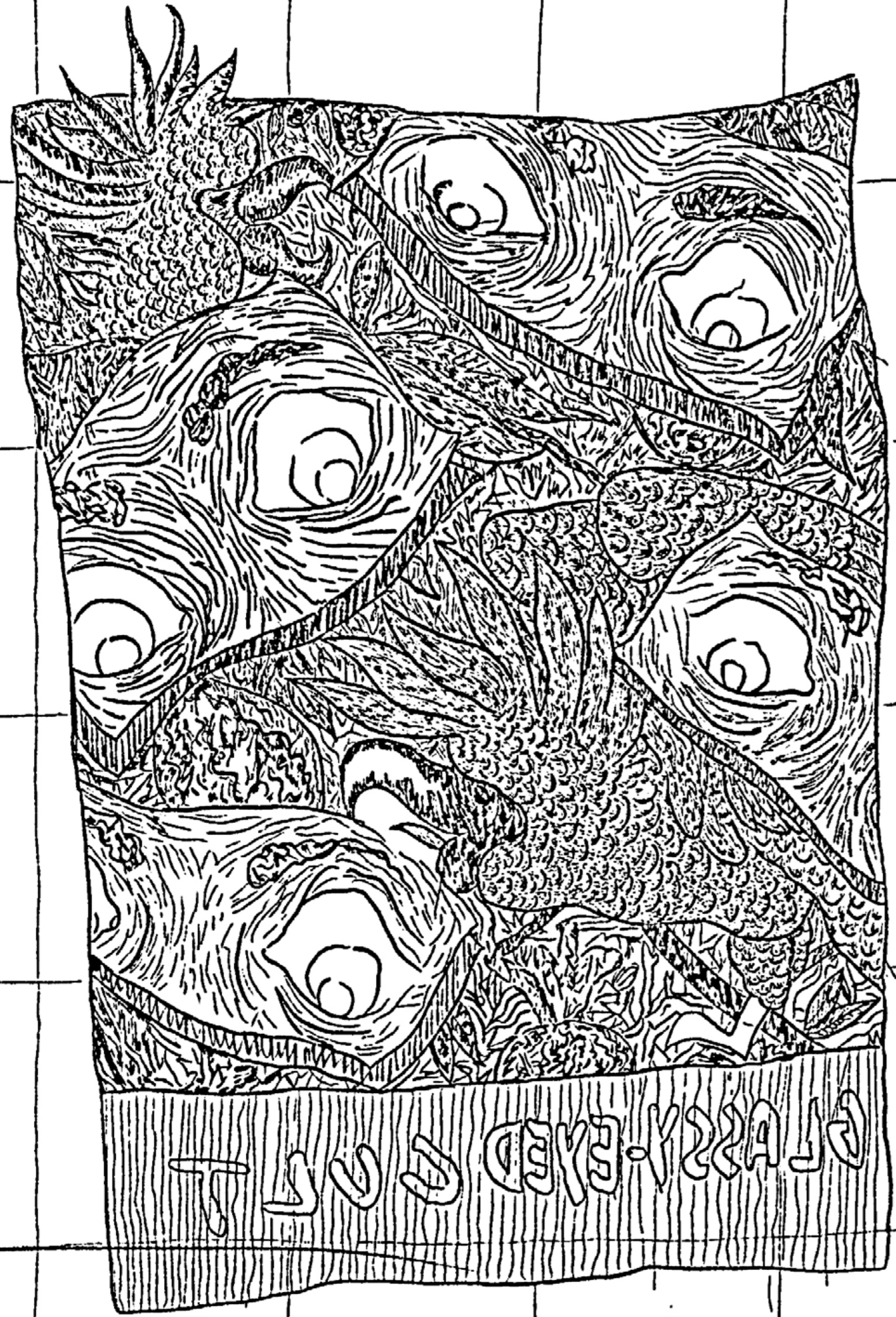
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ZQ-II: '16-'22



CHRISTIAN NEWBY





ZQ-II



2016-2022:
CARPET GUN AS MARK-MAKING
TOOL; BROADSHEET AS TEXTILE
FORM
CHRISTIAN
NEWBY

Introduction

Let me begin by first describing what this document is not about. Doing so will aid in navigating the vastness of textile practices and histories and orientate you, the reader, much quicker to specific techniques, questions, and to some degree, solutions relative to my particular research concerns and objectives. This preamble on what this document isn't will help enable the author to set a scene, a dedicated virtual workspace for the user of this operating manual.

Tufting is not weaving, although, as stated in the Abstract, it is a textile and often a popular shorthand for all things related to cloth and thread. But as we will encounter, this document grows to become less and less interested in parsing textile into isolated breeds. I had an early interest in the configuration of how these states began and ended—when we see *towel-ness* in a towel and how that collection of threads reconfigures itself until something else, a seat cushion or a blanket begins to emerge, and so on. One of the subjects this broadsheet attempts to exorcise is how to open up rather than entomb the interior narratives and relationships within textile. The words 'rug' or 'carpet' are used frequently here. These terms specifically reference hand-tufted, commercially produced furnishings—typically rectangular or ovoid shapes, made in both large manufacturing facilities as well as smaller, boutique design workshops. I won't just be demonstrating what a tufting gun is or what carpet-pile is; the point isn't to teach you industrial jargon. Instead, I will be providing a much more subjunctive and sensuous reading of these terms, tools and materials as imaginaries, locating the production of artworks and other supplements into a framework of personal narratives and geographies.

One of the initial aims of this project was to document the motility, or moving position without a loss of location, within the creation of a rug. Seeing where it begins to morph into something else, to capture like a photograph a certain level of movement or migration from one place to another while still fixed to the confines of the workshop. Production and documentation are seen here taking a two-fold approach: suffusion, entering and exiting a variety of tools and techniques like water through the pores of a sponge; and fermentation, a breaking down or degradation of substance over time to form something new. In thinking about this notion of capturing movement, I also consider other forms of conveyance. Here you see me moving away from the commercially produced hand-tufted carpet, or at least that was the idea in 2016. What happens when you try not to make this particular form may seem at first like an openly ambiguous way to proceed but, as you will see here, asking this question gives a certain matter-of-factness to how this project took shape and is anchored to existing forms for comparison.

We first begin with *Tetracontameron* by recognising a need to pull the stitches apart from each other, too, in effect, see the inner workings of an object like a pile-tufted carpet. This act of splitting open or dispersing the carpet from itself continued further and further until we ended up here, with a publication asserting itself into a state of textility.

Whether from a master weaver or mechanically stitched from a robot, we project this particular breed of object along a spectrum of relatability. And between the intimacy of the artisanal workshop and the anonymity of the factory is the ZQ-II electric hand-held tufting gun.

In discussing those aspects of textile objects that either bring you closer in or push you further away, we will first think of them as a form of living document. Imagine all of the materials in this project as always being part of a whole. So, this research does sit in proximity to the concerns of weaving and weavers and the woven; it will focus on the concerns of tufting: as drawing, as activity, and as a means of publishing, which in turn, will then be less figuratively published and more literally so in this expanded user handbook. This PhD, which started in 2016 and ends in 2022, initially wanted to explore how drawing could affect carpet tufting and be seen as some differential lens to view it through. As we progress through the years, something else occurs—a commutation between labour and the interface through which we view it, i.e. the object. Instead of thinking of diverse metiers informing one another through quantitative commonalities, we will see a complete rewiring: textile as publication and publishing as a form of textile formation.

ZQ-II: '16-'22 begins as an instructional manual. This format was intended to police what I did with the gun and to regulate my project objectives. The original plan was to perform drawing exercises and report on them afterwards. Lists were assembled, tracking my movements and formulating new ones. We end up with an auto-ethnographic diary tracing the interchange between formation and form—a lung heaving in and out, speeding up and slowing down, and recording its shallowest and deepest breaths—beyond the determinate outcomes of applied arts production. It shares a contemporary, cross-disciplinary understanding of textile making that expands what the ratification of form can look like in terms of conventional codes of quality. How do we qualify skill? How can we widen the definition of textile to include an even broader taxonomy of technique and materiality?

This publication isn't entirely NOT a How-To for amateur textile makers. It does tell you directly about the ZQ-II tool and its functions, intended uses, and about general maintenance. It does provide a few helpful hints to avoid events that could lead the user to total inoperability. The structure this publication takes starts with the technical basics of the gun and then gradually migrates through a process of building and planning, providing a degree of historical relevance to each iteration or body of work. It surveys the many cob-webbed hesitations and ambiguities tucked away within the folds of a creative process and then decants this informal know-how into more interior or personal forms published here in this broadsheet, alongside documentation of the tufted drawings and other supplemental ephemera. This publication is not as didactic as it once wanted to be. Instead, its role here is as a medium for communicating with other subjects within an inter-disciplinary field. It is a generative tool, not a critical one.

The encounter the reader has with this broadsheet is a form of actuation where content is brought forth, where the act of reading it and flipping its pages are a means of production. There was a time when I considered the tufted 'drawings' that I made the only content generated by this research. I saw that there was still a lot of stripping down needed to more fully document the exuberance in the act of research. The broadsheet is an embodied localisation, a collection point, for displaying ideas cultivated through artistic practice with the gun at its centre. These aggregated materials published here are imperfect proxies for all the different thoughtful impulses occurring in a creative process. Still, this user handbook-cum-artist book offers vital insight into the lifespan of an artwork that often concludes with its exhibition.

This publication presents the findings of an expanded textile practice that has, at its protagonist, a Dayang electric hand-held carpet tufting gun. This machine will act as the primary technique or method to de-construct or manifest alternative ways of 'carpet' production. The word "carpet" here is being used not as object but as material, a substance, something much more fluid and akin to ink. When substance takes the form of the conventional commercial floor covering, it will be referred to generically as a 'carpet-form'. This terminology will aid in separating when a consumer rug or carpet, like from IKEA or Habitat, is being suggested and when we are talking about carpet as an active medium. It is a way of determining textile without the enclosure of commercial objects. It includes conceptions of textile that, like electricity, can be channelled as a force. The distinction between the two material states of active and inactive (which isn't to say that a carpet doesn't do anything as an object) is useful when talking about the surfaces themselves, as well as the different ways one labours to achieve these states.

Coupling an expanded form of practice with the conventional applications of the tufting gun maintain an essential level of technical correspondence. It mirrors the way a tufted carpet-form is created within a factory setting, i.e. a basic workshop set-up consisting of the gun, the stretched primary backing over a frame and yarn. This technical parity aligns tufting at the core of each practice, tracking how these divergent methodologies perform from a point of singularity.

Familiar narratives regarding gender, industrialisation, and leisure are the familiar vectors in the grid of craft and applied art discourse. Yet, these themes are still lacking in practical, embodied forms of examinations often left out of academic research. This project looks at how an industrial carpet-tufting gun—used here as a mark-making tool and publishing motif—raises questions about how we construct and understand different notions of 'textiles' or general quality of textile-ness that inhabit some objects and practices. It investigates the tufted surface as a site of robust mutability which opens up possibilities for the mark as well as the page, establishing it as a lens in which to view other forms through. It provides an 'idio-morphology', a personal account of the tufting gun and its unique position between the hand-made of artisanal making and the machine fabrication of manufacturing. It does this through the form of *ZQ-II*, an operating manual that gradually fades from didactic technical literature to travel diary and ledger. The ZQ-II is a device almost entirely withheld from the public's understanding of how certain textile forms are made. The *ZQ-II* publication is an expanded textile, a rendering of stories beamed through the gun as if through a prism.

*For those users reading in a PDF format:

Unfortunately, you are not in a position to read this document as it was intended. In its printed broadsheet format. Ideally, you would be scanning over its oversized pages; regarding the washed-out colours on the newsprint stock; and leaving small rips as you flip over each page. This tactility helps ground the reader to a shared haptic condition linking textile, drawing and print together (which will aid the user later in making a few formative leaps). Additionally, the screen you are probably viewing this publication with is most likely a different format and size to the broadsheet's 500mm tall by 680mm wide two-page spread. With such a large size, the eyes are likely to roam over its gutter-less spine with near-

total page continuity at the fold. You then have the freedom to read its micro-chapters in or out of order. With the printed version, you could, for example, remove the cover sheet that has the title, abstract and bibliography and leave it to the side, removing, as it were, some of the formalities required of this publication/textile as a doctoral thesis. Doing so may assist the user of this operating manual to commune with it more directly and without the distractions of the thesis's about-ness or its contextualising capacity. *ZQ-II: '16-'22*, as a handbook in its own right, will be providing such frames of reference as part of its own built-in delivery system, dispatching a particular modulation of voice from what an industrial carpet gun conventionally does to what happens when

I, as the recorded case study, redirect its function from a fabrication tool to a mark-making tool, and the subsequent DIY publishing that emerges as a way of recording this question, which in its own right, is part of how I answer it. The printed format is out there to perform many different jobs, principally as a single and embodied form, containing something of the tufted textile's non-material or intangible qualities.

The tactility of the broadsheet is a bridge where some aspects of touch and surface can be observed, not as a direct analogue to carpet, but as a way of empathising between these two different configurations.



IT IS CLEAR THAT TEXTILES ARE NOT WORDS AND THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM BENEFIT THE CONCEPTUAL APPARATUS OF THOUGHT AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS SENSORY EQUIVALENT. Thus when an activity is labelled as textiles it ceases to be a substance and becomes instead a 'material of thought' and as such enters into the INTERNAL LOGIC of a system which tends to privilege the autonomy of the mind. The word becomes surrogate for the substance. Despite the evocative power, its potential to EMBODY a presence through memory and ASSOCIATION, there is a gap between word and thing which grows as verbal becomes WRITTEN AND WRITTEN becomes printed, as the context of the thing itself recedes from view.

TEXTILES, TEXT AND TECHNE (1997) p. 8
by
VICTORIA MITCHELL



QIANGDONG CARPET MACHINERY

ZQ-II型电动地毯织枪

ZQ-II HAND TUFTING GUN



· 轻便机型，灵活移动
· 操作简单，易于掌握
· 高速刺织，效率领先
· 结构精巧，维修方便
· 手工编织，精工细致
· 权威抽检，质量保证
· 功能卓越，高效经济

· Portable type, moveable & flexible
· Simple operation, Easy to master
· High speed tufting, High efficiency
· Exquisite structure, Easy to be repaired
· Hand tufted, Precision work
· Authority casual inspection, Quality guarantee
· Excellent function, High efficiency & economy

ZQ-II 型电动地毯织枪是手提轻便式电动针刺机具，具有高速刺织、灵活移动等特点，适应于移动工位作业，能刺织多种类型花式，其生产效率为手工生产的 80-100 倍，是新型多功能的专用机具。

本机各种技术指标每年通过质检部门的检验，企业产品标准也已备案。其操作简单，易于掌握，寿命长，少故障，维修方便，是地毯业迈向现代化生产所不可缺少的先进专用设备之一。同时，也对国内外传统的手编地毯产生一场巨大的变革。

ZQ-II electric tufting gun is a portable type electric tufting machine with high speed stitching and free turning. It is suitable for moveable active working method and can tuft various designs freely, the production efficiency is 80-100 times than that of manual, it's a multi functional special purpose machine.

All kinds of technical qualification pass the examination by the quality inspection department every year. The product standard is already put in record. Easy master, simple operation, long life and convenience to repair, it is one kind of indispensable special facilities for the carpet industry to march toward the modernization production. Meanwhile it is a great change to the traditional hand woven carpet.






Instructions

This text at times, resembles or more accurately assimilates styles of didactic technical guides like the Haynes Owner's Workshop Manuals or broadly mimics the voice of corporate sales literature like in Tai Ping Carpets's Company Overview client packet. Still, it also looks to the artist books of Susan Cianciolo, Dorothy Iannone, as well as works of short fiction and poetry by Rosmarie Waldrop or Gertrude Stein. This submission is designed to walk the reader through a process that, if one wanted, could aid them in the production of a finished tufted carpet, but more importantly, would act as a practical record of more incidental, but ultimately vital, mechanisms of production—the exercises, deviations and experiments that make up a physiology linking artist, material and matter. It is a body of work ultimately emphasising the need to explicitly not finish the carpet.

This publication embodies a holistic approach that looks primarily at a regime of drawing practice that positions, as its nucleus, an electric carpet-tufting gun, a clunky and temperamental machine purchased online, made in Guangdong, invented in Hong Kong, used in London, Madrid, Lagos, and Virginia, and thought about in the library, the studio, the garden, on the bus and on my bike. The content found here as well as the handbook form an extension of that regime. It plots the events of a generative practice, pulling materials and experiences into a specific operational framework, an approach that feeds in and out of this textile device to produce a cumulative record rather than the conventional carpet object.

Alongside the images and diagrams that make up this framework is a glossary of terms that explain the technical and operational aspects and provide anecdotal accounts relative to specific works or critical themes. This dilated appendix of documentation and terminology provide, for lack of a better word, the "content" of what could be considered the more typically "finished" tapestries. Rather than infer or suggest to the viewer a blurry host of references and affiliations, I am spelling it out, to some degree, as a set of technical experiences. What makes these works perform concisely are these diaries, sketchbooks, Post-It-Notes, thinly veiled fictional stories, re-enactments, and overall graphic design choices of this publication.

The text is divided into a series of dated mini-chapters to help the reader assemble a regime of drawing with textiles that coincide with particular events, like the pro-democratic demonstrations in Hong Kong in the summer of 2019 or the coronavirus lockdowns in 2020. These moments can lead to acute rationales of making that are difficult to qualify through critical referencing and comparisons or to represent explicitly with a carpet gun. It is a way of thinking that is messy and digressive, and indeed privileged, and that is too subjective to be a reliable signpost at times. To keep things in this thesis orderly, I would please ask the reader to think of this publication as an articulated archive of trials. It starts with the tufting gun and from there moves forward, pivoting with new insight and moving away from the singularity of a carpet-gun-for-carpet-manufacturing.

The sections in this thesis are broken up into Terminology (a list of useful and subjective words and phrases provided as chapter headings and a description of their use and context); individual works (larger finished works broken down not as a roadmap to certain and expected content, but as a container or record of stories, problems, and breakthroughs); a short writing exercise called *Ornaments & Crimes* (plotted throughout this document on yellow paper); excerpts of other previously self-published iterations of the *ZQ-II: '16-'22* handbook (*Company Overview*, *Grey Literature for Intermodal Textiles*, *Among the Living Archive and Catalogue*) produced during the construction of this doctoral thesis. Throughout these sections, fragments of images interrupt or linger in the margins to represent a form of background noise or diversion on the page. These images guide the reader's attention, not as decorative but as disruptive, conscious of the page itself and its previous status as an active surface. Reading the page also qualifies it as an active surface, or as stated in the Introduction, a creative or formative juncture, and these interjections are in aid of it.

Terminology

Throughout this publication, you will find terms such as Resistance, Breakage or Resonance functioning as chapter headings. Together they form a valuable lexicon for the reader to locate how this project circulates the qualities of drawing through the functions of a tufting gun and the surrounding workshop. These terms tell a tacit story of this fundamental point of contact and reveal in a sheer heap of residual research materials. It accounts for what is being thrown at the textile works, intentionally and unintentionally. The job of this list of terms is to gather up the inward argot cultivated in the studio, anecdotal scenarios and other findings crucial to my practice and bundle them into something more utilitarian—a unit of practice, capable of dovetailing into other units. There are terms I regularly use, like jargon, to describe components of the production of textile works, and other times are more thematic or conceptual in use, and sometimes a bit of both. Resistance is an example that could be used first to describe some physical or mechanical aspect of tufting, or as a way of thinking about using the gun in opposition to its conventional commercial capacity. These terms better guide the reader through a production-led experience of the studio, where the most boring technical observations can be included in the kind of sensuous drawing experience that only a machine such as the ZQ-II can elicit. Part of what the gun can do comes out through the textile artworks themselves; at other times, it is about depicting the conditions, and its rhizomatic origin story, before and during the production of the tufted drawings.

Along the way, you will encounter italicised chapter headings that refer to specific tufted drawings. Here you can observe more closely the places and questions—the set and setting—considered during the formation of these drawings. This publication is the most effective way to illustrate the practice of drawing in relation to this particular machine, and there will be times when the tufting gun is not directly present. Drawing with conventional tools and materials like pencils and paint, at times, are a way of rehearsing what goes on the backing cloth. At other times, this process works inversely. Still, other times, maybe most often, it is more about simply exploring—testing—inventing techniques, ambling through challenging discoveries. The sections dedicated to the more finished carpet drawings open up a space to see related sketches, objects, and other fragments inscribed into the making of the textiles.

This function of Terminology here is to deter anonymising the body's role in the act of formation. For these headings to use such subjective titles is to destabilise a textile's material roles and expectations. In many of these sections, the tufting gun is referred to more as a de-materialised and disembodied subject or main character rather than as a physical tool. These sections draw out

and mirror the gun's capacity for connectivity with other forms and operations. Instead of examples dedicated to more finished tufted drawings where one can see related sketches, objects, and other fragments inscribed into the making as an assembly point for all the wandering that's taking place, the user will elsewhere experience how the gun is used as a context for a generative writing practice, a form of substrate in its own right.

Sections to be read aloud:

Throughout the last six years there were opportunities to present materials from this research to the public or annually to my cohort at the Contemporary Art Research Centre. During these in-person and online events I often read aloud or played a pre-recorded version of myself reading from what would become *ZQ-II*. What is left of these recitations, as evidenced in the final broadsheet, are these few passages.

Reports

In the case of these texts, which have been changed since they were originally composed and largely removed and folded into other parts of the operating manual, were intended to be read aloud but now they seem more appropriate as an unspoken inner monologue where the reader imagines their voice rather than actually hearing it. (On page 44)

Ornaments & Crimes

(Italicised sections on pages 48-51)

Talisman

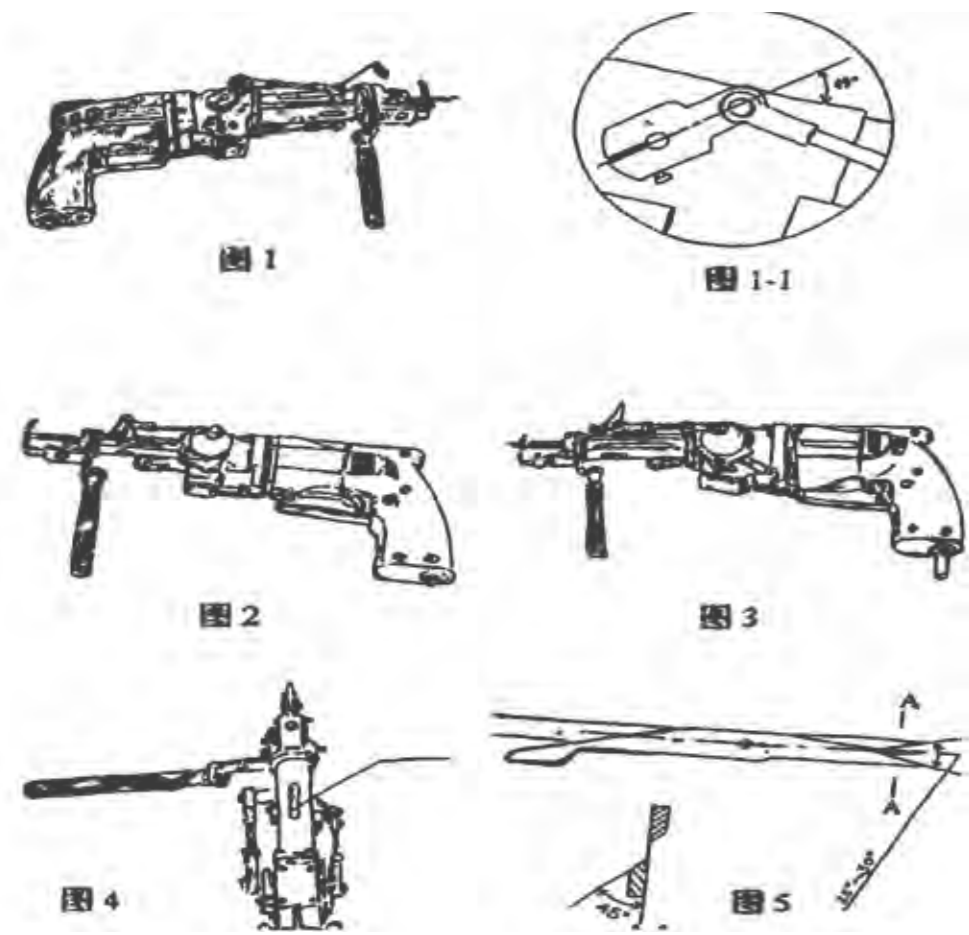
(On page 64)

Tools

The ZQ-II electric hand-tufting gun by Dayang Carpet Machinery is a hand-held device, similar in size to a power drill. At its tip is a large sewing needle, about the width of a pencil. Underneath this needle are a pair of small scissors. The needle pushes through a woven mesh surface, making a loop or series of loops depending on how many strands of yarn you have threaded into the machine. As the needle retracts from the substrate, the scissors emerge and snip the loop into a tufted pile of individual yarn threads. This process happens very rapidly and very abruptly. After about 3 hours of stitching, the user is advised to clean the cavities and recesses where greasy yarn particles may have situated themselves. The operator needs to check all of the bolts and screws regularly. The rapid movement can loosen them over time. Additionally, the needle and scissor cartridges will periodically need to be removed in order to clean the tool more thoroughly.

To disassemble and clean, the operator will need:

- 1/8 hex key
- 5/32 hex key The operator should use quality hex keys. Bolts strip easily.
- 3/16 hex key
- small brush (paintbrush or toothbrush are suitable)
- cloth
- lubricant (3-in-1 is what I can regularly find)



The gun is made by Dayang Carpet Machinery and sold by Anke Industrial, both companies based in Guangdong, China. Buying machines from Kris, my contact at Anke, costs \$200. Repair is free if you pay for the postage and necessary part replacements. I also have an older Hoffmann pneumatic tufting gun, but I don't have easy access to an air compressor or the space required to keep one running all day long. So the Dayang machine is preferable. It is portable, easy to repair on the fly, and cheap to buy and have fixed. With that said, it is also temperamental, needing constant daily care and attention.

User manuals or instructions for any kind of upkeep at the beginning of this research project were limited. At the beginning, when I was sent my first gun I received a single A4 sheet of paper of instructions that had been most likely translated from Chinese to English with the help of the internet(2014). The instructions were easier read as Dada poetry. Since these initial years of technical difficulty, many amateur tufting websites have popped up around me, dedicated to making and educating people to use these machines in a more hobbyist manner.

To use this machine as a drawing tool is not mentioned here metaphorically. There is a pointed implement, a needle, and it leaves its trace behind as you drag it along a stretched cloth surface. But unlike a pencil, it is heavy; a whole day of tufting can leave your arms and upper body sore. Its bulk and its clatter are distracting and tiring at times. But these aren't always negative descriptors. All of that toil and noise are part of the engine that generates what it is you are about to stitch next. The din of the machine constructs an envelope around you, surrounding you, drawing you into the surface as the device pierces and vibrates in and out of the substrate. The traces left by the gun are contingent on several different factors. Fatigue might pull you away from smaller repetitive movements and instead prompt a long and fluid line streaking across the work area, interrupting and reconfiguring all of the day's previous decisions. And as you stitch impatiently from the reverse, you are aware of the gap between what you are drawing, what is being intentionally stitched, and what it will look like when you walk around to the other side and see for yourself. Throughout this project, I have used a combination of: prepared designs (mostly at the outset to lay some sort of ground to build on), these preparations were done simply to work through certain formal issues more quickly; and total improvisation—considering every stitch in a way, amplifying the physicality of carrying and wielding the gun around the substrate.

To consider each stitch allows you to think with the gun rather than just translate. The decisions embedded into the substrate reflect an array of stimuli—stitching along the bottom of the tufting frame during a session in the studio because you're too tired to reach your arms above your head, and you know that if you do, you run the risk of losing your way, and the marks you make lack any generative spark. On some days, I use this lack of presence to build up layers, to generate a degree of noise that is harder to achieve when I enter the studio and know where I'm going, the lines and shapes navigating the surface with an arch sense of purpose.

It is a practice of playing your own body as an instrument in and of itself—a thinking process where you are not just an extension of the gun but an implicit strategy of how it might operate. Initially, I had identified the gun's unique properties as just pertaining to its overall likeness to equivalent techniques or its portability. Still, as I moved from artwork to artwork, regardless of how much took place outside of this body-tool-material 'envelope' I made for myself, choices were also being made out of impatience, fatigue, how well the machine was running that day, or how much mental anguish I might have been unaware of at the outset of the pandemic. These contingencies increasingly began underwriting an approach to drawing that relied on more and more auxiliary systems. If I pulled a muscle in my knee while riding my bike to the studio, this event was soon dissolved into the regime of that day's movements and subsequently tufted traces.

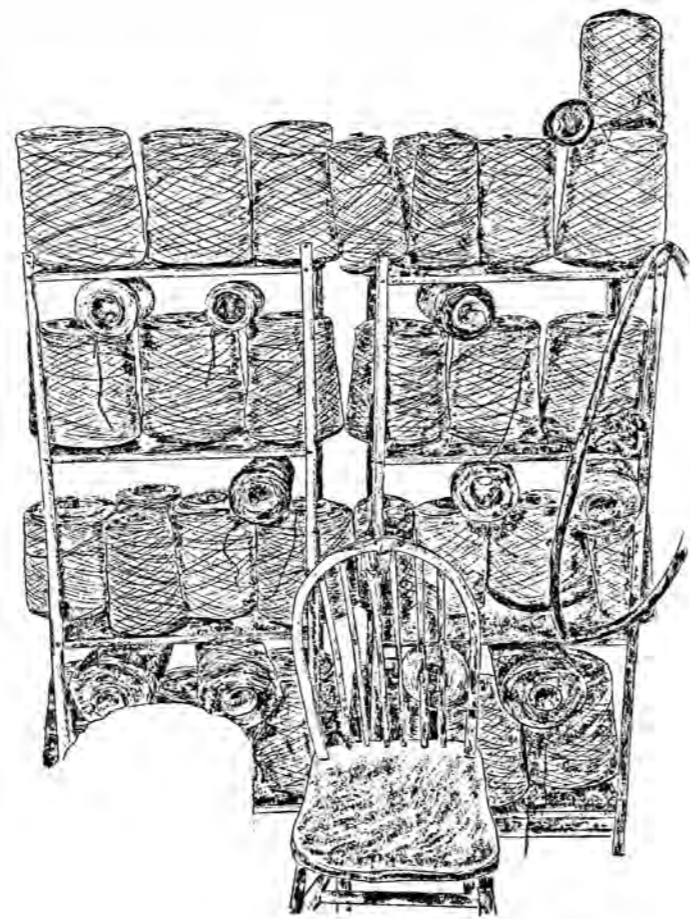
Places

Places consists of sites, people, materials, limitations, opportunities, and comparisons. Place is a spacious category, consolidating an ecology of locations relevant to this project. It's my long hot walk across the plaza of the abattoir-cum-studio¹ in Madrid, sitting at my desk in an old Royal Air Force army barracks in Hong Kong² and how I feel currently in self-isolation during the COVID-19 lockdown³ as I potter anxiously around my garden.

So place doesn't just regard the professionalised location of production, it is a series of parenthetical episodes leading to textiles and drawing—personal experiences accompanied by a technical and conceptual discourse inscribed onto/into the woven surface of the backing cloth. These places may not be literally written across the tufted works, they don't have to be, but nevertheless are sucked into the gravity of textile making and re-distributed here in this broadsheet, this place, as a way to bear new content from its re-telling.

This section is organised to assist the user in seeing a kind of genesis that, via a healthy dose of precarity (as an artist and arts technician and freelancer in Britain), is required to occur in a modular fashion, able to collapse neatly and move onwards—the broadsheet format itself follows a similar organisation. In the case of this doctoral research, which is part-time, residencies in Argentina, Spain, Nigeria and Hong Kong have been used as a practical way of testing the gun's mutability—to not only present my research to other practitioners and academics, but also to further "re-wire" the tufting process through a series of drawing workshops and subsequent discourse—taking small core samples of each place's relationship to the term "textile". These discussions offer up unique impressions of the textile, whether as a thing, or a process, or as something beyond these binaries. These locales make up most of the initial "field research", but the vast majority of these experiences have been written about and reflected upon during the coronavirus lockdown, requiring an unexpected shift to occur. The overall arc of the research began focusing more on how I interpret this machine and its possibilities in the studio through a process of sublimation—breaking it up and re-assembling it into some new form.

The initial insights of this project came through the sheer portability of the gun. Like the stitches on the substrate, the gun travelled and roved, acting as a moveable workshop, classroom, and motif. Showing others how the machine worked was a way of re-encountering its components and qualities over and over again. The feedback from each session focused on an initial technical and semantic clash of drawing, writing and sewing alongside this brutal *other* of small-scale mechanisation and how these roles became intertwined. In the workshops given during my artist residencies, you could observe a participant's negotiation while using the gun, as well as the class's overall response as they looked on, as a mix of:



¹ One of the initial breakthroughs in this project came while working in El Ranchoito Residency Programme at Matadero in Madrid. I was living in Madrid at the time and was there as a local resident and not an international participant. The space was large, like an airplane hangar, and allowed me to work bigger than I had previously. The work *Julio Flores* was a single work that consisted of four smaller constituent works leading me to consider the backing cloth beyond its original use as a substrate and instead consider it as a workspace or exhibition wall where the works oscillate between having individual themes and being unified in overarching characteristics. This work sparked a greater awareness of subject/ground relations regarding the backing cloth and the stitch and how these notions could serve a number of different roles and be pulled in a variety of directions simultaneously.

² Aug-Oct 2019

³ It was in May 2020 when this particular section was originally written.

PARTS NAME

NO.	PARTS NAME	NO.	PARTS NAME
1	CANVAS HOLDER	43	SCREW (S01)
2	STEEL NEEDLE	44	NUT (I08)
3	NEEDLE SLIDE	45	NUT (I04)
4	ADJUST	46	NUT (Q16)
5	CANVAS SPRING	47	GEAR SHAFT NUT
6	SEISSOR SLIDE	48	ARMATURE END PLATE
7	SEISSOR	49	END ARM BEARING LASK
8	END ARM BEARING	50	CANVAS SPRING NUT
9	SCISSOR SHOTTER	51	CLUTCH WASHER BEARING NUT
10	SCISSOR OPENER	52	ARMATURE FRONT BEARING
11	CANVAS NOZZLE RING	53	ARMATURE BACK BEARING
12	HANDLE	54	NUT (6mm)
13	HOUSING	55	STATOR
14	GEAR BOX	56	HANDLE RING
15	GEAR BOX BEARING	57	CLUTCH GEAR WHEEL BUSH
16	CLUTCH GEAR WHEEL	58	STEEL NEEDLE PINCHCOCK
17	CAM WHEEL SHAFT	59	ARMATURE END PLATE BUSH
18	STEEL CLUTCH	60	MATAL
19	CAM WHEEL	61	BRUSH HOLDER
20	CAM NUT	62	SEISSOR WASHER
21	RIGGER PLATE	63	MOTOR
22	CLUTCH WASHER SHAFT BUSH	64	NUT (5mm)
23	CLUTCH WASHER SHAFT	65	SCREW (S02X14)
24	STEEL CLUTCH WASHER	66	HD MACHINE SCREW
25	GEAR SHAFT	67	SPRING LOCK WASHER
26	GEAR BOX BUSH	68	NUT
27	GEAR WHEEL	69	ORD ARMOR
28	ARMATURE	70	CORD CLIP
29	TRIGGER ROD	71	TAPPING SCREW
30	STEEL CLUTCH WASHER	72	CONNECTOR
31	TRIGGER BAR	73	NOISE SUPPRESSOR
32	YARN HOLE	74	HANDLE COVER
33	BOLT	75	WASHER
34	CLUTCH WASHER SHAFT BOLT	76	PACKING
35	SWITCH	77	NAME PLATE
36	CARBON BRUSH	78	CAUTION PLATE
37	CLUTCH WASHER SHAFT SPRING	79	TERMINAL (A)
38	STEEL CLUTCH SPRING	80	TERMINAL
39	SCREW (I04X1)	81	TUBE (D)
40	SCREW (Q16X1/2X14)	82	SUPPORT
41	SCREW (S02X1/2X14)	83	DAVANG LABE
42	SCREW (I08)	84	TERMINAL

Fear

Fear of the gun's moving parts and noise, something that I'll call an industrial stress, the kind of alarm that is raised around large or loud mechanical tools and processes (like the chance of losing fingers on a table saw). It's a feeling that says that you are very close to some kind of substantial injury if used remotely outside of a particular operational remit. Like a tornado or a mudslide, it's an imagined violence void of responsibility. It's simply doing the only thing it does.

Allure

The allure of so many disparate technical characteristics accommodating each other to perform differently—the gun or (drill-like device) adjacent to a sewing machine moving freely over a backing cloth (now resembling other familiar drawing surfaces like paper) and then producing two marks: the braided stitch and the tufted one (reminding the operator of the kind of surface this machine is designed to produce) and so on.

◇

Place illustrates transitory points of contact with the work, such as writing notes on the Underground on the way to my freelance job as a professional picture hanger, at my desk at home, on my iPad, in airports, or when meeting with collaborators on Zoom chats. My actual studio is but one kind of interface gaining specific access—a tool in its own right, an appendage. Whether on a micro- or macroscopic level, there is a particular reliance on mobility, a nomadism that helps to frame the later studio concerns relating to the tufting gun's unique operational orientations.

And one of the 'places' in this project is this publication. It often will use didactic language like 'instruction' or 'user' or 'operator' to invoke a level of similtude with user-manuals, a format commonly linked to the literature of the textile industry. This jargon is utilised establishes linkages to existing commercial carpet enterprises like Tai Ping or EGE Carpets. I will often apply the word 'use' in this text because, despite there being an active diversion from the carpet-form in my research, I still assert that the subverted forms I put forth possess a utilitarian dimension that I liken to poetry, or rather, an overall function of poetry as a means of seeing through personal taxonomies and roadblocks in my practice. Place can also be fashioned into part of the Tool section of this text. If you think of the tufting gun and backing cloth as having a stylus-surface relationship, like with a record player, and the yarn as the sound, Place can be one of the instruments in the recording coming through the speakers along with all the other instruments involved. The "sound" of the studio, the tension and/or flow of its players, a level of novelty that context serves up in specific ways contributing to the implementation of Place.

Workspaces and social spaces have taken on multiple meanings during lockdown. As of June 2020, the back garden functions as everything besides a grocery store, relaxing and working and simply sitting underneath unseasonably sublime summer weather.⁴

⁴ Since June of 2020, I, like many others continued to stay at home due to the pandemic. This one place became many others over the course of the seasons. Lockdowns and their severity ebbed and flowed with the infection and vaccination rates and my own personal and anxiously mediated interpretations of caution and solidarity. The occupation of my home as a workspace shrank and expanded with winter and then spring. How I worked, which aspects of my work seemed the most urgent shifted with my moods—the existential threat, that is Covid-19, has decidedly impeded the entire planet in different ways and forced us to make a thousand tiny little calculations a second whenever we leave the house. These calculations dictate when and if I work in ways that I had not anticipated for this thesis. In which case, I collapse one part of workshop and assemble another.

Materials

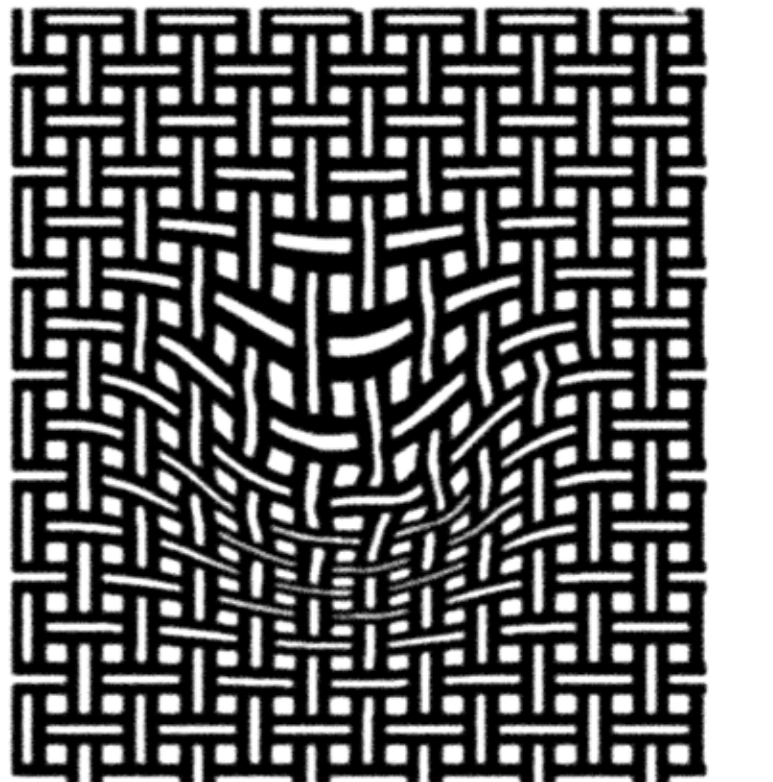
Backing Cloth

The fabric used in tufting is a polypropylene woven cloth, also called monk's cloth. There is a primary and secondary version. The primary is for the actual stitching. There is a secondary cloth, mainly cosmetic and added after a carpet is completely stitched. It is part of the overall finishing of the object. It is applied at the end of the process to cover up the messier aspects of construction, hiding the stitched areas and making the object look complete. It's the gift wrapping of a rug, a finish that conceals the motherboard of colourful stitches on its underside. I have never had much use for this step in the process, preferring to show the tangled rainbow-coloured rat's nest and emphasise the threads of yarn hanging from the beginning and end of each stitched stroke. I used to tidy them up, snipping them off as I went along.



I let these dangling threads remain with the intention that it shows a degree of logic, leaving clues to what the machine does and how it performs without ever knowing what the machine looks like. In its own right, the mess of colours and different yarn gauges tells a more deliberate story of the sorts of choices occurring during the process of making.

Knowledge of what apparatus or implement authors an object's construction is missing in how we regard industrially-made things like carpets. As consumers and users of these technologies, we fill this gap with words—we can't just let fundamental voids exist—we must have at least one or two verbs that will connect, right? In the case of textiles, we can say "textile" is the ultimate catch-all noun, but when we look for verbs to describe our upholstery, clothes, generally a substantial portion of our domestic surfaces, we often choose weave. See other terms such as Reports, Trace, Envelope and the section called *Ornaments & Crimes* for ways this deficiency of language can be cultivated into a practice of drawing—drawing out, drawing from, drawing away, drawing in—a rhetorical means of exploring new sides to the works I've already made, but also as a way of effecting an overall praxis in the studio.



Monk's Cloth, rather than the grey, much more industrial-grade material that I order from www.millstek.com, is a softer, egg-shell-coloured fabric that I have ordered from vendors in China. It's a considerably less robust backing material but much lighter in weight. Because I don't entirely cover the backing cloth with tufted stitches, the colour plays a fundamental role in the overall composition of the works. Unfortunately, these materials do not come in a wide range of colours. I have experimented with alternatives like bleached jute, but these fabrics don't contain the elasticity required to receive the brutality of the gun's repetitive needle punctures. The weave of these substitutes warp and sag and break in most cases. Additionally, I use them when I'm abroad and cannot source the conventional materials, leaving me with limited access to much smaller bolts of fabric available from local shops.

Yarn

At the outset of this project, when I first began experimenting with this machine, I tended to go on eBay and buy whatever cheap acrylic cone I could find. The random lots I ordered limited any overall consistency regarding what gauge I could use or their texture. But by the midway point of this research, I began embracing these errant material choices. There was no longer a right and a wrong way to produce these things. Each strange and random lot of strands felt like I was building a tool kit. Neon orange 1-ply acrylic wasn't the most popular tool. Still, everyone now and again, especially when making improvised works, I find myself testing its value, stitching a little bit here and there in contrast to a beautiful pistachio heather lambswool that I ordered from a mill in the Shetlands. As of last year, I started using a plastic twine, the kind often used for bailing hay. The stiff and slightly unmanageable tuft lends itself to the type of contrast that isn't bound simply by colour and ply thickness. Instead, these ribbons provide course bristles that poke out of either side of the tufting needle's stitch, never applying themselves exactly where you want them but displaced on either side of where you want to be, like the parting of a river.



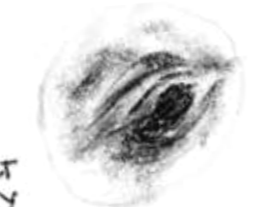
Tétracotameron, 3m x 2m, wool and acrylic on backing cloth, latex and steel tables, 2016



Watercolor
from Buenos Aires
Residency —
Borges wrote
detective stories.

RAFFIA —

Watercolor
about another
drawing —
A description
of it — done sort
of like a looney
tunes landscape.



← WEATHER UNDERGROUND POST-IT-NOTE

MAERSK PLANT DRAWING (w/ TRADESANTIA PURPLE HEART)

IMAGE SEQUENCE: "THE AVI-RIGHT BLOOMING BY CORAL REEF" (2016)

PATTERN w/ (200) TILES + LEAVES

PATTERN (PRE-DOOMDAY) RUG (2017)

Duration

This term refers as much to quantity, density and quality as the passing of time. When you pull the gun's trigger, the arms of the machine spin extremely fast. There is some degree of control over speed if you lightly let off pressure to the trigger, but this is considered more of a design flaw than a feature to most operators.

Duration is a term I think about when I try to explain how this tool makes different types of marks. In addition to its predetermined function of producing cut-pile or loop-pile tufts, the machine can make stitches that differ dramatically based on how quickly or slowly the operator takes in performing each stroke. For example, if you want to draw a straight line and take ten seconds to make a 50cm stitch, you will end up with a very fat and bushy mark. If you make another 50cm line but this time only take three seconds to do it, you will get a much more sparsely distributed sequence of yarn deposits. This effect can be further accentuated depending on what kind of yarn you choose to put into the gun, what it's made of, and how many strands there are. Generally speaking, I almost always use a single strand. Still, sometimes I purchase surplus cones of yarn from eBay meant for knitting machines, and often these cones are, to my initial disappointment, much thinner in real life than in their picture. Eventually, these extremely fine yarns became helpful as I aspired to achieve greater textural dynamism. This idea came from looking and not making the work, standing very close to it and seeing its surface as a wild garden, and letting some degree of chance do the work for me.

Here's in an example of a "score" I made to further illustrate how duration could become a new tool for this process, how it could work, not as an antithesis to the way duration may be experienced or meant to function within carpet fabrication establishments, but simply outside of that conventional operating context. The score consists of a set of instructions and prompts about marks and how long these movements should take to achieve. It's a means of play that focuses more on the present than it approaches some sort of technical, critical, or professional horizon line.

It is an exercise looking at the tufted drawing from the outside-in, not as a dedicated demonstration of the concept that slower lines are fatter lines, but as one of many strategies to move the centre of gravity away from the idea of production and more towards a tacit inspection of material relations. Providing a score substitutes the image-driven tufted surface with a form of roulette that allows the operator to focus either on the quality of tufted stitch or that you've creatively developed a method prior to making that removes the prestige of looking. What's left with is an exquisite corpse of different marks that broaden the repertoire of the tufted mark-maker.

{score}

LEGEND:

Start: { (shift-I)
 Shape: Δ(alt-J)
 Curve: U
 Straight Line: | (shift-.)
 Horizontal: c
 Vertical: ç (alt-C)
 Organic Shape: ß (alt-S)
 Position: → (alt-L)
 Right: >(shift-.)
 Left: < (shift-.)
 Bottom: (shift-)
 Top: + (shift=)
 Middle/Centre: -
 Eye-line: ° (alt-shift-8)
 Trunk-line: ‡ (alt-shift-7)
 Knee-line: * (shift-8)
 Above: ^ (alt-I)
 Below: ... (alt-;)
 Reposition (from Centre): ° (alt-0)
 Units from Centre (Steps): `

Duration: ∞ (alt-5)
 Unit of time (seconds): /
 Repeat: § (alt-6)

Direction: ≈ (alt-X)
 Size/Length/A Size Similar To: • (alt-8)
 Stagger/Broken: ~ (alt-shift-.) (alt-shift-.)
 From Existing Position: ¡ (alt-1)
 Less pressure on trigger: ≠ (alt=-)
 Rest: ∫ (alt-b)
 Material: ‡ (alt-T)
 Acrylic from Ebay: Æ (alt-shift-')
 80/20 blend from McAndrews Textiles: % (shift-5)
 Lambswool from Jamieson's of Shetland: ð (alt-D)
 Plastic: √ (alt-V)
 Jute: Ø (alt-shift-V)
 Finish: } (shift-J)

As a sample of what this might look like I have included both the score and its expanded translation.

```
{
-
%
→U<
• (snake)
∞/////
∫
'<
|c* <>
-Δß (cartoon slime) <-
U+ ->
∞//////////
```

```
∫
i
• (finger-length) ~§(cursive) +>
• (arms span)
∞//////////
∫
→Æ <-
|+>
∞/////
∫
- > | + <
∞//////////
∫
ð 2U Δ (watermelon)
∞/////
}
```

start
 stand in the middle of your workspace
 gun threaded with 2-play 80/20% wool/synthetic blend of any colour
 from the centre draw a curve moving towards the left-hand side
 make this curve the length of a snake
 make in 5 seconds

(rest)
 take one step to the left from centre

make horizontal line along your knee-line from far left to far right
 stagger a line in the shape of cartoon slime drips from lower-left-middle-bottom
 in an arc and back down to lower-right-middle-bottom
 make in 15 seconds

(rest)
 from this last position...

make a sequence of finger-length marks staggered in a repeating loop
 similar to cursive and moving upwards
 make the length of your arm-span
 make in 10 seconds

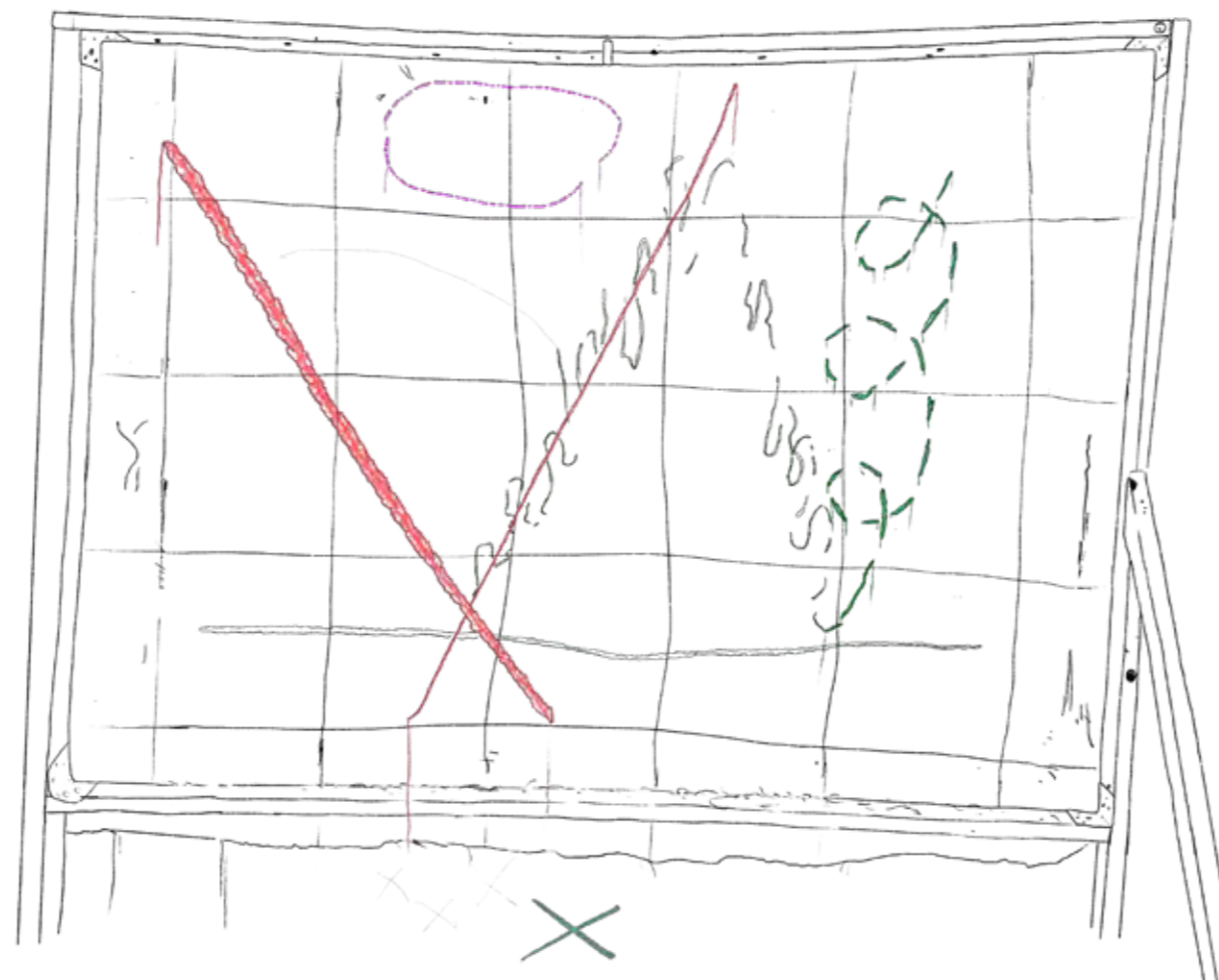
(rest)
 switching to acrylic yarn at left bottom middle
 straight line to top right middle
 make in 3 seconds

(rest)
 from middle bottom right make a straight line to top left
 make in 20 seconds

(rest)
 with the lambswool make a two curves making a watermelon shape top left middle
 make in 5 seconds

stop

CHOROGRAPHY #1



Hard and Soft,
 Hoxton studio, London, 2018
 Early studio notes (later re-written in 2019)
 about how drawing, resolution, and parody might look
 when you're dealing with carpet as a medium.

...this binary appeared whenever I thought about combining a motif or reference material that came directly from something that could be related to rug or carpet, i.e. patterns, figurative scenes from tapestries, logos pertaining to the business of industrial textile manufacturing, anything with typeface, and the machine's own ability to move and manoeuvre quickly. There was a desire to agitate these images and weaken them in some way, extracting their confidence and authority, their ubiquity—their monolithic presence in the world—and absorbing them into my little spider web of drawing vernacular and anecdotal durations.

I've seen painters who have done similar things to what I'm describing. Phillip Guston did it with Richard Nixon, the Ku Klux Klan, and even with shoes and light bulbs. More recently, Katherine Bernhardt does this with Nike, Lisa Simpson, and bananas. For me, it was an impulse to personalise something while at the same time trying to undermine it in some way. Maybe it was just a shallow form of parody. I wondered about how these drawings are visually or thematically constructed by the disintegration of the subject and the weakening of graphic resolution. Technically it's just the tufting gun stitching into this industrial hessian. Like Guston or Bernhardt the method of image production is front and centre when considering the subjects of their work. Guston invoked the image of the easel painter in fat and gooey strokes, a white-robed member of the KKK wielding a thick brush at their sponge of a canvas; and Bernhardt uses spray paint's immediacy as well as its stubbornness—unlike oil paint that can be reworked and refined easily—she uses this technique as a stylus that records the immediacy of her depiction of popular logos and motifs, resulting in an array of pop culture candied and decayed, squashed and ill-proportioned by the misalignment of materials and motor skills. Or maybe it's a virtuosity of messiness: why take so long to construct Garfield when Garfield's likeness is not what we're talking about? Reaching Garfield-ness, his most outer reaches of recognisability establishes a more practical function: one that renders his image out of anxiety and entropy. ✨ ✨ ✨

I saw whether or not to present the subject itself and the execution of it through a conventional tufted rug format at the heart of my research. It's a place that's not divided into the hand-made or machine-made but rather about presentation, expectations, and what systems we lean on and why. The difference between a typeface like Helvetica and the hand-scrawled word or phrase can be a difference in trust—an institutional front-end suggesting a level of safety where they allow you to allow them to be the folks that worry about how something is done. It is the solid forms and smooth contours of everyday life becoming gaseous in our collective understanding of the differences between a logotype like NASA or the scratched graffiti on the window of a subway car.

The hand-drawn or scrawl is informal and subjective, it is an unsolicited editorial. In my case, I was aiming to make this notion more and less obvious from work to work. In exploring this tension between tightness and looseness, some woolly edges begin to emerge. The tufting gun seemed like an ideal tool to isolate where one graphic and material iteration of wool and stitch would differentiate from another. In a way, it was like these works were working in and around these margins of awkwardness. By not stitching up the whole image and creating that unified tufted carpet surface, you see the movements and decisions made in building that image.

Edit:
 Now this passage called, **Hard and Soft** was/is a way of thinking about this practice of object/image-making that I am attempting to break down for the handbook user. I would also like to ask the reader to take this nugget and put it somewhere out of sight but easily retrievable.

This accessory thought, like many of the other moments where I walk you back and forth over something I've just said, is the best way I can think of to guide you through these research materials. You can think of this section and the others seemingly like it not as an abrupt pausing of the dissemination of findings about this subject but as literal a way as I can to exhibit the flow of content. It's a way for this document to behave in a way that sometimes mirrors the ways one can be in the studio, confident of what's in front of them and what the genealogy of that idea looks like, only to come back the next day to feel that confidence is a bit flaccid in comparison. But this perpetual re-drafting gives strange form to this case study about how one can explore drawing through textiles, or maybe its textiles through drawing. ✨ Or, in fact, maybe it is investigating the phenomenon of drawing

with textiles through writing or, more accurately, channelling the textile drawing through a practice-based PhD process.

Hard and Soft is a unit of thinking. It is a bracketed observation from around 2017. It is included so the reader sees me gaining a level of purchase in discovering levels of interplay between the broad designations of drawing and textile from an earlier stage of my research. This is not to say that I disagree with my 2017 self, just that you, the reader, should experience a fair amount of movement in these episodes. It is a project of constant replenishment, one that refreshes itself in support of its process rather than its content.¹

...to talk of forms of parody present in this thesis is still vital. I can't not talk to people about my works without resorting to terms like "tapestry" or "rug". It makes communicating with them more manageable. To speak of "drawings" sometimes works, but you can tell this stretches their understanding of what you do without standing directly in front of them. To understand textiles is to become aware of the terminology we use to partition one from another. Yes, they are technically a form of tapestry. No, they are not technically a rug, BUT they are technically made using the same tools and techniques. Somewhere between these 'yes's and 'no's are things that feel like parody, and things like control, finish, skill, quality...

...we can look directly at things like polypropylene, acrylic, lamb's wool, Carpet Gripper, wood, guns...and can here the clatter of the machine puncturing the clarity of music playing in the background...can feel and smell the lubricant and the occasional choking vibration when the gun is loosening itself somewhere after many hours of use...but things like parody seem to come to us by a combination of looking and saying, by negotiating our thoughts into words and the commitment to verbalising something, you can only see when your eyes are crossed, as best as you can. You are a witness to the gaps between Yes and No, This and That. "Rug"?: yeah, sure, but not really. And so, by this metric, I think elements from the idea that rugs are also images can be beneficial in discussing some of the components of talking about textiles through drawing...

¹ Referring to Rosmarie Waldrop's THINKING OF FOLLOWS, in the section called b/HISTORICAL.



...that the poem is an epiphany inside the poet's mind and then "expressed" by choosing the right words; that content (and meaning) is primary and determines its (organic) form; (Crealey/Olson: "form is never more than an extension of content") finally, that the vertical tendency of metaphor (Olson: "the sort of symbol") is our hotline to transcendence...

Rosmarie Waldrop, "Thinking Follows"
 24 April 2000

<http://writing.upenn.edu/epc/authors/waldrop/thinking.html>

Julio Flores, Madrid 2017

A large drawing made of tufted acrylic yarn on polyester primary backing fabric stretched on a wooden frame hung between two metal pillars at Matadero Madrid in 2017. Matadero is a public art space that had previously served as the city's central slaughterhouse and now hosts many cultural enterprises, including an artist residency programme I attended called El Ranchito.

There are four separate works contained within a single larger artwork. The backing fabric functioned as a workspace, like an easel, a means of presenting work-in-progress and a gallery wall for finished work. It was originally shown this way as part of a work-in-progress exhibition to show the public what the Ranchito residents have done throughout their six-week stay there.

This drawing was the first time that I began to separate the tufted stitches, exposing the backing cloth and showing the tufts travelling across its surface. Because of the available budget, free time and large studio space, I wanted to explore how the tufting gun would perform as a drawing tool if the size of the stitch was comparatively stunted by the overall size of the work area.

At this stage, I continued to work figuratively and illustratively, testing different graphic styles against a recognisable carpet-form foundation. I made four individual images borrowed from various subjects that I was reading about at the time: 19th-century French political cartoons, Arts & Crafts Movement pattern motifs, the Velázquez painting *Las Hilanderas* (1657), and incidental print and online news media consumed on a given day.

Within the larger artwork, named after one of the smaller annexed pieces (initially intended to be cut out into individual drawings): *Julio Flores*, *Escoria!*, *Glassy-Eyed Cult* and *The Spinners*, were mainly assembled from an array of sketches and half-starts produced throughout the residency period of 16th of June to the 2nd of July 2017, as well as some I had brought along with me from London. At the outset, there was not much more than themes of general interest in mind. It hadn't been long since the URRR residency in Buenos Aires, where I spent the entire three months drawing and painting on various found surfaces such as glass, paper, silk, cardboard, canvas and terracotta. And during this, the figure of the harlequin became a mutable formal vehicle for me, through which I could think about patterns and motifs in a personified way—excising the ornament from the surface to an extent and allowing it to behave or perform through emotive mannerisms—to pass judgement or to act up in some way in relation to the fixed status of images within the matrix of decorative print design. And although no characters from the *Commedia dell'Arte* made an appearance in *Julio Flores*, they most certainly bolstered the sketches made around that time that would help to construct the final textile work at Matadero.

The Spinners is the only semi-autonomous drawing of the four internal "works" of *Julio Flores*, mainly because the subject matter offered up so many different entry points for making preliminary sketches. Based on a later work by Velázquez called *Las Hilanderas*, it riffs on existing riffs; that is, the painter did not simply depict women in a weaving workshop but additionally embedded a coded tertiary narrative regarding his contemporaries into its underlying mythological themes. I attempted to overlay another layer on top of that as a way of folding in my own story. In the foreground, Velázquez portrays a scene of women spinning wool. Behind them, deep in the image's background, a seemingly separate episode occurs. In Ovid's *Fable of Arachne*, the goddess Minerva has just lost to the mortal Arachne in a contest of weaving prowess. The winning tapestry is depicted as Titian's *Rape of Europa*. Peter Paul Rubens would also make his own copy of the Titian work. So while on residency in Spain, spurred on by my interest in artists copying or linking each other's works like with *The Decameron*, I added my own chapter, though mine was less a chapter and more of a collapsed comic strip in carpet. In my version of *Las Hilanderas*, I removed any pictorial depth from the image, rendering its contents and Velázquez's into tapestry, and with a crude line, flattened the meta-storytelling of the *Rape of Europa*. The tufted drawing itself is a pastiche of a rug or tapestry with its unfinished black-stitched border motif, attempting a sense of superimposition present within the Velázquez-Titian-Rubens-Arachne-Minerva universe to lock into, but through a medium and technique that doesn't offer such explicit inclusion as its own character. Commercial carpet-forms, despite also being thought of as a surface, render images passive in service to the ensemble, or the coherent togetherness of the sum of furnishings.¹³

I had intended to produce a parody of itself, a tapestry of a tapestry about a tapestry, an appropriate mimetic act of self-awareness in line with Velázquez. At the time, this conception of mimicry that I was holding on to was helpful for me. I was thinking about tufting as more than a way of building up an image that was unique to paint, graphite, charcoal, or any other institutional lodestar of fine art image construction. It was the second time in this research that the notion of storytelling between artists and artworks occurred. Later on, during my stay in Hong Kong, storytelling became an essential tool for describing aspects of material exploration with the gun, linking things like anecdotes and daydreams to the everyday operations of the machine.

The other three works within *Julio Flores* are somewhat different and materialised into an intertextual medley of additional reference points. They attempted to assemble decorative motifs influenced mainly by the Arts & Crafts Movement and Wiener Werkstätte, alongside more aggressive symbols and language from protest literature and design sporadically lifted from the last 150 years of print and television media. They behave more like clip-art that's been shuffled around out of context and meant more to look a little pissed off than to deliver a specific message—Walter Crane's cockatoos screaming "Glassy-Eyed Cult"¹⁴—a black boot stepping on a veiny red hand—a newspaper with the

¹³ I was once told by a painter friend that he did not think that the editioned carpet that was made after one of his paintings would sell because why spend that kind of money when you could just buy one of his actual paintings for a similar price. My friend naturally assumes that his original version would be both a better object to own (an original) and also a better investment. At first I was just thinking, "but what if they just want the rug?" He was thinking about it as an edition or offshoot from his actual practice, and they'd rather have a piece of him, not some lower-ranking derivation.

This anecdote makes me think about his painted surface vs the tufter's textile surface and the hierarchies and differences between them. The painting seems in this scenario to be the object that carries with it the supposed content, its mastery and intention acting as a kind of life-force, whereas the rug variation lacks this vitality somehow. The rug does however, do a number of other wonderful technical and aesthetic translations by the technician, making it still a beautiful object in its own right. It does contain still the prestige of how good a translation it is, how well it has been reconstituted, as well as how the intersection of being an image and object simultaneously is held in place with a degree of skill relatable only to that specific fabricator.

¹⁴ In 2017, William Happer, a physicist and science adviser for Donald Trump's National Security Council made comments that climate scientists were "glassy-eyed" and "more like a cult". <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/15/trump-science-adviser-william-happer-climate-change-cult>



headline "ESCORIA!"¹⁵—symbols in a protest-adjacent graphic orientation, and sitting next to each other on the backing cloth in a permanently unfinished, unresolved physical and conceptual state.

Attempting to make works that exhibit some agitation without explicitly linking it to a cause or ideology remains unresolved. Later in this publication, you will hear from a character called The Operator in an exercise from 2020 I called *Ornaments & Crimes*¹⁶.

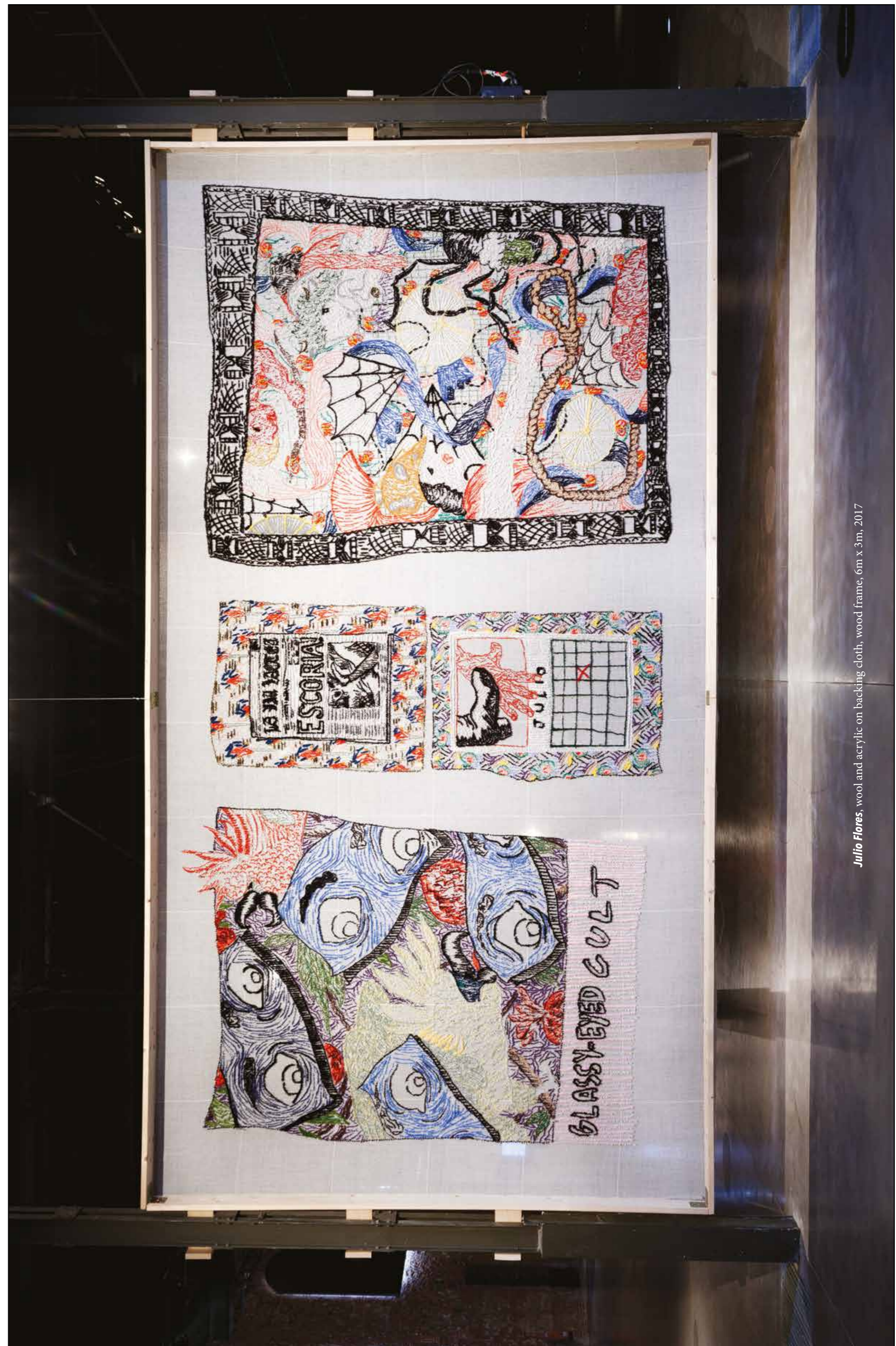
It is a subject that speaks in a lyrical inner monologue, actually more of a naïve rant, about boredom, alienation, class, beauty and nostalgia. It and other iterations of this manner of working are there to engage in, on some level, how badly I am at making work that reflects my social and political positions. Rather than get called out for being a poseur, I instead embrace these emotional responses to particular issues so I can observe them and nurture them. To publish is to offer up an intractable stance often not easily repaired or recontextualised. But that is not what publishing means here. Publishing, in this context, is performance. It is here to make its claims more through the exhibition of ideas than through its critical or historical substantiations.

Looking back on *Julio Flores*, a work where I could feel something quietly click into place within my practice, I see the beginnings of what would ultimately become my methodology. As with my final work for this PhD, *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net*¹⁷, the scale was larger than I would normally be able to accommodate. The more oversized format uniquely offered a broader variety of technical opportunities and creative open spaces, often occurring by accident. I did have preparatory drawings for this work, but many of those drawings were cultivated from images that I had been making for a while; the tufted version was still ultimately very improvised—it had to be—the original designs were too loosely drafted to be tightly copied (at least for my skill level) and the crudeness of the individual stitches already had its own unique qualities. As I tufted the image, I was still left to practice how I wanted the line itself to look. The tufting gun's "mark" can be only so small, and access to a diverse repertoire of articulations and textures requires a larger ground, and more distance to view these details as they ebb in and out of focus. After Madrid, I went back to London more careful about how the physicality of making a gesture with this machine affected its status as carpet or as something contiguous with carpet as a construct. Once the stitches were separated and released from the uniformity of the rug surface, I could see the stitches or the technique becoming subject matter—an act of de-structuring or de-materialising its solid form into a type of scaffolding.

¹⁵ Spanish translation for "SCUM!".

¹⁶ The title of this piece was done with the knowledge of the similarly titled text by Adolf Loos but is not written with any direct relation to his views on the austere reduction of decoration in useful objects. Loos, Adolf. 2019. *Ornament and Crime*. London, England: Penguin Classics.

¹⁷ SEE >> pg.72



Julio Flores, wool and acrylic on backing cloth, wood frame, 6m x 3m, 2017

Scale

Conventional tufting regimes and forms (witnessed both online and in-person) maintain continuous points of contact with mark-making. Any materials I would produce would have to sit in relation to a generic ideal of "rug" in my mind. Commercially tufted carpets, both real and imagined, are important technical vectors for the practice of drawing here. I chose early on to work large, approximately three by two meter-long works as a typical median size due to the needle's substantial gauge on the machine, roughly the length and width of my pinkie finger, and the available size of my studio space. This standard size allows entry points in the work through several pathways—an approximation of large area rugs, a workspace big enough to surround the body, and a dynamic visual field of stitch sizes, textures and effects (smaller works like *VB*¹⁸ struggled to instigate a required level of confusion or stammer that might occur when trying to break down its technical origins). Like with pixels on a screen, there is a basic allowance for how small the stitches can be applied, limiting the level of individual detail you can achieve in any given stitch with the gun. If your drawing requires a fine line, then a larger cloth backing and an adequate viewing distance are needed to supply the visual effect of smaller details. You can use smaller yarn, but at some point, you find that a single-ply has difficulty staying continually threaded in the gun; gravity pulls the yarn out of the machine if the yarn is not plump enough to sit and remain in the eye of the needle. If it can move freely, then it will just fall out. And this will happen over and over again after each stitch. The effect is sometimes not worth the trouble of constantly reloading the gun. Sometimes, it's just better to choose a different yarn to avoid losing momentum. Other times, its effect concerning the other strokes and textures seems ideal. That enthusiasm is what drives you to make a stitch, lose your thread, pick it up off the ground, thread it again, fuck up repeatedly trying to thread the yarn through the eye, and then get it right finally and stitch again, only to lose it again but you don't care.

In thinking of this practice as a form of drawing, we cannot simply equate the gun to something like a pencil. Due to the gun's cumbersome size and weight, we can think of the whole body as the hand holding that pencil. The arms and legs are equivalents to the knuckles; your waist and back will be the wrist. It is helpful to imagine the stress on the body that goes into it making these objects. When drawing with a pencil or pen, my attention is pumped into the tips of my fingers and my eyes, encouraging the rest of me into a hunched position where the rest of me goes on standby.

When you tuft commercially, you are given a design to work from, filling in long and short columns, red where red goes, and blue where blue goes...

When drawing with the gun without a brief or image to reconstitute, your body has to twist, reach, and squat with little forethought. You dance a little. You don't think of it at the time as such, but now, as I sit here at my desk thinking about standing in front of the tufting frame, I reconstruct all the typical poses performed for its three-by-two-meter stretched substrate and place them next to each other in sequence as I write.

Tai Ping

This is the name of the company that invented the hand-held tufting gun in the 1950s. It's a place I had the chance to visit in early October of 2019 while I was on an artist residency at the Academy of Visual Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University. I went just after Chinese National Day, a holiday that extends throughout that week. I was in Hong Kong on the actual holiday, attending one of the larger pro-democracy protests that year with my friend from London who grew up in Mei Foo. We went along with some of her friends and Telegram comrades who were meeting up for the first time to attend the protest and volunteer as emergency first-aid support. We followed them around until we got separated and had to spend much of the afternoon in the sanctuary of a local Methodist church. Police had surrounded the church. After about two hours, they left, and so did we after a costume change. She handed me the umbrella to avoid incriminating herself to the undercover cops combing the side streets; with me as her cover, we strolled away from trouble as a couple of sightseers. Then we walked east from Central towards Wan Chai to see if the tunnel to Kowloon had been opened back up, and then took taxis home. On my way home, a sense of doubt sat in my stomach. Was this solidarity, was this helpful in any way, or was it just privilege and vanity. I felt suspicious of myself.

After the chaos of that day, getting on a train a couple of days later to Xiamen in Fujian Province felt strange, maybe even somewhat disloyal. The House of Tai Ping, as it often refers to itself, is a luxury, bespoke carpet producer specialising in furnishing upscale hotels, private aviation and yachts. The company HQ is in Hong Kong, but the factory is in Mainland China. They've recently moved production into a new and very modern-looking facility designed by Paris-based Sandrolini Architecte, a horseshoe of workshops and offices that wrap around a manicured central garden. As you walk through its front doors, you see a large painted sign directing visitors (in English) to the "Artisan Workshop". It was summer, so the large interior windows facing the gardens had thick curtains blocking the view.

Before going to Xiamen, I never realised how many possible steps could be taken and how many entire departments were necessary to produce these objects. In my studio, I am aware that I intentionally skip whole steps. I don't coat the backside of the primary backing cloth with latex. I do this, so I don't have to clip and groom the thousands of dangling threads left by the first and last stitches made by the gun in a given stroke. And I don't use any shearing machine, instead choosing to keep an uneven surface. At Tai Ping, every production stage was considered and performed to an extremely high finish. Before this visit, I had only an image of people using the tufting guns, and occasionally a post-production team tidied them up. They had machines that would test how long their rugs would stand up to foot traffic! In five minutes, they could show you what they would look like after 10,000 people walked over one of these surfaces in a year. This novel technological discovery made me think of it as some sort of time machine.

As I toured the facility, I felt that what I did and what they did were even further apart than I had conceptualised for this thesis. What I consider the step of the process that unifies these two practices is the tufting, the fulcrum between a form of production that is constructive and the kind that "finishes" the work; in the case of Tai Ping, that means things like evening out the surface from stray threads and adding the secondary backing cloth. In my case, it has been writing.

At the time of my visit, Tai Ping felt like a vital component of my research in thinking of carpet as a practice or set of intentions. The company was very explicit about the way their demographic and

18 SEE>>pg.42

About The Intangibilities of Form by John Roberts, 2019¹

"... artistic subjectivity is the use and manipulation of 'stand-ins'. There is no point, no place, where the artistic self is free of the constraints of prosthetic devices (be it paintbrush or digital camera), the demands of copying (identification and reclamation), and as such the performative voice or persona (recognition of the split between work and authentic self). In this sense we need to distinguish a fundamental set of conditions for art in the twenty-first century." p.15

This book provided initial key insight for this research in thinking about the relations that make up and exist between artistic and productive labour forms.

My intention to use this machine under the banner of art in order to extract further understanding of the notion of "applied arts" was aided largely by Roberts' focus on the dynamics between skill, deskilling, and retooling in relation to the author's voice. It is still difficult to determine whether or not simply diverting the gun's original commercial application to one that is relieved from a top-down manufacturing framework is clearly available to the viewer at first. The machine is obscure to the larger public and part of being able to witness a retooling of the apparatus has to do with legibility. At its most rigid application, the gun can construct a surface noticeably absent of any human steward, and at its most unrestrained it can be seen as "crafty". Legibility in this context, is about managing levels of tension.

The mimicry that Roberts says is lost after the readymade, is held on, albeit loosely, in a work of mine called *Argyle* (see pages 32-33 of this handbooks). The patterns and motifs of conventional carpet objects is echoed in this work, while at the same time trying to suggest that these themes are melting or undergoing some process of liquefaction. The inclusion of ornamental themes associated with different forms of textile production gave the tufting gun its voice—emphasising both critical and mimetic qualities within works. In *Argyle*, this inclusion begins with the name of the work itself which provides some graphic derivation, a title that came at the completion of the work. The title is a reminder that these objects are partially planted in a world of flatness, and in the practice of surface design and in the general coverage of things in our built environment.

Works like *Argyle* or *Hamburg Süd Trellis* (see page 54 of the handbook) are practical in their search for new manifestations of fine and applied art relations: first, think of the commercial rug, then tug on it, blend it, peel it back and disassociate it.

"Duchamp does not embrace heteronomous labour in order to dissolve art into social technique, but in order to re-pose what artistic skills might be in the light of their transformation by heteronomous labour."pg. 81

Below is a list of helpful notes that I made at the time of reading the Roberts' text (2019):

"The production of subjectivity in the process of labour.

"The textile as a site of conflict between the different functions of labour; how control is wielded through them, and how pleasure is obtained by them. It is an object capable of being investigated by many different metrics. It is a relational material, teetering on a fulcrum that divides one contingent influence from another and thus defines itself as an object having its own discrete meaning. The role of Spandex to that of an upholstered subway banquettes may seem to be obvious cousins but the way in which they are produced includes them in one very specific type of production. What new iterations could we explore between them aside from their ultimate consumer output if we had access to the tools of their production? How would we understand not only the way in which Spandex is made but our predispositions of its use would likely expand beyond the leotard.

"How does the textile object's role change at its mechanical inception when the intentions of the machine is diverted away from its original design? Does this conceptual inversion meaningful in regards to how we will ultimately see the object? How far must we go in changing it or the behaviour of the tools in order to make this presence of concept available? How do we find evidence of this communicated directly through the act of making the object versus changing the object's status via its presentation (like with readymade objects)?

"The textile is a point of rendezvous between user and producer, an abstraction, an object who's narrative until that point is totally obscured.

The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade, Verso Books, 200

1 Roberts, John. 2007. *Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade*. London, England: Verso Books.

what their outward-facing invocations of craft would look like. They walked a fine line between the factory and the maker's studio with a sense of total precision. The agency cultivated through this coupling was not, as it may have seemed to visitors to the factory, formed by the "artisans", but by the company's use of narrative.

For over six decades, Tai Ping has been creating meticulously-crafted products that are admired and celebrated by the world's most discerning clientele.

The Tai Ping website manages the mythology of the company's genesis that is meant to suggest humble beginnings and local spirit but also to invoke a level of artisanship that is otherwise only appropriate for aristocracy. All of this is clearly presented on the "Since 1956"¹⁹ page of their website with sub-headings such as *The Birth of a Brand*, *The Legend of the Tai Ping Tent Story*, and *Distinguished Guests*. Previous to my visit I had not been able to speak to anyone at length about how to use or maintain a tufting gun properly, gleaning only what I could from the internet. The visit

19 [https://www.taipingcarpets.com/about/heritage#:~:text=Tai%20Ping%2C%20meaning%20"Peace",produce%20high%20quality%20andcrafted%20carpets.](https://www.taipingcarpets.com/about/heritage#:~:text=Tai%20Ping%2C%20meaning%20)

Tip: With a small paintbrush or toothbrush you can remove the gunk that builds up over time. This gunk is made up of bits of wool and lubricating grease. And regularly keep bolts tightened, especially at high stress points, i.e. the arms and on either side where the needle and scissors attach.

to the factory was primarily for me to be able to compare what they do with what I do. I began this research project referring to the carpet-form as a class of textile, a generic idea that people roundly agree on, at least when discussing it as a consumer product or historical artefact. Tai Ping provided an obverse counterpart to my own studio and practice with regard to concepts like size, skill, and intent. Another way to describe this imagined dialectic is that there exists in my studio, as well as many others I presume, an internal logic, a flow that keeps you very low to the ground, so to speak, and sometimes prevents one's ability to see what you're really doing, or at least what you're actually showing. The image of Tai Ping casting a long shadow over the realms of textile craft and industrial arts is a form of narrative device, a way of thinking about my practice as the protagonist/antagonist within the walls of the research project. The work produced in the studio did not hinge on any single finding found on my visit or in the company archives of Tai Ping. I wanted, rather than needed, to see the place in real life. I wanted to make the journey so I could bring my own memory of it back to the studio. This trip felt more like it was generating, rather than discovering, materials for a chapter in the birth of the gun—or at least with my tufting gun, anyways.

The factory provided a living manifestation of the allure of craft in a luxury goods market by mirroring the mastery of its makers in the building itself. Throughout my visit I had this image in my mind that undulated and mutated between a medieval guild, as imagined by William Morris; a stylish Bauhaus workshop; and Foxconn, the infamous Chinese manufacturer of Apple products. The sign announcing "Artisan Workshop" reminds me of Morris' fetish for medieval crafts guilds, the beautiful new production plant, its overall style, evoked a mid-century modernism, and the opaque formality of my hosts and the particular political climate between Hong Kong and Mainland China in 2019.



These impressions used here in the context of this thesis, become utilised throughout the drawing process. In some cases, it was whether or not I should work in the studio at all, in other ways it was just something present while I tufted away at the cloth backing, the parity between my workshop and the those at Tai Ping holding a harmonious chord for as long as it takes to finish a stitch. At the time, I imagined my version as the ragtag, DIY, amateur version. I reminded myself that a million other things could differentiate or neutralise this coupling I was composing. This is a working model that subsequently became less and less useful as I moved to the end of this thesis and finished off the final works and, but as the project was building initial steam these themes and fantasies were very important to the buoyancy of my research practice, one that moved in and then out of focus, and then migrating to a new set of stories and foggy notions native to the act of art production.

Distance

This is a term referring to the way stitches in the drawings are visible in relation to how conventional carpet-forms are experienced—a dense huddle made by repeated and uniform rows of stitches, often in vertical columns. By saying "experienced" I'm speaking about the way the surface is observed both optically and haptically, or "seen" through touch, or at least, seen through a desire to touch. The surface of carpet is a unified one, the stitches are dense enough and close enough together that it creates something in between an object and a gathering, like being carried by a crowd at a rock concert, but in this case, so tightly bound together that the individual threads are disregarded on any discreet basis and integrated together. So perhaps, with such a rigid organisation, imagine instead that the rock concert is populated by the Army—a strong and steadfast bunch, enough to not drop you, but you occasionally can still hear the odd grunt slip or feel someone's knees buckle slightly under you.

Distance in one regard, has been used to think about image quality. If you think of the threads as pixels constituting a picture. It allows for more detail. By spreading the stitches apart, or by using less stitches in general, the backing cloth is revealed. Visually, the journey from carpet-form to tufted drawing has but so many steps. From artwork to artwork you can feel a sense of proximity between notions of good workmanship or quality, and those of something much more awkward. It is in this crudeness, and in the tension and exploration that crudeness can evoke, that we discover new, less object-driven, dimensions or conceptions of textile. It is in gaps and verges that the materials of this project operates, where we can refuse to isolate interfaces from the infrastices, or its surface from more active functions²⁰. Initially, the tufted works were, like many artworks, made to be followed back to some origin or intention. I thought that if I allowed the viewer to see the exposed backing cloth that a door would open, allowing them to consider what constitutes this object and shadow of the person who stewarded these materials together. But as this PhD gave way to more and more content, a sense of interdependence began to form between each node of research. In order to track the works, I needed to describe them, plan for them, prescribe variables, and in doing so, these activities became part of a larger ecosystem of exchanges.

Another way distance has been considered during this PhD has to do with indulging in a form of notional proximity to other bodies in the tufting or larger textile universe. In many cases, the kind of speculation occurring happen at either an extremely interior moment, like as I operate the gun, or when I've reached the outer limits of engagement, like when I am writing up notes or focusing more directly on the contextualisation of this project. The act of doing so forms its own magnetic bonds between all of the assorted pieces assembled in this document, and the only way to account for these events most accurately is to continue to perform such aggregation on the page. To explain

20 "Western industrialized design produces objects by dividing surfaces from what we call "infrastices." By infrastices we mean all manner of electrical, chemical, and mechanical workings; their parts, structures, and conduits; and the energies, gases, and fluids they carry. Surfaces are typically opaque, smooth, and solid layers, such as moulded casings, plastered walls, cladding, and pavements. The enclosure of infrastices within a surface breaks their continuity and brings into being a singular and discrete material entity—an object. As infrastices become a hidden interiority, the surface of the object is necessarily punctured by other material components—interfaces—that allow the object to be used and connected to other objects. The aim of mainstream design is to enact this logic of form and to refine it as far as possible, through a deft creative shaping, whereby surfaces become the primary substrate of everyday human perception and objects achieve the highest economic, political, and cultural status." ---Mike Anusas and Tim Ingold, from "Designing Environmental Relations: From Opacity to Textility, Design Issues": Volume 29, Number 4 Autumn 2013, 58.

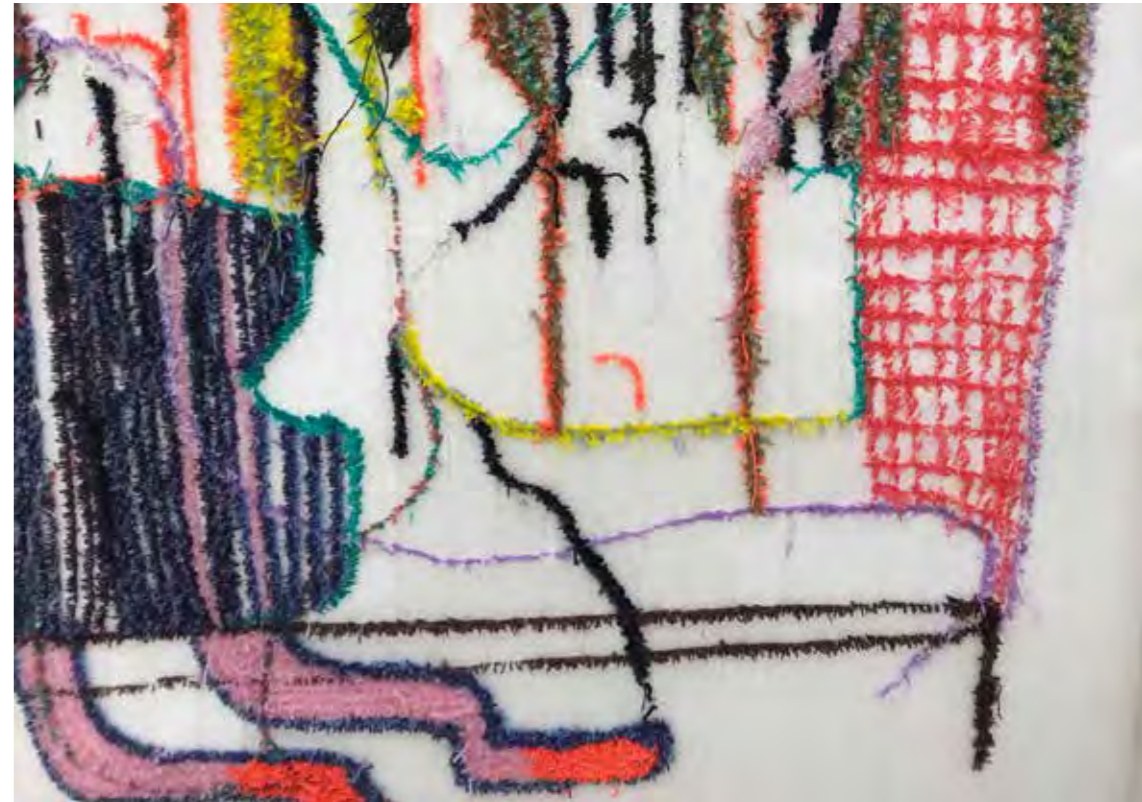
why a particular floral pattern, or ideological slant was included into my practice is more acutely observed through a performance of manipulation. In doing so, the viewer of the works or the reader of this thesis, will be granted a more greatly nuanced and tacit articulation of praxis. In some ways, the textiles presented here serve as misdirection in order to reveal a kaleidoscopic vantage point for viewing formation itself.

In 2019 when I could finally mount an exhibition of most of the works in this PhD research at Beers Gallery in London, I could see how the difference in distance (in conjunction with scale) made each drawing legible in very different ways. You walk through the gallery drifting from a large abstract drawing to one with text and cartoon hands; you can see what kinds of other chances the yarn is



given to perform. You can see what valency is possible with regards to scale and yarn size, whether or not it performs representationally, something that highlights the line or stitch itself, or something that engages with or emphasises simple shapes, colour and texture. This finding informed a way of seeing what the exhibition's visitors later fed back to me. Because these wall-hangings were textiles rather than pictures, there flows a circulation between the nodes of public and personal engagement and memory. In the case of my tufted works, this feeling of familiarity or discourse between genre or motif is one of the intentions fed into these finished works. This show at Beers was particularly aimed at rallying or footnoting different textile characteristics into some amalgamated junction or collection point facilitated by the applied language of the tufting gun.

And like a conventional rug, this multivalent system has a front and back, or top and bottom. Like any website or computer application, the back end is its own codified terrain. Its encounters, challenges, and pleasures are discreet from the substrate and outwards, beyond its cut-pile strands. This



Detail of drawing made during one of the sessions at the Academy of Visual Arts, HKBU, Hong Kong, 2019.

apparatus or framework of tufting/drawing/writing is effectively the history recorded by what can be physically seen and touched on your living room floor or the gallery wall. And this operating manual seems to be contributing to this project as a recording tool; it is meant to look and sound like one for sure. But more than anything, it is just another illustration, a rendering, of what a textile can be seen as. It is a practical re-enactment of carpet. It is a record of its handling, however unfastened it may come across. It doesn't do what carpet does. The paradox of textile is in its explanation. Distance was supposed to talk about the visual experience of a finished tufted drawing, but in writing it down, some aspect of the presence of textile is rendered moot for a moment.



JAILLELL
POST-IT
with
HAPAG-LLOYD/
MAERSK LOGO
TREE DRAWING
ON
SHELLS

POLICE
VIOLENCE
BADGE

PRINT
DESIGN
SKETCH

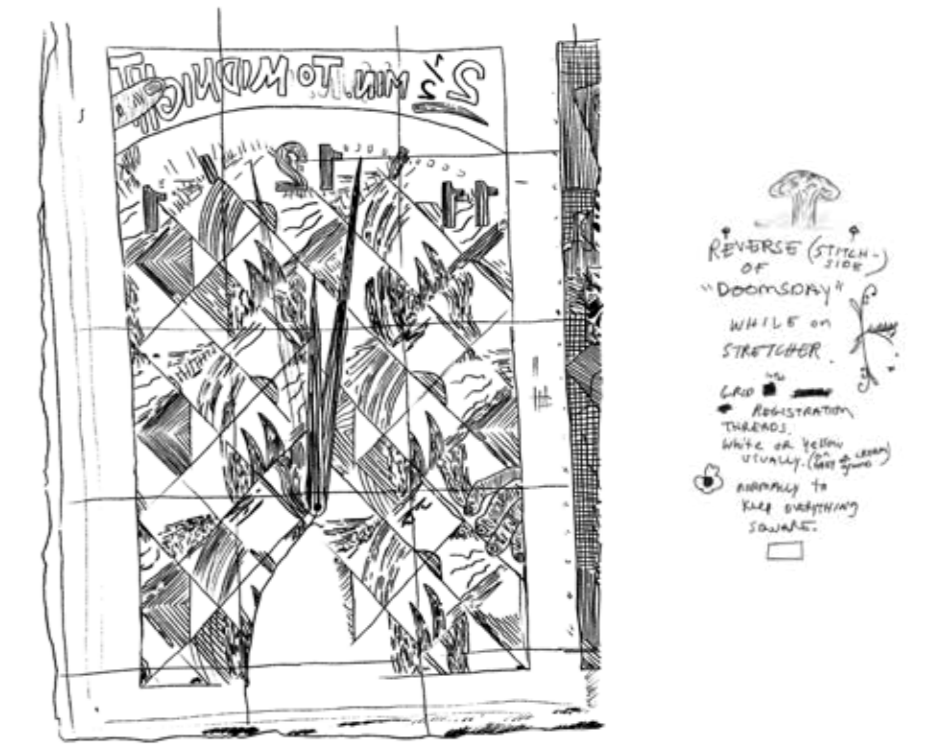
"CALL A LAWYER"
HORSE RIDER



This operating manual uses so many analogues and metaphors to explain itself because textile is a form of code; genetic raw materials embedded into our built and natural environments, our muscles, and our social and labour hierarchies. When we interface with these woven, tufted or embroidered surfaces and objects, we experience a parallax view of characteristics sympathetically joined together as a whole. Each iteration is a composite of needs and priorities communicated in a sensuous idiom, not hidden from view or necessarily lacking any didactic message.

unlocking more embodied approaches to image-making that wouldn't have to be so pedantic or that could operate more implicitly, rather than trying something more brash and head-on. I searched for a methodology that could enclose itself around some of these reference points; a place of proximity or a position close enough to listen to more informed voices. Whether I was looking at painting, comic books, embroidery or industrial textile production, there were experts.

So when I started my first drawing since being in Madrid (2017), I had more confidence with tufting, this new technique of fully separating the stitches, and anticipated that this could help open up a visual field that would allow the occupation of a satirical cartoon and a decorative rug at the same time.²³ My hope was that within the world that allows artists to make weird things, a brief but seamless cohabitation of these two contrasting visual languages would take place. The exposure of the individual stitches works a kind of spell on the unassuming viewer where you know and don't know what you're looking at. It's like until the backing cloth is totally filled, overgrown with tufted wool, it's an immature surface or object, emotional and self-conscious. Much of this thesis leans on this dialectic between finished and unfinished. A big question that is constantly being asked of these works is whether the act of drawing²⁴ is doing something to, or affecting the idea of textile-ness. Or, is drawing only a convenient sideways view of observing this industrial process more? A more comprehensive way of looking at this is to think about other ubiquitous manufactured forms and what they might look like if they were only half done. Imagine if the operator was able to play their specific machine in a different tuning like a guitar, then stop halfway through the song, displaying a unique intersection of agency and the author-less anonymity of machine production. And then be able to hear the awkward fray at the end when the song unravels at the point of interruption and its components peter out incongruously.



The Design Museum hosted an exhibition curated by designers Edward Barber and Jay Osgerby called *In the Making*²⁵ in 2014. The show displayed several objects in "mid-manufacture", a kind of perinatal state where the object is half raw stuff and half thing. These objects fall somewhat short of total transformation because they rely on us knowing that they will become a football boot or a brick or some pencils. Can tools that make football boots just be told by their operator to add this or subtract that to make something else entirely? There is something very familiar about looking at these different goods in different states of production. It is a sense that you can know and not know it at the same time. I have seen this look of recognition and confusion every time someone comes to my studio or whenever I've given drawing workshops, like in Nigeria and Hong Kong, and they start to see this industrial surface materialise before them. It first occurs when they regard the tufted drawing on its own in person or in reproduction--then when they regard the gun--then again for a brief moment when they see the needle stitching into the backing material. In the end, I am unfamiliar with other forms of manufacturing. One reason I think the gun is unique is that it is somewhere between mass production and artisanal handicraft--the technical, ornamental, modular and economic aspects of it elliptically orbiting some strange latent social nucleus. Holding it in your hands without even applying it to the backing cloth suggests a level of autonomy and latitude available to any of its operators. During these workshops, I describe this latent urge to project something onto this tool, whether in the form of a carpet or something *other*, as a talisman or magic wand, a utensil to amplify some suspended capacity or shape within me that I can't quite reach otherwise through different activities in my practice.



Textile: a phylum of object with many different classes, such as machine tufting, weaving, knitting, or felting. Regularly I ask myself about the carpet-form, the commercial furnishing known as a tufted carpet, and its equivalences. In this time (2017), my claim is that the gun operates like a pencil and enables the stitch's observable capacity to function like a drawn mark or painted trace. The simplicity of this observation is what breathes life into this PhD, regarding a practice-based enquiry. The question is "what happens when you use the gun as a drawing tool?" This thesis is designed to ask open questions, to set off on an undetermined path, in a sense. What happens is, in the context of a research project, that you begin to place yourself in all manner of configurations in relation to this orbit of tools and techniques. Eventually, tools are rendered by stories, research prompts manifold discoveries in unexpected territory, and old practices are set aside for new ones and later resurrected.²⁶ Subjects begetting subjects do begin to insulate this project from larger relevant discourse. Too great a contextual overview would extinguish the role of what I've been

²³ This goal of merging or grafting a satirical drawing with a rug was not a goal I had in mind beyond this particular work.

²⁴ In addition to drawing, it ultimately asks how publishing and subsequently, reading contributes to this ideas.

²⁵ <https://www.dezeen.com/2014/01/22/barberosgerby-in-the-making-design-museum-exhibition/>

²⁶ Footnotes like this one are here, in many cases, to allow and ultimately track claims made along the way. As is suggested here, it needs to make temporary assertions or enquiries in order to keep moving. At this stage the practice of publishing wasn't relevant. Drawing was the central differential when trying to think around what a textile might be or look like.

Flowers

Throughout this project, there is a broad use of floral motifs. Employing flowers, or "florals" rather, and regularly occurring vegetal curves and shapes aid in suspending a quintessential carpet-form to the errant and scruffy surfaces found here. Rather than completely erasing the commercial textile from the tufting process, the experiments with the carpet gun and the drawing of flowers anchor this process to a wider practice of ornamentation in design and craft.

The presence of tufted stitches, spaced out and visible in relation to the backing cloth, and the decorative floral imagery are there to remind the viewer how the tools and materials are used, to emphasize its parts and establish a form of anatomy (I am reminded of seeing the skin through a patch of thinning hair or fur). I believe that by opening up this object in a literal sense and separating its constituent components, you can embed new experiments and new stories within the folds of a more traditional operational context. Floral patterns are an effective door to open to achieve this. It links this project with so many other textile iterations and other art and design practices. The flowered surfaces here aid the talismanic tufting gun in occupying the interchange between different material contexts all at once.

Flowers, in this thesis, are also employed to maintain degrees of discord and congruity with abstraction. As the years went by and the story of this cohort of ZQ-II devices coagulated into *ZQ-II* the publication, the body of work and the textile drawings were improvised more and more. Flowers devolve into juicy curves and colours and a network of patchy psychedelic nests. Being and not being one typology or another is vital to the consideration of textile-forms. A towel is not a curtain, and so on. But, as presented here in this manual, this broadsheet is more about the possibilities of textile formation rather than isolating restrictions.

Doomsday Rug, 2017

This work was made after the residency in Madrid and in an exponentially smaller studio within an old high-rise estate building near Hoxton Market, East London. From then on, an established standard size of tufting frame would be approximately three by two meters. Even in later works like the one made for the City Observatory at Collective Gallery in Edinburgh in 2020-21²¹, this three-by-two-meter area of stretched backing cloth would be the designated standard "workspace". Referring to the substrate as a workspace was something I came to by the end of the Matadero residency in 2017. I had to decide whether or not *Julio Flores* was one single work or four distinct things yet to be excised from the context of the backing cloth. I was asking myself, how was I intending to designate the negative space in between each image? Thinking about space, objecthood and depth



in relation to surface was always present--to make a conventional carpet-form you need, ideally, to tuft the rug in the middle of the tufting frame, leaving ample space around it²² in order to finish it later with latex and secondary backing cloth. So there is a type of suspension between object and image that takes place, but I did not have any explicit awareness of this until *Julio Flores*, and then with *Doomsday Rug*.

Continuing from the work in Spain was a desire to explore how other graphic styles and visual languages associate or belong with other media. *Doomsday Rug* began from a sketchbook I started in Athens, Greece (at the time I was making regular, almost monthly visits). The drawings made around this time were influenced by a lot of anti-capitalist print and web materials that I came across or that were pasted on walls and other public surfaces around town. Around this time, I also started attending reading group sessions hosted by the London Anarchist Federation. The sketches made in Athens and London started to link up with drawings made 2 years earlier while on residency in Buenos Aires. They were anchored by images found in web searches for "l'Assiette au Beurre", a 19th-century French satirical magazine that featured the acerbic comic illustrations of painters like Felix Vallotton and Juan Gris. In Argentina, I was looking at these alongside the work of Honoré Daumier, uncomfortably and unsuccessfully attempting to square the more formal and decorative pleasures of my previous work with something that seemed socially reactive to the world outside of the studio and the communities that I felt distant from. I wanted a creative delivery system for engaging more directly with these themes and weighty subjects. The tufting gun sat in the background of many of the sketches I was making at the time. There was an assumption that therein lies some key to

²¹ BOREDOM>MISCHIEF>FANTASY>RADICALISM>FANTASY, see page 85

²² Another consideration for allowing extra space around the area you intend tuft is tension and shape conformity. If you stretch a conventional carpet irregularly you might affect the shape negatively. Pulling the substrate too tight in one area may warp that section in a disproportionate way and ultimately keeping you from producing a uniformly rectilinear shape, and even not resting entirely flat on the floor.



Doomsday Rug
2m x 1.5m, wool and acrylic on backing cloth on carpet grippers, 2017

referring to regularly as 'practice'. In other parts of this document, I hold up this term by way of others like 'regime' or 'distance' or 'exercise', or through a lyrical auto-fiction summoning images of gardens, jewellery making, and musical instruments as parallel modes of production, but also as a methodology for projecting subjectivity onto a process and thereby disrupting any sense of authority over it.

The phrase "2.5 Minutes to Midnight", drawn at the top, takes its title from the Doomsday Clock, created by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists in 1947. It functions as a mirror reporting how close to global annihilation we are due to climate change and nuclear weapons. *Doomsday Rug* was made following Donald Trump's election as president of the U.S. in 2016. It was an attempt to make a textile that also functioned on some critical or satirical level. As a piece of satire, I think it failed. There wasn't anything clever that overturned or illuminated what had just occurred. It was a convulsion in response to how shit a human being Trump is. It was about the deep cynicism he signified, how dangerous his election was for many people—a knee-jerk reaction, in my case, to want to make or do something immediately that thought about this event. Clearly, this sort of outburst isn't exactly activism, but the actual Doomsday Clock itself is only a symbolic accountant of our existential threat as well. Additionally, the time taken to record such a response in textile form without an immediate audience absorbs most of the initial confidence in the work. I was OK with all of that because my overall interest in seeing what it would do rather than publicly testing the *Doomsday Rug* in an exhibition meant that I expected a degree of failure or challenge to my initial objectives.

For this work, I lifted the Clock's symbolic function to test if this sort of image could coexist alongside the decorative nature associated with a rug, more as a textile experiment and done like a sketch, with a degree of abandon and informality. Trump certainly had no relevance directly to the textile industry (or does he?). It did demonstrate the tufting gun's ability to fuse textile's ornamental and patterned aspects with the hand-drafted comic qualities of cartooning and the expressionistic faculties of painting. It was a breakthrough previously half-discovered in Madrid with the work, *Julio Flores*. But in that case, I was more or less skimming various graphic styles to make a collage that showed more of a heuristic demonstration of the gun. *Doomsday Rug* was an attempt to push two discrete modes of production via the precarity of the unfinished or partially tufted pile surface.

In 2017, I moved into a new studio in Hoxton and began production on a collaborative carpet with my cohort at CARC through our We Are Publication publishing collective. To be able to work on both my research and the WAP project meant that I needed to work smaller and share the workspace between the two projects. On the left side of the backing cloth, I worked on *Doomsday Rug* and on the right side, I worked the first half of *Notes on Carpet (NoC)*. The latter was made to the specification of a conventional carpet, but with the added feature of also being the newest expanded "issue", a practice-based take on the traditional academic journal.

NoC could be employed as a collage, a theatrical stage, as a prop, and as a sculpture. In this collaboration, participants submitted images they wanted to include in the design of a finished rug. Rules about what the gun could or could not do were issued, and after these drawings, photos and bits of paper were delivered, I arranged them as the issue's editor and, subsequently, its "printer".

With WAP I allowed myself to break a cardinal rule set at the outset of this PhD: *to not make a carpet as we know it*. What neutralised this limitation was that this object was not simply a rug. It needed to be rug so it could displace the expectations around what a publication is, or what is an academic journal, what constitutes artistic research, or how publishing might be expanded. *NoC* answered these questions in many different ways: it assigned equivalences between the roles associated with manufacturing or production in general, i.e. designer, fabricator, etc., with some of those of print publishing like editor, printer; and the open call helped to gain a longer view of how these roles are valued and emphasised within different industrial or institutional contexts. *NoC* undercuts the prestige afforded to the journal, the editor/publisher, and the artisans by allowing these positions to stay unstable.

Think of the word carpet itself, roll it around in your mind. Exhaust it, dehydrate it of vitality, and see it through your peripheral vision until it begins to lose its tight corners. Keywords like *carpet*, *carpet-form*, *tufting gun*, etc., are exhausted here in this document as a way to tenderise them, their meanings becoming more flaccid and capable of new implementations and characterisations.

Carpet-form

Instead of referring to rugs or carpets, I am using the term carpet-form to depict these objects as a particular mode of formal textile production frequently found in manufacturing. By using this distinction, I am referring to a semblance of form, which is generally rug-like or carpet-like and held together or produced by a commercially driven manner of production. To accurately define a pulling away from the conventional furnishing we refer to as a "carpet" and to describe places beyond it; I use this term. It is a singularity. It's not meant as a primary unit to represent iterations within the category of textile, but instead as an anchor point.



SomePigHarquinBlanket and NovemberTunicCalendar wool and acrylic on backing cloth, 2m x 1.2m, 2017

Regime

This term refers to the specificity of how the tufting gun is used here, like an exercise routine. The machine can only be fed yarn; the only way to begin a stitch is to pull the trigger. So Regime refers to the expressed course taken beyond these basic requirements. How do I affect this device with such rigid design intentions? My treatment of the gun differs from the commercial regime taken by a company such as Tai Ping, which has many different technicians, each focused on one or two aspects of production. In this sense, Tai Ping operates more like a large architectural firm than an artisanal workshop. My approach is a personal and idiosyncratic feedback loop that works in contrast to the more partitioned mode. So far (2021), it has been five years of tufting and writing and then more tufting and writing. Together these two operations take on aspects of a field diary. Rather than seeking resolution in each artwork or piece of writing, they are always in service to the next exercise.

There is a faint feeling of anxiety where you think that maybe you should have made a plan but more often than not this brings you to some new technique or discovery. *Come what may!* This is the improvisational spirit employed in the studio that maintains awareness—one stitch besetting the next, building into some critical mass. If you must, it is still easy to pull the threads out and start over, but this is considered wasteful and, generally, a lazy way of problem-solving.

Regime in the case of this PhD includes all of the other supplemental materials and activities pulled in by the sheer gravity of being able to draw with what feels like the raw materials of carpet. If you were to take a couch and have all of its constituent parts, the upholstery, the wood, the foam, vaporise and reassemble into something still uncanny, familiar, something "couchy" maybe but something still something altogether removed on some level. *The Couch of Dr. Moreau*. In the studio, it doesn't just feel like the gun is the pen, and the yarn is the ink. Depending on how it is applied, it's more like each operation resonates with so many other aspects of textile history. It doesn't come across as mimicry or parody. Instead, each measure comes with a degree of influence; a teetering and delicate semblance made up of points from an existing constellation of textiles.

Rugs and carpets, in my regime, being what they are, don't undergo any total transmogrification in terms of material or form. When viewers of these works or workshop participants see them for the first time, you can see an encounter between familiar and unfamiliar conditions and states. The rigidity of carpet-form has been displaced and pried open.

I am still uncertain whether or not this displacement occurring is the inscription of the familiar or conventional forms onto the raw materials or the arousal of more peripheral references as the carpet-form degrades into an index of constituent qualities. Like an exploded technical drawing, I imagine an illustration that could include not only its material make-up like yarn and polyester or the density of its stitches but also its socio-cultural DNA. It being textile, places it within a nebula of other practices and forms: embroidery, weaving, garment production, fashion and print design, domesticity, feminism, empire, exploitation, painting, sculpture, craft, the applied arts, tradition, ornamentation, thread, interior design, labour struggles, modernism, pattern, aristocracy, the middle class, flowers, guilds, coverage, religion, memory, hobbies, stength, computer coding, magic, trade, migration, geometry, parody, colour, factories, ateliers, occupation, studios, workshops, and garden sheds.

This operating guide talks a lot about how to expand the textile with the help of drawing, two perfectly vague and manifold concepts interlacing each other. But through this process, I admit that there are still blind spots that I cannot fully address from within this project. What I mean is that I feel like the notions of textile and mark-making seem continuous and fluid to a degree. I still run into the issue that what I am specifically doing—what artworks I am making in my studio—do not make the best case for breaking through moulds of pre-determined forms. And on the other hand, I lean towards the idea that what small offering I do have to put forth in the form of these tufted drawings and publications embody a sense of re-direction or minor sleight of hand in plain sight that removes the "carpet" from the qualities of "carpet-ness".

To maintain an easily viewable link with certain objects, literature or practices—to find clear analogue relationships—is something that this thesis is designed to perform. This is why it is presented as a set of mutated carpets and an oblique user manual. It is a continuous approximation of itself. Maintaining a sense of nearness or proximity is used in my work to locate something familiar. Fixing a location (in this case, the carpet-form within a greater taxonomy of textile) is something I do to explain what I'm doing to non-practitioners more plainly. It provides a shared understanding or consensus—I know what a carpet or rug does, what they look like, and so do you, so now let's change that. One might use this strategy when speaking to relatives at Christmas or chatting to the person next to you on an airplane: *Well, you start with carpet and then you crack it open. Literally and figuratively. It seems kind of weird when I say it, but if I showed you it would make more sense than describing it.*

SomePigHarquinBlanket and NovemberTunicCalendar, 2017

A stolen message from Charlotte's web
A plea, an insult, an arrangement of letters
An anecdote about making and saying
Some Swine is fine, but Some Pig is better?²⁷

SomePigHarquinBlanket

The drawing consists of two harlequins, each resting on a clock and inverted from one another like on a playing card. Above each of them is a repeating band of text *SOMEPIGSOMEPIGSOMEPIG...* At the top and bottom of the image is a fringe, not an actual one but an illustrative rendering meant to suggest that this is an image of a rug or blanket.
NovemberTunicCalendar

27 A short poem I wrote and put on the cover for the first iteration of this handbook called, *Grey Literature for Intermodal Textiles*.



Banner painted in 2020 for London Renters Union

A Re-enactment of ‘The Experience of Drawing’ from ‘Berger on Drawing’¹ 2020 by John Berger, 2018

¹ Berger, John. 2007. *Berger on Drawing*. Edited by Jim Savage. 2nd ed. Aghabullogue, Ireland: Occasional Press, p. 4.

THE EXPERIENCE OF DRAWING: The ‘canvas’ is usually the same. When I move into a new studio, I build a tufting frame. It’s as big as I can make it while still being able to spin it around to see what I’ve done on the front. In this case, and the case of most of the recent frames I’ve built, the work area is just under three meters in length and two in height. It was much smaller in Nigeria and at my parents’ house. The canvas is not actually canvas but a woven polyester or sometimes a much softer monk’s cloth designed for carpet manufacturing. The weave is a course and heavy material compared to the soft surface of the monk’s cloth—a potato sack vs a baby’s blanket- with thin registration lines for maintaining a rigid rectangular shape. I feel almost bad about puncturing the monk’s cloth. Knowing it will never be the same is a pretty hyperbolic way to describe tufting into this material. Still, something resembles regret: what I’m about to do will actively diminish my tactile experience of this particular cloth. More than the grey backing, I would almost rather be swaddled in it than turn it into some experiment.

The timber frame you work from is upright, held erect by A-frame legs at either end with scraps of carpet stapled to them, functioning as slippers to make moving the heavy frame from place to place easier. On one face of the frame, Carpet Grippers have been mounted. These thin strips of wood covered in tiny wooden nails like rows of oblique piranha teeth are attached for the primary backing cloth to be stretched across. These strips, angled away from the centre of the frame, allow the maker to adjust and re-adjust how the fabric is stretched to properly line up the registration lines. It is a process that should force me to put on gloves, but I persist in raking the tips of my fingers over the gauntlets instead, a routine I manage to uphold throughout the drawing process. In Spain, I could not find these grippers (not a lot of wall-to-wall carpeting in Madrid), and I had to hammer in nails instead, hundreds of pins, all around the frame’s six by three-meter perimeter.

The fabric can be slacked and tugged tight like a drum. If you wanted to make a proper carpet, the lines signify a tuning standard for rectangular forms. I generally abide loosely to this standard and only for general tufting comfort; if it’s stretched too tightly in one spot, it can be slightly hard to run the gun over the surface and may even punch huge holes that you cannot repair.

The feeling of standing in front of this taught partition doesn’t induce the same anxiety that sometimes overcomes me when I look at a blank sheet of paper. The un-tufted surface already has a lot of information: the lines, the woven texture, the grey or cream-colour variations, the tension, and the minor drags of finger-blood along its perimeter.

Berger’s *The Experience of Drawing* (2005) quickly begins manifesting the creation of a standing figure, a Golem, in which to project the potential weight, gravity and muscular movements of a real human being. It tracks a feedback loop that the artist has with his paper, pencil, subject and his own body. This record of drawing that Berger performs replicates the marks with fluid romantic prose. It occasionally imbues a level of doubt regarding proportion, the totality of the subject and ground in real-time. I do not have a similar scene of such sensual transmission between the subject and author in my own drawings. In the act of reading Berger, he delivers a kind

of genealogical payload. It enables you to witness each mark in a sequence. Looking at a drawing after it’s finished similarly regards Berger’s own shapely account. Perhaps more abstractly, you can experience the body’s shifting weight and mass through a few thousand little pencil scratches. The drawing itself is like a net or a set of sonar blasts for catching tiny glimpses of something swimming in the deep.

Sometimes I make a stack of drawings at home with legal pads, sketchbooks, Post-it notes, an iPad, and even embroidery as a kind of workaday routine. I do not necessarily intend to use any aspects of these when I go to my studio and pick up the gun, but it’s useful for general flexibility. I do feel more limber when it comes to what should happen next on the stretched cloth. These sketches utilise a wide variety of styles and image formats. During one Christmas holiday, I only drew pastoral scenes taken directly from Goya’s cartoons commissioned by Charles III and Charles IV of Spain. During another holiday, I embroidered improvised flowers as gifts for relatives. At my desk, I make small Post-It-Note drawings as I work on my computer: images of smoke morphing into shrubbery, the Doomsday Clock’s most recent update, the names of shipping companies in bubble letters, the phrase “prairie fire” surrounded by black Sharpie flames, and small abstract paintings on paper done in groups of ten or so. So as I look at the empty woven grid of primary backing fabric, there is no longer that anxiety about the first stroke or gesture. It, the practice of tufted drawing, is reckless, it is careless, but it has been in training. During this time, a type of underpainting takes place—small incidental twists and curves and specks sprayed into the cloth as if randomly. Like trying to make something new look old, you must think more economically with the yarn. Yes, you can go full bore and fill up the surface to ‘sand it back’ or pluck the carpet pile free of the weave, and it almost will certainly come to that later, but at the beginning, you’d instead fake whatever anticipated effect you’re envisioning.

In *Hamburg Süd Trellis*² I had a strict plan that stemmed from the Checklist. Together, the very long official name of the shipping company and an Arts and Crafts Movement-style trellis pattern signalling industrial alongside artisanal modes of production and distribution. It asks how those notions may or may not require scaling up or down in the context of using the gun as a drawing tool. In the case of *Argyle*, I started with a waterfall that I lifted from one of the Goya cartoons. From then on, the work was much looser; the waterfall lent some structure to the picture—bifurcating through the middle and being the only somewhat rendered or predetermined choice. An internal logic sprung from its graphic curves and improvised spatter of woollen scribbles gave me something to work off of. Large muted teal green shapes fill in underneath the waterfall’s crest and then repeat as if it were some enlarged pattern from a scrap of upholstered fabric. Then an overlay of red/orange polka dots followed by a series of diamond shapes on the left-hand side (the drawing takes place from the back of the work). Squiggled manoeuvres became large masses, and the areas of haphazard filler stitches could later be cultivated into contingent compositional strategies. There are a lot of straight lines in this drawing. The gun itself seems engineered this way on purpose to produce tidier stitch columns. But even then, too many long stretches of wool indicate me becoming

¹ SEE>>pg.45

tired. The gun itself is heavy. After a few hours, I start getting distracted by how much I notice the weight of the machine, mainly if I’m using very thin wool that constantly keeps falling out of the device and requiring me to reload. When this happens, I start simplifying my marks. Eventually, I am aware that I might overdo it with straight block lines and put it down for a while or go home.

At times, Berger’s account of drawing the figure sounds like he’s depicting a journey; the captain’s log; the diaristic retelling of travelling through unknown territory:

“Yet when I made a mark, somewhere beneath the near ribs, the nature of the page changed again. The area of opaque light suddenly ceased to be limitless. The whole page changed by what I had drawn, just as the water in a glass tank is changed immediately after you put a fish in it. It is then only the fish that you look at. The water merely becomes the condition of its life and the area in which in can swim.”² (Berger, 2005)

Once the initial pulses of the tufting needle stitched the first shapes and jagged movements, breaking the smoothness of the backing fabric and separating it from being just a large grey partition wall, black and white yarns were thinly streaked across the surface as if to ignore all of the other information before it. The contrast of these lines sat on top of the other murkier tones. Also within this next phase were the smaller corners and pockets within the work that started to collide and create intersections of discovery, fortuitous impasses where many different actions had taken place at different times. *Argyle* was started in one studio, taken down, put away, brought out again, and finished a year later in another studio. At the first location, the tufting gun wasn’t working properly and could not trim the yarn as it stitched, leaving most of them half cut or left simply as a looped pile. The following year when tufting commenced again, the gun’s stitches were back to tufting a cut pile; a potentially lighter line can be achieved on this setting. Any fatigue that may have occurred in the past was now long gone and feels like you’ve been given someone else’s work to collaborate on. Because I often use very thin 2-ply acrylic yarn, you can see the pile on the front side of the drawing not as a collective huddle of threads but instead see them single-file, each thread standing behind another. If you’ve chosen a colour that has enough contrast against whatever the existing ground is, like I had done, there are many different words to describe the visual effect. It’s an effect that was one of the most crucial technical discoveries that I made with the tufting machine. Choosing a verb that coincides with this particular and subtle event is difficult. Dancing, or dancing across, the already partially tufted surface seems appropriate from a viewer’s perspective, an arabesque, but I’m doing it from the back side of the image. Like a 35mm camera, I’m not entirely sure what I’ve just done until I’ve developed it: putting down the gun and walking around to the other side actually to look at it. In most cases, this means moving furniture—the studio is small, the frame that I work on is just large enough to bisect the room, and the cones of yarn are on the floor (shelves would impede how much space I would have to move around in), there used to be wheels on the frame but made it wobble around too much, and now whether or not I drag this thing back and forth depends on my own projection of how important or dramatic my recent marks seemed. To say that it dances or rips through or streaks across the stretched work area is to describe it as an encounter; to walk around the wooden frame and experience it in isolation in my role as the operator is to experience it in slices. Walking from one side to the other does noticeably deliver an experience of the work that feels manifestly different from the decision-making on the reverse side. This is mainly due to two primary factors: texture and orientation. On the ‘working’ side of the drawing, the marks

² Berger hits on something not explicitly mentioned in my re-enactment but elsewhere in this thesis. The way he talks about the water’s relationship with the fish resonates with aspects of my own experience of drawing. Throughout the thesis, I talk a lot about surface—like the water—in relation to a rug’s own apparent surface dynamics and qualities. It’s something moot—something very static, rather than a record of my body crouching down low, climbing steps to offer up the gun to hard-to-reach places, or sitting on a little stool that straddles a long wooden board that spans the top of a scaffold tower.

Unlike Berger, my sites are not set explicitly on the fish but on how the fish’s form is impressed upon the water at any given time. I’m mostly interested in the water’s ability to work around the fish. The fish feels more like a passenger once you start imagining how the water curls and glides around every part of its body. Water is something that encompasses or slips under, reacts to, or slides through. The phrase “be water” comes to mind. This was a popular slogan during the 2019–2020 street protests in Hong Kong. The phrase comes from martial artist Bruce Lee. It is his take on the Taoist concept of *wu wei*, or a form of intuition, to move with nature, to be reactive, and it is central to Lee’s versatile pedagogical approach. The protesters in Hong Kong invoked this same technique to fighting the police—maintaining a level of formlessness, allowing a level of pliancy to guide them from battle to battle. They are the water and the punitive government response is the fish.

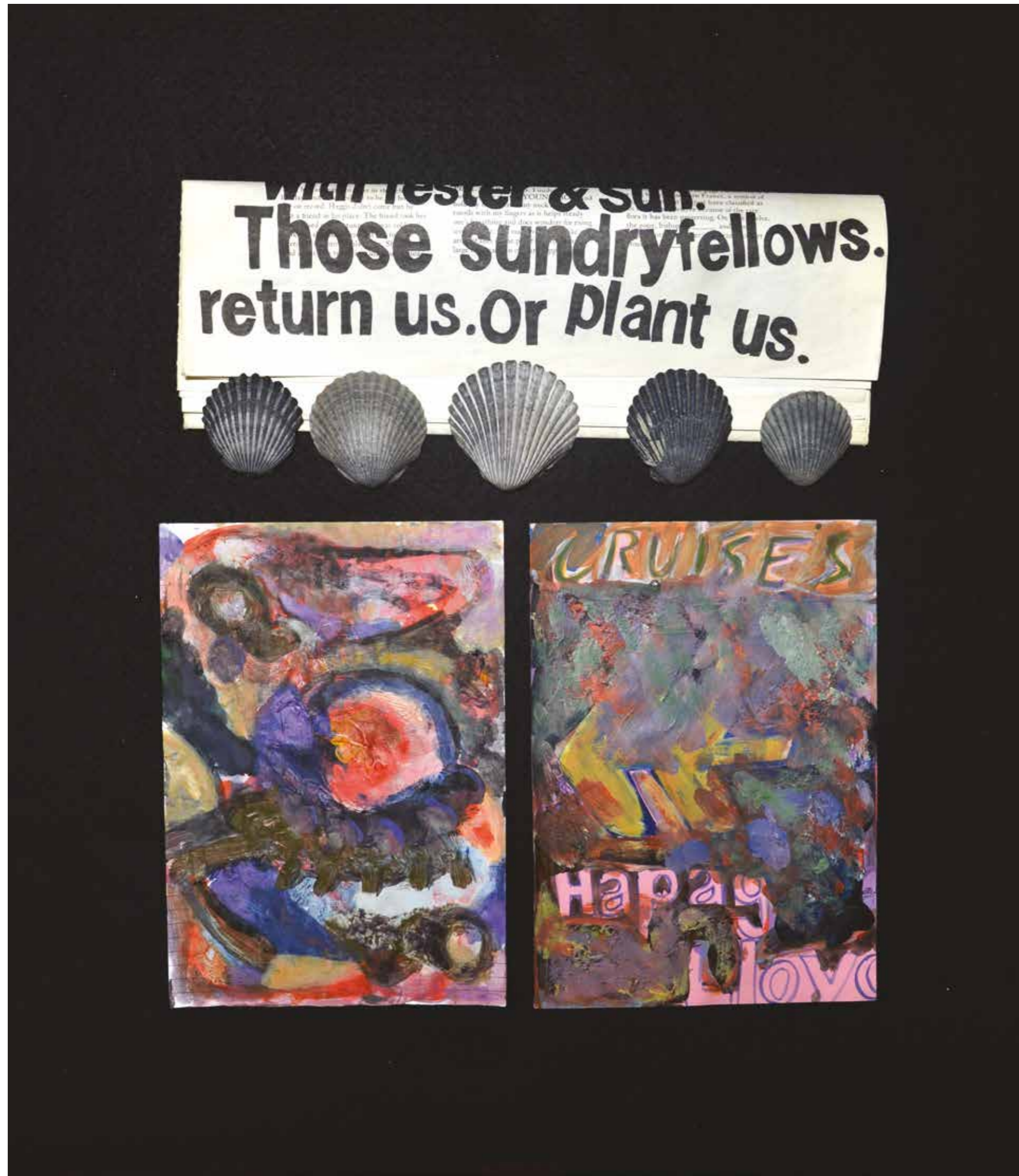
My variation on water is not the same as Bruce Lee’s, and certainly not like those in HK. Lee’s water was not their water either, but summoning these examples identifies a common characteristic—a methodology of fluidity—echoing Jeet Kune Do’s central tenet: *using no way as way; having no limitation as limitation*. (Bruce Lee Foundation).

left are flat and braided, much tighter strokes than the proud and hairy pile of the opposite side. The difference in how they indicate the motion of the artist’s body appears substitutable, but the stroke, the trace left by the tool, is not. As you travel over this fulcrum, from a procedural form to a substantive one, you discover a much furrier mirror image of what you’ve been making. The hassles of disrupting everything in the studio: moving furniture, the flurry of dust, and the tiny cuts from the Carpet Gripper, mean I will wait weeks to see the other side. Most of the time (in 2019 and 2020), I take these long sideways peeks (the tufting frame stands about half a meter away from the wall and allows a limited but sometimes valuable vantage point at the very beginning).

As it moves in and out of the backing cloth, the needle on the machine advances itself along. You can push or resist its default speed to an extent, dictating how much yarn is deposited within a given length of time. A slow gesture where the operator actively must withstand how fast the gun wants to go is how you produce greater pile density—allowing your ink a heavier flow. Pushing or forcing it to cross more territory than average gives you a discrete file of worsted rice grains springing up from whatever colour was laid down, denoting a visual noise that one’s eye is still capable of tracking. The conventional carpet-form can only represent a line. The availability of these strands of wool or acrylic standing like toy soldiers enables one to pursue the drawing and its marks to follow its movements and form some subjective logic. Manufactured carpets require an economy of stitches to ensure maximum similitude to an original design. It needs consistent speed and yarn thickness to assert a sense of technical congruity. If the intended image is abstract and irregular, it ceases to be random when it functions as a design. Like any other carpet it needs to be recreated with precision. Rather than as spasmodic gestures, the flecks and wandering tendrils of abstraction are now the exact locations where minuscule and organised rows of uniform stitches must go.

When the tufted drawing is finished, I release it from the tiny galvanised teeth of the carpet gripper frame and trim any excess backing cloth. Using my sewing machine, I stitch around the edge of the drawing to keep it from fraying. I’m still not sure how these works will age. I think I do this simply as a gesture that it is finished. When the textile is removed from the frame, hundreds of little bits of yarn fall off the work. Most are loose yarn that shoots out from the gun and lands on the surface of the drawing during the process of tufting. Unlike a conventional rug, the final works are not treated with a layer of latex on the backside. This is meant to keep the tufts from coming out of the substrate. The issue with putting any latex or glue on the back has to do with the quality of surface on the work’s reverse side. Sometimes I prefer it to the front side, but a layer of glue would make everything crusty and stiff, sometimes even discolouring the yarn.

Once the works are finished, they are photographed, put into vacuum-sealed bags, and stored in the basement of my house. Before they’re taken down and put away, I do sit in front of them and write down any tendencies or any limitations I may observe while making them. This process tends to be done sometime, in what feels like the middle of making, when there’s very little finish or graphic resolve. Some of the writing done later is performed while looking at the documentation of the work. This kind of writing tends to be more of a projection of the past rather than a documentation. This is often how the writing aspect of this project takes on new lives on the page rather than on the backing cloth.



THOSE SUNDRY FELLOWS
 SCALLOPED NEWSPAPER
 (RETURN US, OR PLANT US.)

CRISTY
 FLOWER
 PAINTING

CRUISES
 HAPAG LLOYD
 ←←



UNOER SHELL UNO- SHELL LEAF
 SHELL FLOWER UNO-
 SHELL FLOWER
 SHELL CUTTING SHELL
 SHELL P SHELL UNO-
 SHELL LEAF SHELL FLOWER
 SHELL HEART UNO-
 TEASEL SHELL RT SHELL
 SHELL SHELL CORAL SHELL
 (UNO-SCALLOP - CORAL - PURPLE TEASEL)



Notes on Carpet, by We Are Publication, 3m x 2m, wool on backing cloth, edited and fabricated by Christian Newby, 2018

This work followed on from *SomePigHarlequinBlanket (SPHB)* and reiterated many of the same components. It did, more than the other artworks, function as a diary entry in and of itself. It was, in fact, November when it was made. This motif follows on from the clock motif. But where the clock was implicating time in a much more general way, i.e. the time spent on making, when it was made, etc., *NovemberTunicCalendar (NTC)* aimed at memorialising the present moment—the time being spent in Nigeria specifically. The drawing was composed of an image of a garment. I chose the term “tunic” for the title as a way of determining a rough shape. The tunic is a lot of things all at once. Similar to a robe (the word robe comes from the Middle English word for garment). There is a genericness to it. It is antiquated, adorned, scruffy, belted, a blouse, a shirt, a surcoat, Greek, Roman, medieval, v-necked, embroidered, hip-length, long, wide, short, and sleeved.

And finally, the “calendar” was a simple grid to build around besides being linked directly to the date. In later works, the image of a trellis begins to emerge. The calendar, the lattice, the spider web, and the vector maintain a joint function, a practical framework that helps me organise content and composition. It starts with something relatively rigid—and then come the spores!—permeating through its substrate in organic mounds and pinnacles and entangling itself sporadically through it.

This section reports on the production of two smaller works made while on residency at the Arthouse Foundation in Lagos, Nigeria, an exchange that took place with Matadero Madrid.²⁸ These works were made the same year (2017) as the *Doomsday Rug* and *Julio Flores*. They began exploring the tufting gun not just by what sort of mark it could produce but also through the formation of compounded titles, squeezing words together or with hyphenated links in between to signify a particular type of use of its drawn subjects, daisy-chaining them into a rendition of equalised components. One way I thought that I could test the frontiers between different textile forms was to use the title as a descriptor of not only the subject matter but also its titular or grammatical structure. It sculpts them into an incorporated whole to qualify meaning from both the individual word and when strung together. The compression of these individual words into something simultaneously unified and still somewhat in suspension between one another wasn't something I had tried before. Previous works' titles maintained a level of simplicity and matter-of-fact-ness, but this was the first time I had begun composing titles that I thought would aid the viewer towards considering way-points, something inconstant, instead of fixed locations. The words “some pig” weren't necessarily supposed to be a reference that the viewer needed any knowledge of. Instead, it was used to signpost a level of play between the words, the way they sound when spoken, possible connotations of the phrase, and the textile's oscillating capacity of being at once a thing and a surface. The intended hope was, and still is in many of the works since, to be able to observe the drawing's ability to bundle aspects of writing: scrawling and marking, decorative flatness, its relation to figure and ground, its relation between the pile and exposed backing cloth, to domestic use and something other beyond determined sites of ornamental form.²⁹

The inclusion of these works as a single chapter, speaks to their overall purpose within the context of this thesis. They were about testing out text, whether that be literally in a work or as an excuse to build a kind of micro-poem from for an artwork's title. I had for some time been making sketches and searching for some way I could include the phrase “some pig” into one of the works. This phrase comes from *Textiles, Text and Techné* (1997) by Victoria Mitchell (from *The Textile Reader* (2012), ed. by Jessica Hemmings) but is referencing the children's book *Charlotte's Web* (1952) by E.B. White. It is a message written by a spider about a pig and to a farmer. To keep the pig from slaughter, the spider spins a web that contains the message “Some Pig”. The farmer sees this message and takes it as a sign that this may be an exceptional animal. The farmer's wife comments that perhaps it is, in fact, the spider that is exceptional. Mitchell uses this scene to describe the split between something's “effect”, its finished and inexplicable finish and surface qualities and what lies within, the embedded skill that goes into its constitution: “--that which is hidden from sight and which the consumer takes for granted.”

At the time, both the phrase and Mitchell's use were compelling. The words became a mantra, pushed initially along by their illustration of Mitchell's concept of textility, a practice of disintegrating the interrelation between textiles and words. At first, it seemed that the more I used the phrase, the shorthand for textility, began to consciously fade from view. At times, the words just rolled around as some pleasing canticle, and other times I thought of it as an epithet, associating the word “pig” with “cop” and “some” as a coarse generalisation. At the heart of my impulse to make and talk about textiles was often this fundamental dialectic of beauty and hostility.

I got to Nigeria at the end of 2017. In Lagos, I had decided to keep working on whatever I was doing before the residency, but with the expectations that the context of the city and the people I met might have their own natural and tacit influence. And it did. It always does. The expectation is to package these observations into some final work to deliver to the residency by the end of your stay. Still, more often, these factors re-emerge later in a much more residual capacity. I only realised afterwards that part of the “work” for the residency is the process of finding materials, finding tools, and finding venues. In my case, finding a market or district in a city that sells yarn or woven fabrics like jute to function as the backing cloth.

What I brought to Lagos, besides my tufting gun, was a desire to use text in the drawings. At the time, it seemed like an obvious experiment. The question then was, what will happen/how will this change? As of now (2021), I think the titles of the works have a real ability to effect the tufted drawings' overall constitution. By this, I mean whether or not I use hyphens or whether or not I title them after something apparent in the textile's image, like a calendar or a harlequin or if I

²⁸ The first six weeks were in the Madrid and then a few months later another six week residency took place in Lagos.

²⁹ In the work *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net* (2021) **SEE>>pg.72**, the “necklace” component of the work functions in reference to both the work (a 10-metre wide tapestry bisecting the interior of a decommissioned observatory in Edinburgh) as it hung below it's dome and across the octagonal brick structure, as well as the title itself and on the whole, all of the titles of work found in this thesis. The compound title/list, organises itself loosely. The hyphens act as links but manage to still alienate each word from the next.

Even in the case of *Julio Flores* (2017), the title refers to just one of the four distinct images tufted into the one large substrate. It doesn't function much like the later works but does still draw attention to a subject/ground dynamic, the substrate as a site of broader contextual enquiry regarding tufted textile, and the body itself. It distinguishes the internal *Julio Flores* from the external *Julio Flores*, a nearly anthropomorphised *Julio Flores*.

add something that imposes a deeper structural function or symbolism. In the case of *SPHB* or *NTC*, the clunky portmanteau of subject and form mimics a much more exciting surface tension than seeing what putting actual letters and words on tapestry itself does. Its primary function here seems to work, not entirely in reverse of Mitchell's example in *Charlotte's Web* of the primary signifying function of words, but instead acts as a whole piece, woven into one object-word-gesture. It's not emphasising intelligence through language over the intelligence of the hand. The string of descriptors is a construction; it's a thing, a trinket, a tag—maybe a moonbeam shining down onto the tapestry, or maybe in this particular experiment, the tapestry's own gravity as an artwork is more just a supporting joist holding up its title. I saw the titles from then on as units of containment. “SomePigHarlequinBlanket” or “NovemberTunicCalendar” entreats the notion of an unbroken chain, an outer shell, and within it all, we extrapolate these words and their positions, their hierarchies, their punctuations, their individual meanings, their couplings and how it looks and sounds formally. At one point, I had an inclination to think about text and textiles as the recto and verso of each other, complimentarily discreet, but at the end stages of this research process, it is hard not to equate them with woven cloth. Mitchell supposes in her essay that “...words are substitutes for use”, and I agree. Plato's *Statesman* proposed the idea of judgement, or the ability to rule in the absence of existing laws, through the metaphor of weaving, a “unified character” of virtues.

Breakage

This could also be filed under the heading Amateur. Like many terms in this user manual, Breakage is used literally and figuratively. One of the most significant and most routine setbacks is not entirely knowing how to properly maintain the machine and keep it in pristine working order. Aside from the first two hours of use, it is never in perfect working order. There is a sound that appears on the second day. It is a rattling sound, a whirring, and a crunch happening all together. This noise keeps part of my face in a near-constant sequence of squinting grimaces.

While making the work *Argyle*³⁰, I lost the ability to cut the pile of my stitch and was left only with the loop option. The gun wasn't broken, just in need of a tune-up. I attempted to give it one, and when this proved unsuccessful that afternoon, I carried on anyway. What resulted was one of the only works with a mix of both cut and uncut pile, a unique and heavy-looking effect that I have not been able to repeat.

When the machine stops working or starts to make that other awful sound: a clicking and winding whizz that occurs as the machine stops is due to a set of gears inside the gun's body not making firm contact with one another. I am reminded that I am not a professional. At least, not a professional carpet fabricator. That sound tells me that, at certain moments, I cease to know what role I am entirely playing. That is how I thought I might negotiate feelings 'skilful' or 'useful' in the face of near-total technical ignorance. These terms, and others like 'innovation', articulate textiles as moving in a current, a forward movement associated with economical or technological improvement. Advancement in the context of this guide appears differently and is not upheld by traditional notions of quality and the mastery of craft. Breakage is a lack of proficiency giving way to improvisation and new creative clearings—breaking the broke into some precarious new ecology of needs and purposes despite, or because of, technical challenges.

I held drawing sessions when I was doing an artist residency in Madrid, Lagos, and Hong Kong. The point was to explore tufting as a drawing process in a more social context, shining a light on the event rather than a finished object. My technical abilities less defined the teacher/student dynamic with the gun than through how much time I had just sat with it, used it artlessly, the vain attempts to repair it, write about it, and observed as others used it for the first time. As much as I could, there would be a small discussion after each session to ask how this machine made people feel.³¹ This question's generic nature was meant to be inclusive, to see how others associated with it.

At the time, I had been reading Ivan Illich's *Tools for Conviviality* (1973):

“Such society, in which modern technologies serve politically interrelated individuals rather than managers, I will call “convivial”.”³²

With these sessions, you could observe the tufting gun change from a facilitative role to one as a mitigator between forms and techniques. Illich's concept of *conviviality* was shaped by a tool's (tool being used liberally here to include anything from a hammer to a hospital) contribution to any social purpose. He uses the example of a car. Once you have a car, yes, it gets you somewhere faster, but you now have to build roads, and does having these tools outweigh the potential harm that these innovations can create: pollution, deforestation, labour exploitation...?

Illich wanted a term to describe tool usage in contrast to an industrial technic, an “autonomous and creative intercourse among persons”. The drawing sessions were about an encounter with the tufting gun to gain new access to an otherwise obscure industrial technology. In doing so, the configuration of the carpet-form is broken momentarily, and the object's story is given an additional chapter, another root sprouting off. The opacity of how the industrialised world is lessened a little bit, but beyond even that microscopic shift, is the ability to re-purpose this technique through its obliqueness—conciliating between what you know and don't know to make something other than carpet.

Equivalences

This research is full of things speaking on behalf of other things. Equivalences are used to help inform a subject by way of another, by way of their differences and similarities and onward towards new determined values and meaning. The gun is a pencil, and the gun is a *gun* gun, as well. The backing cloth is paper, a wall, a partition, a membrane and a portal. When I ask what happens when

³⁰ **SEE>>pg.32**

³¹ Most of the questionnaires that I handed out were never completed. I found the most effective way of getting the participants to articulate on their encounter with the gun was simply to engage in a more informal dialogue with the group and allowed them to guide how and what we talked about.

³² Ivan Illich, “Tools for Conviviality”, 1973, xii



Argyle
3m x 2m, wool on backing cloth on carpet grippers, 2018

you use the ZQ-II to make marks instead of columns of stitches, the answer is constructed out of comparable parts of other things. A calque formation³³ occurs, a coupling up of the gun's native operating systems, stripped of its formality and financial incentives and made out of modular and extemporaneous conditions of amateur craft and a kind of DIY spirit. I can't make the tufting gun do anything but tuft, but I can overlay new precedence onto it. I can replace the otherwise singular intention of manufacturing with an open question. To ask "what happens when...?" is to neutralise a degree of intention. Yes, I start with what effectively resembles a commercial carpet-form, but I took a small step away from it by exposing its backside, its columns, and then later its front side, and then making a progression of zines and manuals about it.

Gutter

The gutter is an allowed margin that makes up for any page loss from the binding, folding, and other post-printing processes.

Having no gutter meant seeing the entire double-page spread of the broadsheet. It contributes towards a spread that both facilitates the dual pages as discreetly organised compositions of text and image and a panorama the eye can float across, landing on points of interest rather than in a more linear fashion.

Argyle, 2018

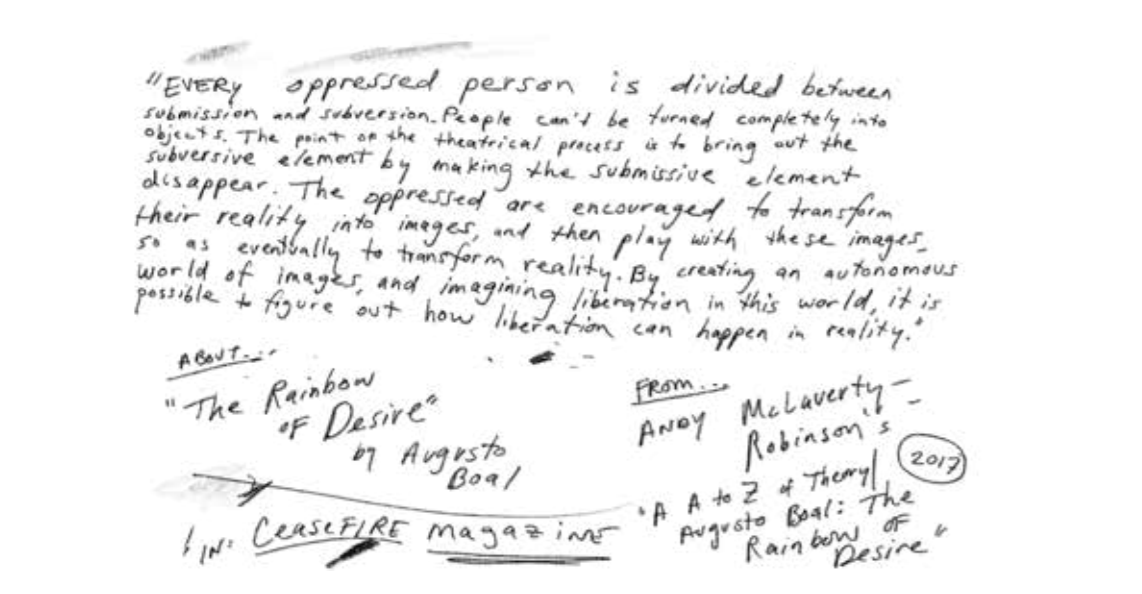
In stepping away, to a degree, from the rectilinear shape, volume became something important to consider when beginning new tufted works. *Argyle* still follows this general form, but one whose corners have eroded—a sagging organism—the overall drawing's perimeter lends itself more pointedly as parody as it only just maintains its familiar commercial/traditional profile. This globe comes further off the wall—slouching—its volume has a physical aspect inscribed into it—a big, flabby belly sparsely covered in a shaggy hair. This wasn't an intended result but a welcome one. It revealed a different way to ape the carpet-form's status as a furnishing, morphing instead into something removed from functionality.

Like with *Doomsday Rug* or *Julio Flores*, or most of the works, there are various decorative motifs interlaced with free-drawing. These patterns and floral themes anchor the drawings to a prevailing category of ornament as a starting point while looking for ways out and into more improvised mark-making. Each motif allows me to keep drawing without entirely having to make everything up on my own. They provide a small template, something very generic, and in some cases, lost to any sense of authorship.³⁴

To start this work, I stitched part of a waterfall from an earlier marker drawing I had made around Christmas 2017. The image was part of a series of felt-tipped marker drawings I had made from weaving cartoons Goya had painted for the Spanish Royal Court. They depicted idyllic pastoral scenes of people leisurely enjoying nature. The waterfall was only a small detail, but it was something that punctuated a newly stretched backing cloth and offered some initial access. From there, large repeated patterns were overlaid, creating a basic framework. Once you've established this, you can start working on the compositions like some stasis needs keeping, at least until it tells you this balance needs quick and drastic tipping. This is a complex process to illustrate well, but this is why many of these tufted works use designs like diamond-shape, harlequin motifs or florals, or decorative borders—the purpose is to manifest a system of order concerning another system that constantly feels provisional. Sometimes, this happens not simply in a single artwork but as a larger arc between the different works. Some stick very close to the repeatable pattern, and others are documents of successful free drawing, moving from one mark, or set of marks, to another and building towards greater abstraction.

Additionally, the overlay of motif and freely wandering stitches offer exciting chances to examine how the gun and the tufted stitch achieve a level of virtual transparency—using different size yarn threads, stitch densities and colour choices. You can make it look like some marks are sitting atop others. These reveal to the viewer some trace of the machine's ability to move—streaking across the cloth surface, through thick forests of wool and out the end onto some new patch of un-tufted ground and showing you, the viewer or user, that this is a tool capable of considerable agility and manoeuvrability.

Theatre



³³ "...to calque" means to borrow a word or phrase from another language while translating its components, so as to create a new lexeme in the target language." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calque>

³⁴ Decorative signs and symbols are ecumenically distinct in their ability to be lack any individual authorship or origin.

³⁵ Functioning organically like language. They can be tracked to a time and a place or an empire or some historical context but much more rarely to an individual who can decipher their graphic meanings to a particular set of ideas or individuals.

Here, what I'm calling a *theatre of practice*, is put forth to the user of this document. Presented as a fluid piece of technical literature, highlighting a horizontal and multi-disciplinary approach to art-making, it shows a continually re-mediated approach to thinking about textiles—producing a textile practice that is as heterogeneous as the predispositions surrounding it. To do this, I needed not just an industrial carpet machine to "misuse" and appropriate, but also to write in some narrative format that allowed my most melodramatic proposals to live and breathe momentarily, and their scripts to be read aloud. The voice chosen to walk the reader through this research is also designed to be read as an inner monologue, as the agent in a diary entry—partial and circumscribed, and at other times instructional and didactic—other times lyrical and more focused on how the words might be heard rather than read. These voices hoist the experiences of my studio practice onto a kind of stage—o slice it down the middle so the audience can see inside. The Boal quote mentioned at the beginning of this section talks about an oppressor-oppressed dynamic and the need to dissolve the feeling of submission to view change. *Ornaments & Crimes*, a short world-building writing exercise included, takes a look at alienation and ornamentation. It is a monologue occurring in the mind of a misanthropic low-level worker. It is about someone angry but awkward, who is not in a state of imminent or exemplary violation by the state or their employer, and whose own boredom is more the engine for building their speculative uprising. The main characters, one of which is just myself as the narrator, or rather, more the voice of the person performing writing exercise, followed then by a lyrical inner monologue of the main character. Initially, this voice was written out like a diary entry. Still, after reading so many versions, or recording excerpts of the text for conferences or CARC presentations, I decided that it was irritating, maybe a little embarrassing. The objective to give shape to some of the thoughts that occur to me in my real life and job, hanging pictures in the houses of London's wealthier residents, sounded a bit pathetic. The sentiments at its core about class and social hierarchy sounded better when given a dramatic distance, imagining an actor in a full-tilt soliloquium rather than a naval-gazing complaint. And rather than finishing this lyrical element of the story and ditching the part where I describe what will happen, I found that it was a more useful tool overall in its half-formed state. It was easier to flow in and out of it unfinished.

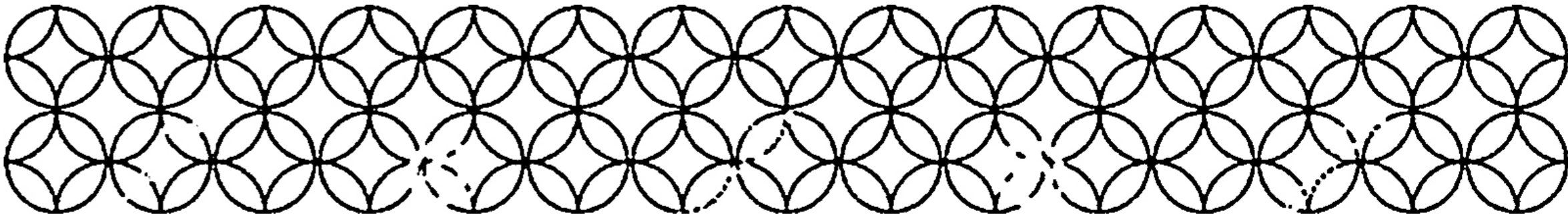
Gesture

This isn't directly referring to the stitch the gun makes; instead, it refers to a trace of the body in motion. In the case of my tufted 'drawings', a gesture is accommodated mainly by the absence of pile density. A tufted surface is made up of a tight huddle of individual yarn strands. When these strands are packed in closely, you begin to see, as one tufts, the surface materialise. You fill the cloth backing with wool like a mushroom spawn to a wet log, colonising available space. So the reduction of this inoculation allows the cloth fabric and the stitches to stand in relation to one another. It's a simple shift that easily positions the drawing between textile genres and formats. This means one can still apply it to contemporary art practice, giving its operational mutation around pile density a more rhetorical function. However, in the end, its status as a textile object is still maintained, even though it lacks a determined commercial or utilitarian configuration.

Gesture is a term that I am using here regarding technical specificity, i.e. the mark left behind by the combination of the gun and the body working together. This is perhaps why it is much easier to discuss these objects within the terminus of fine art considerations rather than through conventional commercial formats like carpet, curtains, or upholstery. The metaphorical leap from one place to another via a set of relationships rather than the things themselves tells stories, explaining something to someone else through our uniquely observed universe. I am currently using self-publishing and the PhD itself as tools to record my activity and as a means of content generation.

The order in thinking about what the trace or gesture will look like or how it will hopefully perform usually starts with colour choice and location, then yarn thickness, whether or not to loosely hold on to the yarn to maintain tighter stitches, and how quickly or slowly to move the gun across the cloth in relation to the size of yarn chosen, and finally whether or not the attempted stitch requires a stopping point halfway through (full circles are impossible unless you can rotate your entire body at the same time).

Even if they could these narratives would inevitably omit any characters of lower social standing. Motifs are borrowed and edited and spread around like seeds. Some standard themes typify the ornamental traditions of a specific culture or activity more than others. I try as often as I can to initiate a drawing with something very prosaic—draw a shape, draw a flower, draw a line. In my mind, I romanticise this impulse as still taking part in some pastoral activity of rendering images of flowers into cloth and thread, as well as contributing minutely to the flow of a motif's development. <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/augusto-boal-rainbow-desire/>



Care/Quality

As is mentioned in the section titled, *y-h*³⁶, later on, to say something is manufactured suggests uniformity and quantity and doesn't inherently qualify something as being made skilfully. There's a distance between human and machine and skill and quality. Skill is acquired, and quality is the result of someone or some process being carried out precisely. Even if I tried, I would not be able to make a carpet look like it had been made in a factory like Tai Ping. In their case, they strive to achieve levels of finish throughout each production stage and each department responsible for it. They have small concentrated teams at the design stage; the same goes for the team that produces the stencils. They have a more extensive assembly line of workers focusing on every aspect of the process, such as dyeing, trimming and tufting.

Exercise; Working Drawings (Mel B)

Drawings as exercise. This sentiment refers to the general activities of conventional painting and drawing but is not isolated to making art. The title of this section comes from Mel Bochner's 1966 exhibition-in-a-book, *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to be Viewed as Art*, wherein technical and preparatory drawings, lists, tables and notes by artists like Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt and Dan Flavin were photocopied and collated into four identical three-ring binders and placed on pedestals for viewing. I borrowed this title because, throughout this PhD, I produced a cache of tertiary materials related to my subject and not explicitly created for advancing a particular final artwork. I wanted to maintain a keen peripheral awareness of actions and materials for this project to better document a practice-based research methodology. At first, it was performed as an antidote to the overall stress of the PhD research (and doing it during a global pandemic). Items such as birthday cards, slap-dash DIY garden furniture, protest banners and the like brought me in contact with an array of materials and techniques that I often opt out of when it's time to think about art as a professionalised activity. These activities were the counterpart to a career concerned with impact, legacy remuneration, and prestige. What can be seen as hobbies can be tracked here as vital creative happenings borne not from institutional allure but for sheer pleasure. There was a concentration of these activities during the UK's 2020-21 lockdowns. Rather than feel like I was replacing reflective practices for more uncomplicated, perhaps more therapeutic ones, I decided that they could be integrated into a larger discourse around how experimentation takes place in the studio or workshop.

When I talk about a drawing as exercise I'm primarily referring to the sensuousness of moving a paintbrush around or using hand tools and the optic and haptic feedback loops that occurs. In 2021 I was painting a lot of banners for the London Renters Union. I found that simply moving the brush over a discarded bed sheet and the overkill that went into making

³⁶ [SEE>>pg.45](#)

sure the black outline of the letters had clean lines and edges had, at times, overshadowed the particular campaign for which I was making them.

o

One function of this research is to assemble a genealogy of practice, to explode what I do into fragments, and then label those fragments, and while that's happening, to experiment with the labelling process. To say what a work is "doing" in an exhibition text, studio visit, or some other contextualising performance of the artwork denotes a level of significance that is often at odds with how an artwork is formed. I'm not saying that what an artist or craftsman is doing doesn't warrant a level of significance. Still, there are a lot of stories and different exchanges between the artist and their materials, tools and the people around them who sometimes facilitate much of the labour. Through my own first-person point of view, I'm interested in recording a backdrop to the object that unseats the more institutional and prestige-driven narratives we have come to expect at galleries and museums.

I'm here to fill in gaps in knowledge through practice. The most straightforward way I know to do so is to take the very format of the PhD and use it as a generative tool. Taking both a maximalist approach (a cannibalising of itself) and a pragmatic one (isolating the tufting gun and its versatility as a point of departure), I index my research as a creative tool in and of itself. At times, this feels remote to drawing with carpet, but "drawing" in this case also signifies the drawing out of something from this activity, the unravelling of artistic practice. In my case, I consider the totality of a given work period—the length of time that has taken to produce this submission, 2016-2022. It is not the kind of examination that answers a question with a single answer. In addition to testing the boundaries of textile or drawing, it carries with it an underlying ambition to look at how actualities of artistic practice square with the final artwork and the stories we tell supporting how something is produced. The tufting gun can be seen as a practical demonstration of dynamics between artist, subject, and production. The story of how something is made often enriches the experience of the artwork, sometimes more than the object, image, or installation can achieve on its own. And the story told by a gallery, museum, or historian is also streamlined, sanded down to a smooth, routinely unblemished surface that necessarily removes the tedium of the day-to-day. To talk of Exercise is to dive into this banality and routines of daily upkeep. But the onset of an artwork, or when it is still under construction, can often be where an author finds the most potent enchantment. Some artists and producers are still more driven by the finished thing. Exercise can hurt; it can be unpleasant at times—while results are what some aim for in the end, others prefer to abide the process in steady pursuit.

In my case, finished tufted drawings such as *RaspberryJail*³⁷ or *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net*³⁸ will be seen as finished results, I would call them. But at its onset, the initial piling-on comes courtesy of exercise, and from there, I move within a set of established visual boundaries created. The "ground" created by automatic drawing gets honed more and more. I consider these boundaries to be the visual information in front of me, stitched into the backing cloth. Once these limitations are applied, it becomes easier to transgress them and include those more extrinsic activities: designing a series of silk Hermès-style equestrian scarves, replacing the horses with harlequins in cat/cow yoga postures, gardening, or cutting out bunting in the shape of the god Pan.

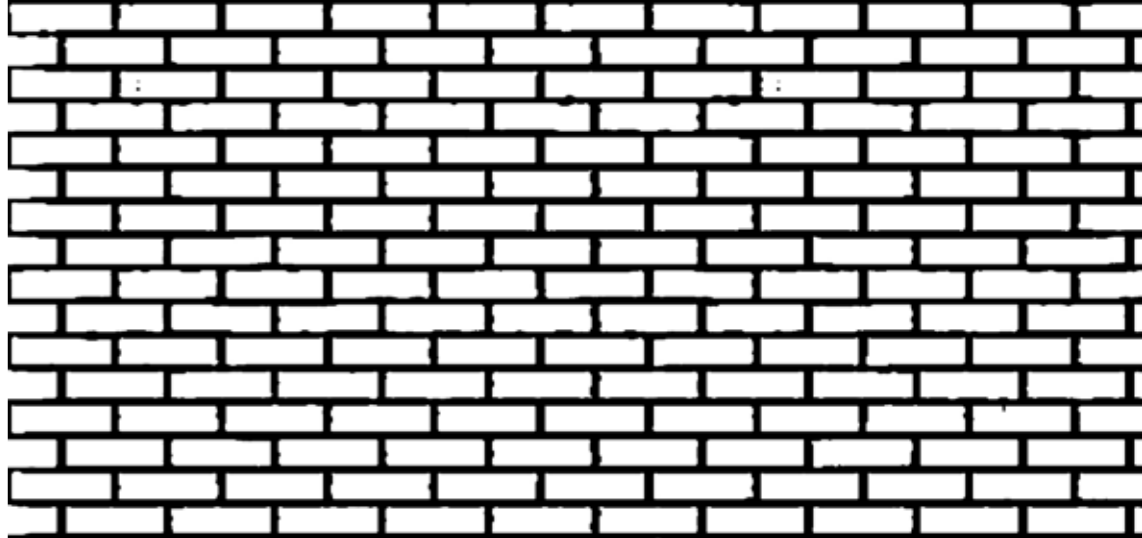
Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note, 2018

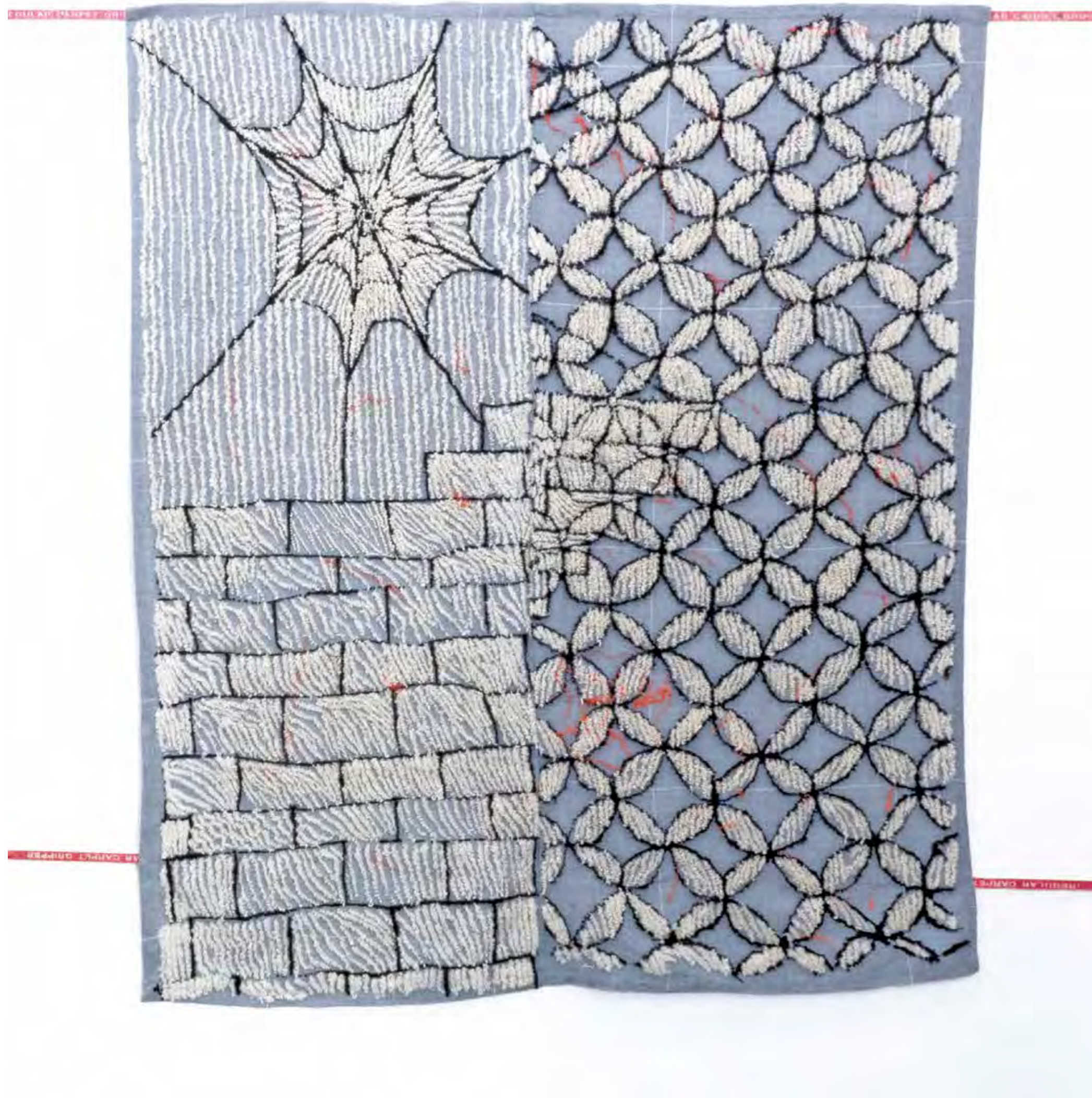
This work focused on highlighting a form of paraphernalia of the workshop that I built up over this research. It sought to further observe residual content, or see remnants of the process as surplus, as an addition to the process rather than refuse. Like *y-h* (2019), it used the production detritus of previous works to aid in shaping new compounded formations. It was about assembling leftovers and ready-made components into a kind of bricolage of materials and motifs that had been marginalised in some way.

Its construction was contingent upon a few primary factors: I had run out of backing cloth and only had scraps left, I had already decided that the following work would use a black and white palette (after referring to the Checklist), and considering these initial decisions, I chose to work off generic clip art and decorative vector graphics found on the internet that I had redrawn onto Post-It Notes and stuck around my desk at home.

³⁷ [SEE>>pg.64](#)

³⁸ [SEE>>pg.72](#)





Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note, 200cm x 190cm, wool on backing cloth and carpet gripper, 2019



HARLEQUIN
BUM

HONEST OUTH
Post-It-Note

Blue-
ORANGE
LEAVES
cut-
out

My workshop had reached a critical mass, having produced several works mainly focused on not making carpet-forms. The results produced before this project used the carpet-form as its delivery system. The main issue here was much of the feedback I received was about where it was fabricated. After that, I felt I needed to make some that would not be considered too finished to have made myself, more like Frankenstein's monster, a sketchy carpetoid record of events.

Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note (BWSWPIN) was designed to be read as "bad" on a few levels: offcuts, a crudely sutured central seam that greatly suffered under the violence of the gun's needle as it moved from one section to the other, a lazy obliqueness to its square shape, and image vectors cynically almost phoned in from Google searches. At times, I did feel like I was not trying hard enough. I lost sight of how it would feel when I started whatever would be the subsequent work after having made this one. That feeling always makes a difference. Whether or not I pivot to something different, the choice is distinct. This felt like more of a kit I had assembled for myself. The general public feedback when this was exhibited was positive; by this, I mean that in lieu of a full review, most people told me which one they were drawn to the most, and by far, *Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note* was the favourite. Certainly not hard data, but it was an exciting discovery considering it was shown alongside almost all of the finished tufting drawings I had made then. The exhibition was an opportunity to record some observations about the works, and that could be made in relation to each other and not simply contained within the perimeter of a single isolated object.

After *BWSWPIN* was made in 2018, I had to move studios. At that time, many of the works had not even been finished (the edges had not been hemmed yet). They were put in boxes and brought out in the spring of 2019 to prepare for the Beers London exhibition. The initial engagement with the

work concerning this research was, in fact, an essentially experimental activity. It reinforced a need for inclusion. I needed to widen my field of view. It pressed on an aspect of the artistic practice that is clumsy, fast, anxious, bored, overwhelmed, and that comes across as counter-intuitive to ideas around skill or genius (whatever the internal parameters of this are in the studio). It is generative and makes its findings elliptically, over time and without total control.

Leftovers

Leftovers can be those half-thoughts, ideas or associations that start you down a path but do not persist much beyond your notes or sketches. But they can also refer to pieces of material or peripheral activities that seem to reside outside the studio or the artist's central sphere of references and techniques. Hobbies, homemade birthday gifts, Halloween costumes, the embroidery you started at the beginning of the first lockdown, or the smaller offcuts of backing cloth that collect at the end of each larger work. These false starts and workshop vestiges, often in the studio, collect in little pools. On their own, they are not what drives the practice but instead stick around, and sometimes annoy, sometimes remind, and act as a counterpoint to whatever it is I'm working on at that moment. It's a stockpile of moments of focus from another time, another me.

'One Always Fails in Speaking of What One Loves' (Barthes) and 'The Writing Machine was actually an Erasing Machine' (Taussig)

When you play a drum kit (or rather when I, myself, play one), I am aware that certain sounds and movements are made capable via the extra emphasis exerted along several articulation points located in (on?) your upper body: fingers, palms, wrists, elbows, and shoulders primarily. I say "primarily" because the rest of the body is used as a counterweight to maintain postures that distribute weight and energy where needed. I find drawing with the gun familiar in this way. In terms of making marks that rely upon deliberate articulations of interlocking joints in the body to produce an array of 'traces', I think mark-making and drumming are, at the very least, close cousins to one another.

Michael Taussig talks about the "corporeal" or kinaesthetic awareness of activities like singing, dancing, and drawing. In his book, *I Swear I Saw That*, he describes the act of drawing as something he needs to do to not erase the reality of an event or memory by writing about it. He talks about losing something important the more he writes about a subject and needs this additional method to keep his sense of something alive and present.

This section is partially named after a Roland Barthes essay mentioned in Taussig's book. He describes Barthes' idea of the third meaning and its hyper-awareness that once you've driven deep into a subject or idea, you are left with an inexplicable awareness that you have altered it in some way. That, in some un-knowable way, you have changed it. This understanding of the third meaning is my impression of how Taussig describes Barthes' late essay. Reading this made me think about how I wished I could work committedly in a dedicated discipline like painting or photography for a very long time. From my point of view, these activities seemed singular and streamlined in most ways, or any other more conventional

professional endeavour, for that matter. But with painting in particular, friends and colleagues seemed to do it with resplendent absorption and focus. Different aspects of their lives were allowed in, all of the things they loved or became interested in, all of their tastes were given a single stage to perform upon or pass through. But if you were interested in politics and fashion and houseplants and science fiction, could you find a way for any of these to make some sense together, implicitly or explicitly?

This is something I believe I generally am capable of doing now with the work in this project. Still, even so, throughout this doctoral process, I found even having this enormously fertile textile platform to speak from—knowing that some aspects of recording what makes this practice interesting—cannot be embodied from within and hidden away under a deep dermis of contextualisation. Signposts are required all along its visible frontiers, in plain sight. Also in Taussig's book is a quote from John Berger describing a feeling of envelopment, where you are beginning to be 'drawn in' to your project. A thesis as a metaphysical 'textile' is how this project has finally come together. This is done by finding ways of bringing the guts and the gears to the surface, by grinding away at some form of reveal.

"Each confirmation or denial brings you closer to the object, until finally you are, as it were, inside it: the contours you have drawn no longer marking the edge of what you have seen, but the edge of what you have become ... a drawing is an autobiographical record of one's discovery of an event, seen, remembered, or imagined."

Taussig describes his need for drawing as a need that allows the author to look more obliquely at what they're doing. In *ZQ-II: '16-'22*, I have roamed acutely around aspects of one central technic. The cross-disciplinary experiments taking place around it are me trying hard not to only build up some swarm of supplementary material around the ZQ-II, absorbing

¹ Taussig, Michael. 2011. *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks*, Namely My Own. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. p.22.

and collapsing all content as it comes in contact with it, fantasizing from without rather than from within. Taussig speaks of himself assembling a more extensive picture through additional sympathetic lenses like drawing and magic. He adds that Barthes, on the other hand, hated keeping a journal and described doing so as an "inexorably descending curve", suggesting that somehow the thoughts expired by the time they hit the page and definitely so once they were read from the page.

"Looking back thirty years later at his [Simon Ottenberg] three types of notes, it seems to him that the closer they were to writing, the less valuable and interesting they were. The more he actually wrote, we might conclude, the less he got. The writing machine was actually an erasing machine."

Any single articulation of a drummer's playing is not enough to even get the sticks to make contact with the kit. It requires a mechanism, a system of exposition and reveal, one aspect taking responsibility for the crack of the snare while the shoulders, elbows, abdomen, and the palms of your hands are simultaneously positioned for subsequent movements.

² Simon Ottenberg was an anthropologist that valued what notions you haven't explicated in your fieldnotes rather than the ones you did. This quote worries me a little. Here I have spent pages and pages trying to bring the reader of this handbook right up to the glass to observe closely what sorts of things have constituted this practice for the last 6.6 years and how its become part of and informed by the PhD process. I've tried to write it all down!

This was challenging to think about. But the writing, as you may have guessed, is a red herring at times. It's always sincere—no lies here—but it is constructed on all fronts to change registers, shape-shift, and move between formal and informal ways of speaking or showing research materials and their findings.

Trace

Trace can mean stitch. It can mean mark. It can be wool or acrylic. It can be what follows the needle at the end of the gun. It can be the evidence left behind by the body. It can be a set of collected choices over a period of time. It can be the attempt to write a story that tries to characterise something you can't see in the mark or stitch itself. It is the pathology that steers the hand and gun into the shape of a raspberry or a chevron or a noodling arabesque. It evidences all of the time spent and collapses it.

Objets de Grève³⁹

This is a term used by Jean-Luc Moulène in 1999 to describe his photographic series of manufactured objects made by striking factory workers in France. Each photo depicted an industrial artefact, customised to demonstrate manifest levels of control and agency over the factory. These changes were small but clear subversions of their anticipated forms.⁴⁰

Earlier in this research, when the question of *What happens when...?* started taking shape, I searched for examples of other artists using industrial tools like mine. Not my tool specifically, but ones that shared something of the spirit of the process I was trying to access⁴¹.

The *Objets de Grève* are there to revert your attention back to the operator. They remove the industrial product's use, and in doing so dampen the voice of the consumer momentarily. The objects are still there, but the drama taking place through them is between the workers and the bosses. This alteration of moving its production's centre of gravity just slightly off track and into an operational wilderness was a meaningful revelation for me. The *39 Strike Objects* that Moulène documented were not altered to a degree beyond recognition, they were clearly frying pans and cigarette packets, but with a message inscribed into it and onto it. They carried a form of graffiti that gave these workers access to a realm of agency and symbolism.

The lead I took from these objects is notably different in practice, due to the fact that there aren't really any stakes in how I use the ZQ-II machine.

Resonance

Being in Hong Kong in 2019, the city where the gun was invented, a new chapter (for me) began to emerge. It was a residency taking place against the backdrop of an uprising. It wasn't my home, and I wasn't going to understand any nuances beyond the headline that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP wanted to be able to imprison Hongkongers in Mainland China. But the concerns of making artworks were obscured by the proximity to a general urgency and needfulness around you. One that I hadn't felt before so acutely. For me, being in HK contributed not to the larger technical or economic history of the tufting gun. Still, as this technical manual guides the user through both the backgrounds and foregrounds of this device, it seems vital to include a vantage point to this machine that draws on complicated feelings that I was experiencing that entangled privilege, art making, culture, and internationalism. I mention it here and in other sections to limit the possibilities of how the tufted drawings can be seen. This manual does not suggest that anything and everything can be thrown into the pot of associations. Instead, it looks to bracket out a place between clarity and myopia. It is not about claiming expertise but distils it into an elucidating practice of not-knowing.

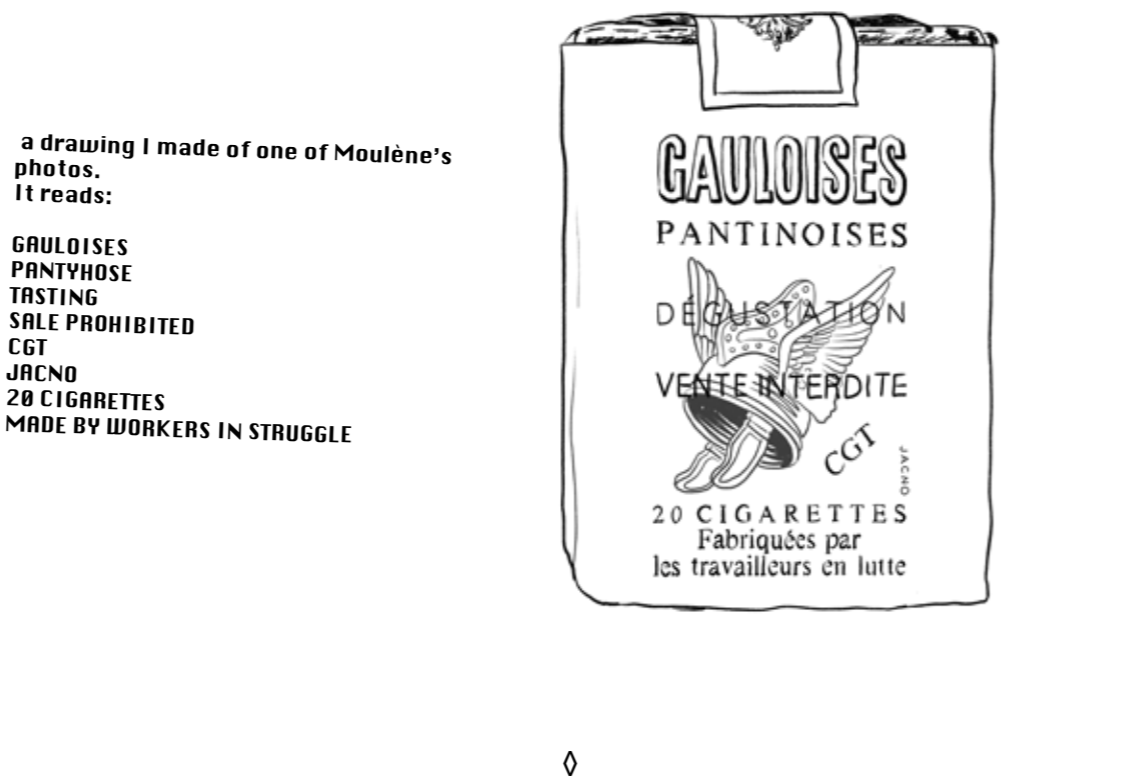
³⁹ 39 *Objets de grève présentés par Jean-Luc Moulène (1999–2000)*.

⁴⁰ In this section I'm entirely referring to the subjects of Moulène's photographs rather than what he himself is doing.

⁴¹ There are examples of artists that use a tufting gun, such as artists Caroline Achaintre or Trish Andersen, but to bundle anyone who uses this tool together is to focus on its quirky novelty and deny each artist a particular voice.

I'm picturing a black hole. No, actually, I can't picture it. It can only be described by the churning accumulation being pulled into it. It is a conditional occurrence, a happening. And at this event horizon is heat and humidity; the smell of tear gas; the splashes of blue dye; the futility of getting home some nights⁴²; the laser pointers; the idea that umbrellas could be used with felonious intent⁴³; being cornered in churches; the kind of paranoia you, as a foreigner, threaten yourself with despite still knowing that you're not really a threat at all, that you're engaging within a more privileged set of rules than everyone else; the question of what you do as an art or craft practice could be remotely interlaced with such experiences.

October 2nd, 2019



When I started the first carpet drawing in HK in August 2019 I started with random scribbles; a confetti of small stitches dispersed across the stretched cloth; a peppermint shape that I tend to draw when I get a little blocked or stifled sometimes. Then I began using a fish/dragon scale pattern that I encountered throughout the city: on the signage of buildings, on upholstery, on television, and on the packaging for the many mooncakes being sold in the lead-up to the Mid-Autumn festival. I kept it around for a while to remind me of what I considered 'bad residency ideas'. It wasn't offensive or tough to look at, but in my mind, it signified a very facile engagement with my new surroundings and a potentially weak link between myself, the place, and the ZQ-II. I was seeking out images and patterns that weren't particularly overt, and this was that for sure, but its ubiquity was, in the end, too hard to reconcile. Instead, I incorporated the pattern into the drawing as a type of underpainting or ground with the intention of overlaying⁴⁴ other marks in the future. Due to its size and intention to produce something in a portrait format, *hsbc* had to be tufted whilst turned on its side in a landscape position. About halfway through the drawing, I began incorporating the HSBC logo as a repeat pattern. Like the dragon scale design, this was chosen for its general ubiquity and basic geometrical form. After having attended a number of demonstrations and protests in town, I felt a shift occur in my thinking about the artist-in-residence's tendency to respond to the host

⁴² Getting home meant walking across from Sheung Wan to Wan Chai to try and hail a taxi. This was difficult if the government had shut down the tunnel.

⁴³ Umbrellas were routinely ditched after some actions as police presence increased in a particular area. They were used as defence against police projectiles and to help with concealment while building barricades.

⁴⁴ SEE SHEER>>pg.45

location. The daily encounters with subway fly-posting, anti-CCP graffiti, and the updates of what the Cantonese-language social media platforms were saying (from my friend On Yee in London) did, however, affect how I determined the value of resonant shapes and texts in the studio. I was sitting on a fence trying to decide whether or not to stitch less sophisticated phrases like "Fuck the Pigs!" across the woven backing fabric or to steer away from it all in the seclusion of the art school, a charged historical site of its own⁴⁵, and just keep my head down. The act of producing this PhD project allows for the opportunity to highlight this problem. It enables me, in effect, to say that within the process of making this work or that work, there was a strong back and forth within me regarding how to engage in political discourse or activism through art. One way of quelling that conflict was to go to as many street protests as I knew about. The impulse to make anti-police tapestries or banners or flags was present. Even one of the tutors at the university I was at suggested making a tapestry that hung on the outside of the building. An act of tacit support to the students involved in the movement. But so was the reality that this wasn't my home, that I was an interloper standing in solidarity and a tourist. The protesters' experiences and my own aren't necessarily linked through an output of textiles when the stakes are this high. Textiles are tools; sometimes, they are weapons, and sometimes a record of events. The trauma they collect is not always explicit. It's not always reported on through a record of commemorative images or passed on through a lineage of symbols and motifs. It can be absorbed into the weave or pile of the maker. How the author or maker is positioned in relation to trauma is vital but often challenging to perceive concerning objects like carpets, where anonymity is common. I was in the mezzanine looking down on the street. I was also not making carpet. But it was a finding, in its own way, to feel this discovery sensuously, through a process of doing and failing.

In establishing a common link with commercial carpet production, there are a number of experiments in this project that borrow or call back to various forms of decorative rugs and the platforms used to sell them. The references elicited in these works are lifted from the websites of companies like Tai Ping, Habitat and Concept Hand Tufters. These sites include online catalogues divided into evocative motifs that neutralise and replace the narratives that may accompany any individual rug made in Morocco. Some sites refer to these products as "Berber-style"; others use more alluring language like *Atlas* to promote them.

⁴⁵ My studio was located at the Academy of Visual Arts campus at Hong Kong Baptist University in the Ngau Tau Kok neighbourhood of Kowloon. The building was an old Royal Air Force barracks left behind from British colonial rule.

Tourist (instead of Amateur)

tour: a journey for business, pleasure, or education often involving a series of stops and ending at the starting point⁴⁶

amateur: someone who does not have much skill in what they do⁴⁷

Throughout this research, I had been using the term *amateur* to describe certain aspects of my practice associated with craft or the applied arts. Whether or not I am an amateur, the intersection where skill is torn apart, parsed into fine art or craft, or even labouring, is what felt valuable to this project. On the one hand, I wasn't, at least at first, skilful at using the machine (I'm still not when it comes to finished carpet-forms), and on the other hand, one can say that I may possess a level of expertise within the field of fine art production. In addition to this well-worn discourse pitting these two distinctions of practice against each other, I felt the presence of a particular gaze that I may have been prone to at the beginning of this research. This gaze coupled my work with those elsewhere in the world that produced the object I had been using. It provided a point of comparison. Amateur emboldened a sense of discovery and an absence of consequence. There is undoubtedly a healthy sense of curiosity pumping through the veins of this practice but doing it in service of a doctorate fixes it firmly to ideas like professionalism and rigour. To the user of this manual, this terminology is put forth to allude to some of the gaps between artisan, petit-bourgeois fine artist, factory worker and hobbyist.

Occasionally, I attempt to fix the gun when it acts up. I believe that I often improve some aspect of its function but ultimately fail to return it to its optimal condition. Throughout this PhD, I have purchased five machines. These machines are made with parts that aren't the most durable, i.e. the heads of the hex bolts found throughout it can be easily stripped. So, in addition to feeling like an amateur textile maker, one becomes an amateur repair person of these things, which, in the end,

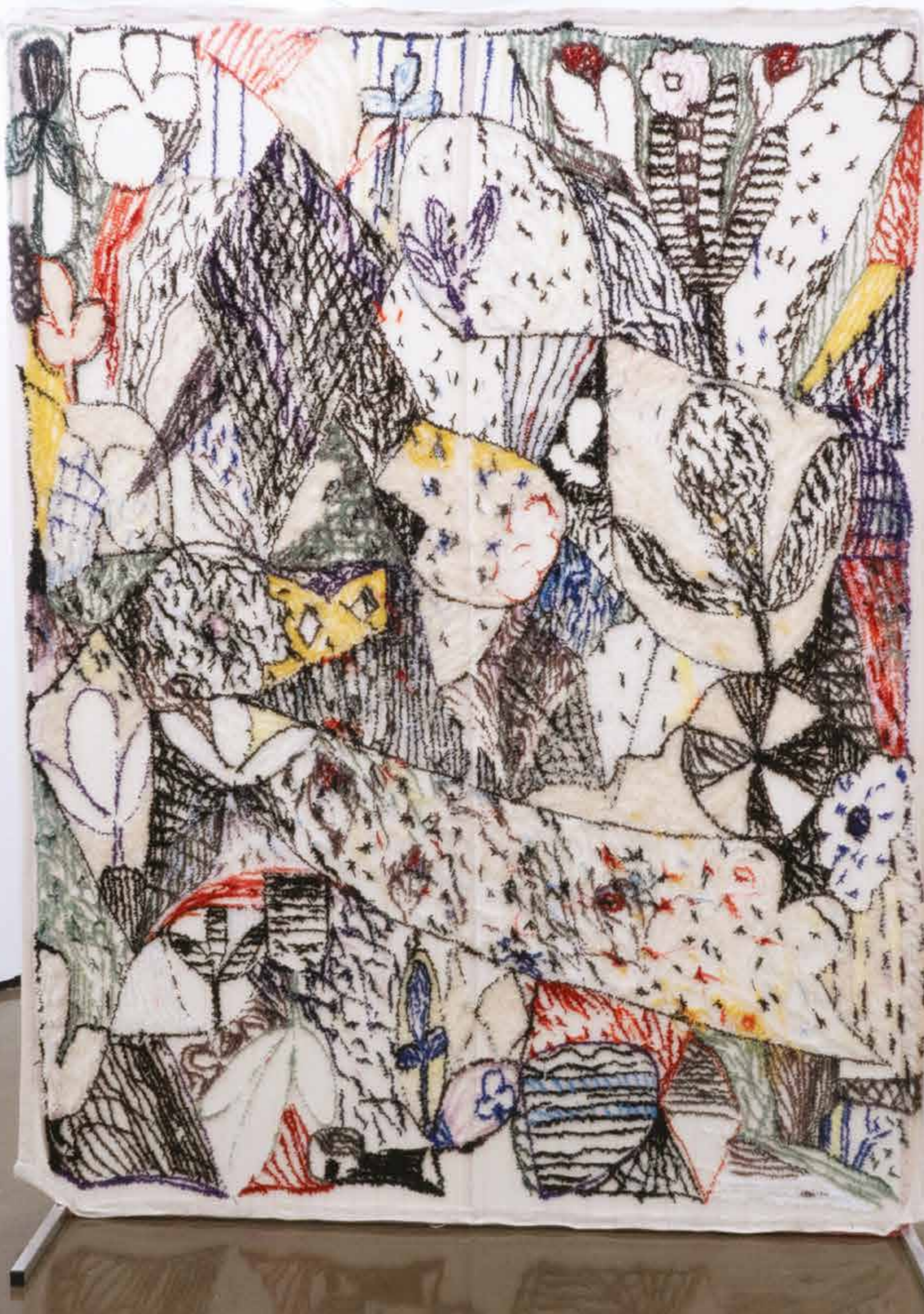
⁴⁶ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tour>

⁴⁷ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/amateur>



NO MORE EVICTIONS
SCALES - SHRUBS
TRELLIS w/ FLOWERS
PASTORAL SCENE VARIATIONS

Clubs & Flowers
200cm x 190cm
wool, backing cloth,
and aluminium frame
2019



looks a lot more like tinkering. Spare parts of one machine start to migrate to facilitate another one, and you find out that not all parts are created equal⁴⁸. Two guns become one, and after all that, it still makes an unbearable clattering that wasn't part of the device's original clattering. I showed this machine to my very technically-capable father—two men hunched over with no manual, observing it like it were an artefact just dug up, following the progression of its gears and joints and mapping out the mechanical origin of this machine's stitches—this moves that and so on. I later figured out that tightening something over here affects its performance somewhere down the line. It required a holistic approach.

The term Tourist seemed to be a more appropriate choice. Going to Hong Kong in 2019 wasn't necessarily part of my initial field research; an opportunity to visit presented itself, and I took it. To go and visit with representatives of Tai Ping and to go to Xiamen and visit the factory occurred at a turning point. To think of this technique in terms of what they do vs what I do began to fall away; the journeys themselves, the tracking of my own body, and an inward consumption of my studio practice began to emerge. Previous methodological iterations have themselves been consumed by this kind of travel diary.

This broadsheet, this manual, this diary is a textile. It is a record. Its function lies not within its position as an observer but in its accumulating and fallible collection of episodes. To be a tourist or to tour can suggest a negative pursuit but it also denotes movement, or more specifically, a sum of movement.⁴⁹

Since I began this project in 2016, there has been an explosion of amateur tufting websites, articles spotlighting artists, boutique internet vendors, and makers using the machine. Initially, most of my information on tufting was from watching badly filmed YouTube videos from factories manufacturing rugs. They were demonstrations of how their particular business makes tufted carpets. These videos were, I assumed, to convince prospective clients to hire their services. Some had graphics and music, some were shot on VHS tape, some were iPhones, some just shot a technician making a rug, some didn't even seem worth uploading at all, and some seem to take place in seemingly dubious workplaces. But in the last two years, the site www.machinetufting.com (Tuft Love) and the site www.tuftinggun.com (Tuft the World) have become resources for purchasing materials and general maintenance. There's even a tufting app for amateur tufters to more easily purchase supplies and access tutorials. While it's not entirely making-for-making-sake, the examples of textiles given by the people running these platforms frame this activity as an exuberant exploration of material, something akin to what you often find in knitting and crocheting culture. Since there are so few of these sites available, they act as a standard-bearer, telling the consumer hobbyist or textile maker that these machines can make rugs like the ones in your house, but actually, if you want, you can get a little wild and make something up.

Tuft Love, three artists/designers who went to art school together and now respectively live in Shanghai, Macau, and New York City, filled in a lot of initial gaps for me regarding the tufting gun's overall mechanics and daily upkeep. Their website and YouTube channel offered access to this machine I did not think was possible when I started this project.

⁴⁸ Before committing to just buying tools from Anke Industrial, I have purchased seemingly identical tufting guns from different vendors on Alibaba.com. These machines were not always fabricated in the exact same way, instead they were made to resemble the ZQ-II.

⁴⁹ SEE>>ABSTRACT



Back side of Club & Flowers.



Clubs & Flowers, 2019

Clubs & Flowers is made with the cream-coloured monk's cloth that I purchased at a site called tuftinggun.com, based in the US. It's a softer backing that, unlike the grey cloth I buy from Millstek.com, a company based here in England, which has a white grid on it, this one has yellow stripes woven into it. These lines help keep the rug's shape rectilinear and maintain even tension. This cloth backing is widely bought and sold from companies based in China and can be sourced from Alibaba.com where I did a lot of my initial tufting supplies shopping.

C & F is made from two pieces of monk's cloth, sewn together crudely with my sewing machine. I say crudely because it doesn't exactly provide the kind of surface that the gun likes to stitch over. The zig-zag stitches connecting the two pieces of cloth impede the gun's ability to stitch across the middle without potentially running over and breaking the seam open. In addition to this issue, the seam is already being given much strain from stretching the cloth onto the tufting frame.

The general philosophy of skill intended for all of these tufted drawings is that these issues add to an overarching narrative that can visibly be followed by the viewer, a landmark of sorts. These potential issues of construction or craftsmanship are often ignored or bypassed in some way. Instead, the plan is always to react to the problem or attend to it at a later time. This logic often prompts mistakes or minor disruptions to be made intentionally. Many drawings have large holes bored through them when the gun wasn't calibrated correctly, simply pulverizing the substrate. Typically, these punctures are the size of a large egg, and such a wound would be too aesthetically or technically challenging to a rug manufacturer or anyone. But here, we can track such a scrape; it brings the viewer to a particular area and becomes just another detail as you closely scan the drawing's surface and find your favourite vignettes of coloured thread.

The motif drawn in this work grew from a smaller, quicker tufted drawing I made (*VB*) at my parents' house in Virginia. The drawing was initially intended as a carpet for my mother. I ran out of the backing cloth and the yarn and had to improvise. This improvisation would take place on a bleached jute backing, a material much more difficult to work on with the machine. I chose a motif composed of club-shapes and arched window-shapes, eventually assembling it all into some fortress façade arrangement. I decided later to tease this image more, making a larger variation of this drawing on the monk's cloth. There is a minimum size that most of these works flourish more in, a size at least four or five times the size of *VB*, but I found that *Clubs & Flowers* did not achieve or build upon the same visual and tactile effect that I observed in *VB*. The larger version came across as much more illustrative, leaner, and lacking the same discordance that made the smaller work more sculptural.



Illustration of *The Envelope*, a space created out of the violence of the machine, its loud volume and the focus occurring while using it. There is an interior or associative space concerned with the artwork, its references and the body itself. The exterior world is muted during sustained gestures. This illustration also feeds back into the operating manual as a didactic tool for describing a moment that, in hindsight, is like trying to describe a dream. But the drawing is also just another drawing. A forward motion rather than an entirely reflective or expository disclosure. See page 48.

For the solo exhibition *Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note*⁵⁰ at Beers London I decided to show at least one work where the viewer could walk around it. In other exhibitions, this meant hanging them from the ceiling, but in this case, I wanted something more sculptural, something free-standing. The exhibition was a short one-week mini show. I would have to think of a way to stand one of these works upright without too much technical heartache, something modular, something relatively inexpensive. *C & F* was the best choice between all the other works because it was square-shaped and not one of the biggest works (the gallery was too narrow to accommodate larger drawings comfortably). In the end, the aluminium square tubing was not an elegant solution. If the exhibition had provided funding, it would have been better to fabricate something more bespoke. Presenting the back of the work to viewers allowed them to read these surfaces beyond their less generous front sides. The reverse face reveals stitches and dangling threads, a system of choices and extemporaneous happenings. Seeing the back of just one of the works opened up access to the others hanging against the walls. To have them all hang wouldn't have been ideal. I prefer considering these objects to include seeing them like a picture and as an object.

The Envelope + Blind-spot

The Envelope is a way to describe what happens inside, and Blind-spot is how I might characterise the outside. The Envelope is an enclosed sense of concentration. In the context of tufting, this is also a very physical experience. The noise and vibration of the gun build a shell around what you're doing. Partly because you need to pay attention so you don't injure yourself, punch large holes in the backing cloth, let the gun fall out of calibration, and start laying down messy stitches. Alongside, or because of these concerns, The Envelope is a space where the contents of drawing or tufted drawing, and this publication relate to itself. It releases itself from the anxiety of any blind spots, uncertainty, or anything capable of slowing it down. It is the creative capacity found within the production of stitches. Sometimes occurring in relation to the marks being made and often, like with *Ornaments & Crimes*, is spurred on by the open space, or sometimes an openly ignorant space, made available when you have a lot of stitches to make and have given yourself few opportunities to improvise—a happening that occurs under the duress of your own designs.

VB, 2018

Made while visiting my family in Virginia Beach during the summer of 2018. The studio in this case is a room that could have once easily been described as a 'rumpus room', although located above the garage and not in a basement. It's a tidy, carpeted space. It used to be my bedroom in high school. Now it's a place meant for recreation. More than anything, it's just a thru-way, a back staircase to get to the kitchen. It's a space now made up of sports memorabilia, a pool table and a now-yellowed exercise bike from the 80s that never gets used. It's a generic kind of place in the house. Behind me is a flat-screen TV and above me, hanging from the ceiling is a small inflatable airplane with the Corona Extra logo printed on it. This carpeted space is the only room that was big enough to accommodate my tufting set-up; a one x two-meter upright wooden frame that you stretch the carpet backing onto. Nestled between the crawl-space door and a pool table, the room is awkwardly transformed for a month or so into a textile workshop.

The drawing is made with bleached jute ordered from the internet instead of the conventional polypropylene backing material I buy in the UK. The difference between having a light-coloured or white ground is substantial. I usually would fill in negative space with white yarn to achieve what might register visually as a white background. This result is very different from an actual white ground. Additionally, the texture of the jute is much rougher and creates a certain extra-unfinished surface together with the sparse application of tufted yarn. Unlike the poly cloth, the jute smells. Smells like rope.

The image is mainly abstract but has a loose diamond-shaped motif and is punctuated with fleurons inside semi-circles that resemble an architectural aperture like a window or a series of cubist arrow slits from a medieval castle. And the application of wool is quick and patchy. The white wool and the cream-coloured jute ground appear to move in and away from each other depending on the darker shapes that sit next to it. Most of the other works that have used the grey primary backing fabric seem imposed upon by the surface and not precisely part of it. There is much more resistance between the figure (the woollen strokes themselves) and the ground of the industrial hessian.

Report⁵¹
VB

Quick and jerky movements
Limited colour palette: purple, white (cream), black, red/orange, yellow
White jute ground
Decorative shapes similar to flower emblems
Something in between unfinished and scratched away
Aya said the other day that it 'didn't look finished'
Should be bigger, scale seems to provide a more dynamic technical and operational playing field

⁵⁰ SEE >> pg. 54-55

⁵¹ SEE REPORTS >> pg. 44



VB, 75cm x
120cm, wool on
jute, 2018

Hemmed edges, un-latex verso
White marks and white ground work better than white on grey

Aimed at being abstract while maintaining some familiarity with an array of decorative motifs, many of these works as trying or needing not just to be abstract for fear of being swallowed up or subsumed by the still-present gravity of the carpet-form. By placing familiar but distorted symbols and emblems from a wide spectrum of textile surfaces, I'm trying to implant a certain level of parody or augmentation to displace this object as just another chunky/crafty wall hanging.

I was thinking about how comic strip illustrators traditionally draw people and animals, plump facial features, spindly appendages, flicks of the wrist rounding up the form, and the persona of that character. Garfield's all curves, with his half-open or wide-open eyes, hates Mondays and loves lasagne. So when I include these jittery stitches and imperfect shapes in the loosest of repeatable patterns, I'm attempting to produce an appropriate language of caricature for the conventional textile surface.

The overall structure of the image comes from a very basic internal sense of composition and balancing out how much of one colour to use in a specific place because I only have so much red/orange yarn. Half of my suitcase was filled with yarn.

Location is something that feels important to these works. The cultural context does not explicitly drive it. The locations in these works seem implicitly related to time or the availability of time. The works made in London, though, do somehow feel stifled by a sense of obligation rather than experimentation. I imagine this is an imperceptible aspect of the work for the viewer, but this differentiation is felt in the act of production. It is felt in the preparation. It is felt when explaining this process to a new audience

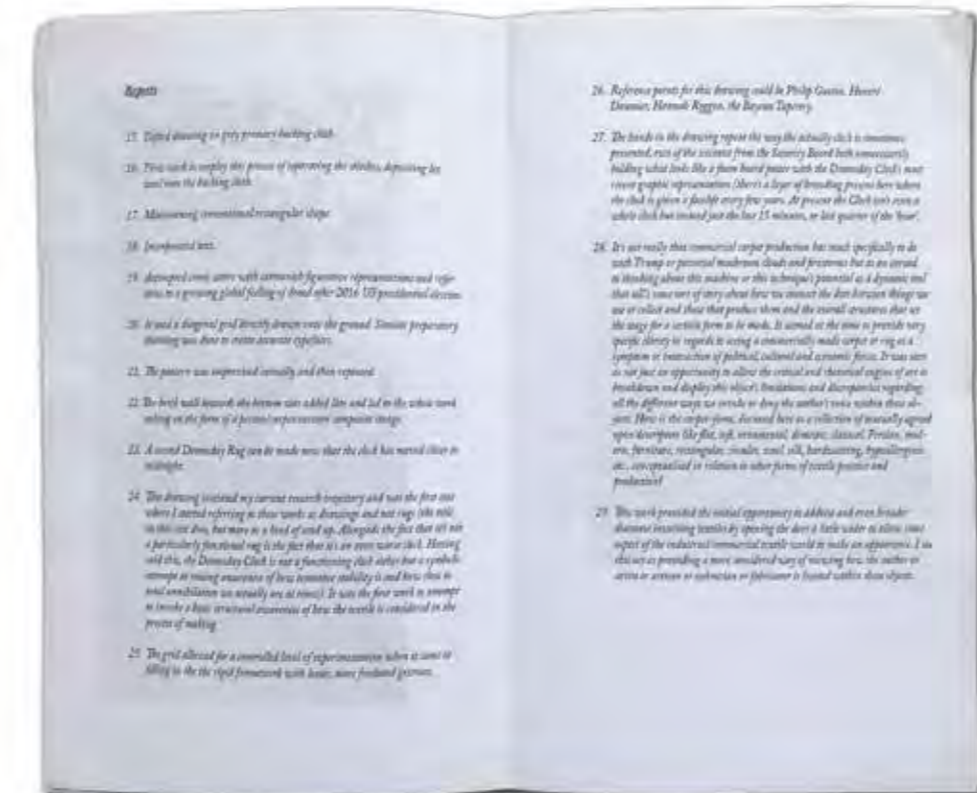


Grey Literature* for Intermodal Textile Scenarios

OR

A stolen message from Charlotte's web
A plea, an insult, an arrangement of letters
An anecdote about making and saying
Some Swine is fine, but Some Pig is better

*The U.S. Intergovernmental Textiles Working Group (ITELWG), in its "Data Information Functional Plan" of 1995, defined grey literature as "reports or documents open source material that is widely available through established channels and may not come through normal channels or systems of publication, distribution, bibliographic control, or acquisition by businesses or subscription agents" (as cited from Wikipedia)



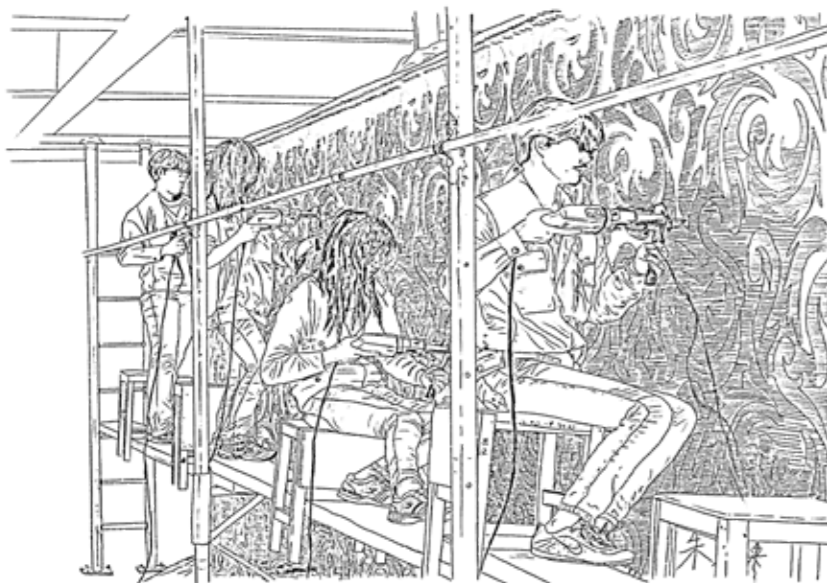
Reports/Grey Literature for Intermodal Textiles

The Reports are a list of simple observations made immediately after finishing a textile. As of this final version of the thesis, most of these texts have been absorbed into the more longhand descriptions of listed artworks. These lists first started off as a checklist of work not yet performed. It helped plan a general timeline of experiments within the format of the tufted drawings. It was a list of instructions on how to pivot from one set of tufting trials to the next. Soon these checklists expanded and gave way to new variations. Ultimately, the checklist became the Checklist, the Checklist became *Grey Literature for Intermodal Textiles*⁵², which became *Company Overview*, and this became *Ornaments & Crimes* and eventually the larger written document, *ZQ-II*. The checklist became another in-road—a way to draw and trace with words the activities present within the tufted drawings.

The Reports are ways to track progress within the larger tufted drawings efficiently. They provide context, any intentions, and how the works may have pivoted from previous works. The long-form passages accompanying these works exhibit more subjective narratives happening at the production time. They account for more contextual components and a recollection of intentions. At the same time, the list-generated format offers a concrete measure of what is physically there after they are tufted, and then works itself outwards (sometimes) as a writing exercise. The decisions made within the studio or residency are then accounted for more substantively in the long form, integrating the registers of vision and touch.

What about the artwork that cannot be evidenced through the senses directly. The short-form reports were merely indexes of what happened or what can be accounted for in the end. This taking inventory grew into a new arm of the research practice that, to some degree, could be seen as displacing the role of the tapestry. In the essay *Textiles, Text and Techné*, Victoria Mitchell describes the process of dematerialisation of textiles as they become subsumed by language:

⁵² *Grey Literature for Intermodal Textiles* (2018) was an early printed zine version of the *Ornaments & Crimes* newspaper for the exhibition at Collective Gallery in Edinburgh, 2011.



"...it ceases to be a substance and becomes instead a 'material of thought', and as such enters in to the internal logic of a system which tends to privilege the autonomy of the mind. The word becomes surrogate for the substance. Despite the evocative power of the word, its potential to embody a presence through memory and association, there is a gap between word and thing which grows apace as verbal becomes written and written becomes printed, as the context of the thing itself recedes from view."⁵³

I don't disagree with this statement. One of the basic guardrails of my research examination is the PhD itself. By giving the reader all of this text to comb through I may be pushing the encounter of the tufted drawings into the background, reduced to the 'material of thought' and privileging the publication to deliver only a carcass of a thought⁵⁴. But just explaining the textiles is not what is happening here. Publishing is the keystone. The *ZQ-II* operating manual moves adaptably between descriptive and animated voices. Publishing is the state keeping the word and the stitch sympathetic to each other.

Return to Form

Myrto
Aleks
Justin
Haleh
Ana
Phil

This refers to small episodes during this research where I made a conventional carpet form (as best I could, for personal or professional reasons). The rugs made for these individuals were small, about 150cm x 50cm. Some were gifts, some were commissioned, and some were attempts at collaboration.

These objects punctuate in many ways, different phases of research, rest stops along an evolving methodology. The overall shape, as well as technique of producing these rugs was uniform; they did not change and were not made in light of any new discoveries. They were a chance to reset. At the outset of this project, I thought of these as a way to re-familiarise myself with a counterpart production method. The control group in this larger experiment. From an organisational point of view, I thought that if I paired what I did with the actions of a conventional production line, I could provide a degree of difference through comparison.

⁵³ Mitchell, "Textiles, Text and Techné", 324.

⁵⁴ From Jean Dubuffet's *Anti-Cultural Positions*: "I consider written language a poor tool. As an instrument of communication, it conveys merely the carcass of a thought: what slag is to fire. And as an instrument of thought, it overloads the fluid and adulterates it."

Sheer⁵⁵

This refers to what appears as the overlap of images and or the visual effect of stitches laying on top of another. Sheer comes across as suggesting something thin and light. The drawings in this manual are not that. But the visual effects achievable with the gun work almost in opposition to the sort of surface conventionally thought of as carpet.

The building up of pile density in a drawing with different gauge yarns alongside specific colours produces an effect that, at a distance, resembles a transparent or overlaid appearance. Because these works do not fully fill the backing cloth with yarn, the production of them is, in part, image construction and sculptural. It is more likely to have its objecthood perceived when the viewer is much closer and able to observe a kind of terrain. Regarding it from a distance renders the tapestry's tufted pixels into an image. In these tapestries, there is the allusion to depth and actual depth.

Peacock Feather-Scales and y-h, 2018 and 2019

Peacock Feather-Scales is a work done as a kind of afterthought while working on larger works for *Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note*. Sometimes after I've come to the end of the backing cloth stash, I start making do with what remnants I have left around, especially when I forget to reorder backing cloth. On some occasions, these pieces get sewn together like with *BWSWPIN*; other times, they are haphazardly stretched onto an available space on the tufting frame. *Peacock Feather-Scales* is a work that spontaneously addressed some basic structural changes that I had meant to make during the research process. Drawings like this one function as a palette cleanser, a buffer that was designed to clear away the concerns of the previous work and make room for the next pivotal instruction from my Checklist.

Early on, I wrote up the Checklist to help guide my initial research plan in the studio. It imagined each new work as a pivot from the last in an attempt to experiment more systematically with the non-carpet-format cultivated in the studio. Some of these prompts said to use more or less colour, make larger



y-h, wool and bailing twine on backing cloth, carpet gripper, 2019



Peacock-Feather-Scales, wool and bailing twine on backing cloth, 2019

or smaller, denser tufts or sparser tufts, and the main one that persisted was to break away from the rectangular shape of the carpet-form. There are many ways to signal the notion of "rug" to someone. It doesn't always rest on a specific material or use, or shape, but I knew that in the context of the commercially tufted carpet-object there were some essential signals to tell the consumer or user what it is: material, image, density, and most often shape, though not always, in the case of manufactured goods, tidiness, though not to be confused with craft. Tidiness lets people know that it's the kind of object made in a factory, but that certainly doesn't guarantee the type of "quality" that signifies prestige.

So with these vectors loosely in mind at the time of making *y-h*, I outlined a shape that seemed oppositional to a circular or rectilinear format. I made this work in one hour, working on it sporadically as I agonised over another larger work already stretched on my workspace frame. I assigned *y-h* some very quick parameters: gooey-non-rectangular shape, a light application of yarn tufts, and a decorative pattern (or pattern-like application of colour). I decided on a blue and white striped beach towel motif punctuated with little floral blasts of colourful yarn. It was only after that I noticed a resemblance to the lowercase letters "y" and "h", depending on its orientation. Despite being such a quick sketch, it was a valuable milestone to see new frontiers emerge between the carpet object, the drawing, and even sculpture by way of its shape and tension with painting⁵⁶). *y-h* wasn't the first non-rectilinear work made in the studio but earlier works still only just managed to break out of that shape and in doing so didn't manage to come across as alien and adversarial enough to the carpet paradigm.

Hamburg Süd Trellis, 2019

There came a stage when I felt that I needed to emphasise more explicitly the origins of this technique as you regard the works. I wanted to push the industrial nature of the tools and materials used to increase the level of contrast experienced between the manufactured and the improvisational that were

⁵⁵ Sheer can also refer to the light shining through a drawing if it is not being hung on the wall but off it, exhibiting both sides.

⁵⁶ Joseph Masheck, *The Carpet Paradigm: Integral Flatness from Decorative to Fine Art*, Edgewise Press (2010). Masheck draws a line tracking a relationship to flatness that starts with decorative carpets and moves through modernist designers of the early 20th century and through to Abstract Expressionism. He claims that the tension between image and object was present long before the critic Clement Greenberg laid claim to it.

determining the dialectic that had emerged throughout these works going back to *Tetracontameron*. In a roundabout way, I found myself using the names and logos of shipping companies in sketches at home alongside images of flowers and variations on trellises. On an initial web search for the company Hamburg Süd, I discovered its full corporate designation to be Hamburg Südamerikanische Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft A/S & Co KG. The sheer coverage that this single appellation occupied on the web page was striking enough to see it as some whole mass and secondly as a proper name or description of services. How the page formatted the words made it resemble an image or more extensive graphic array. The name translates to Hamburg - South America Steam Shipping Company—a name that gave a level of tension to the work. It wasn't something that was directly related to textile production. It was an essential service and a reference that might push a sense of scale. Artisanal textile production can be seen as miniature, if not non-existent, in its economic aspirations in relation to this particular vector of globalisation. The arteries of trade in our everyday periphery would aid in distinguishing if you can imagine, the vastness of textile forms like keys on a piano, the tone or particular octave being offered up to the viewer.

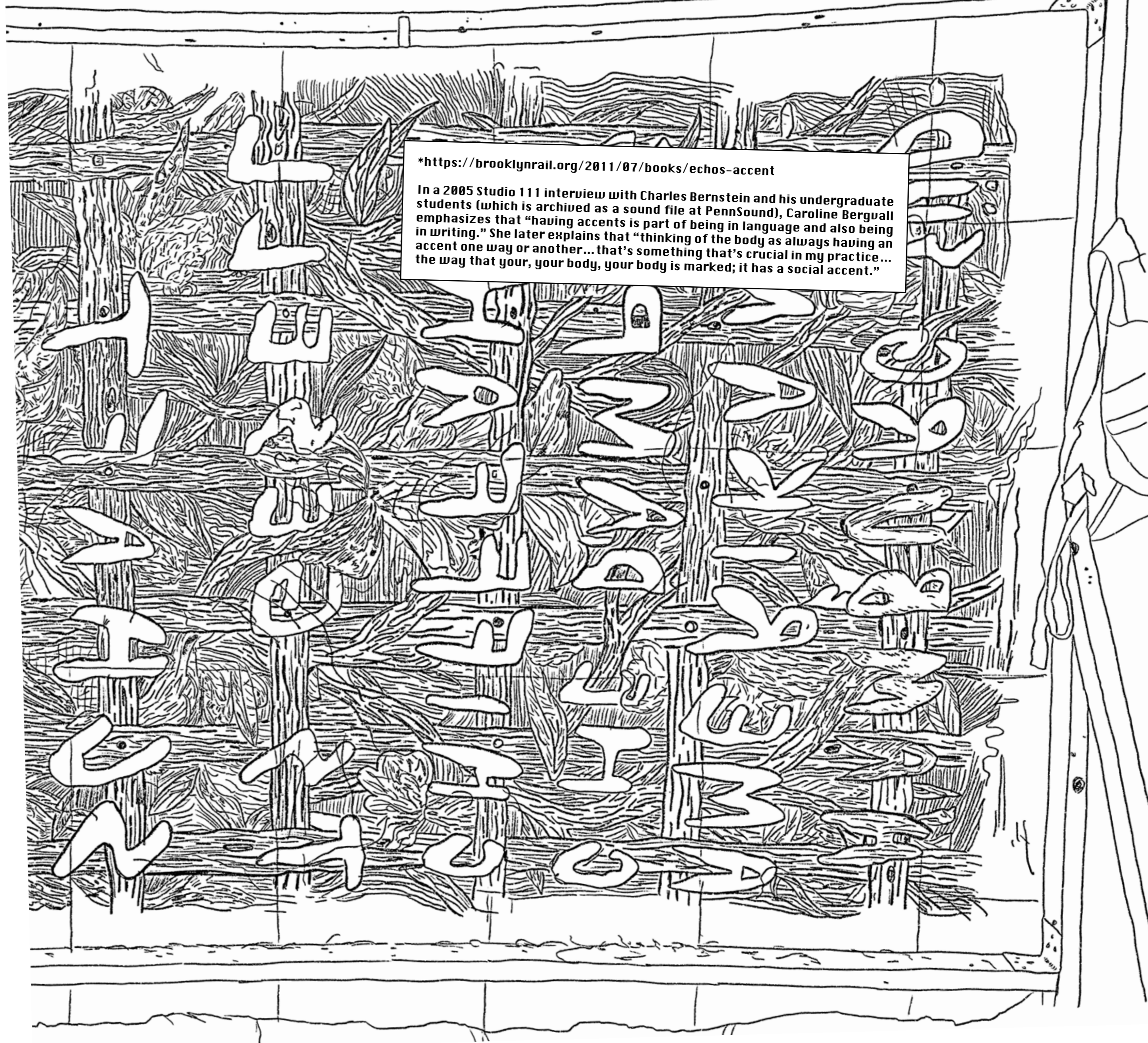
I have made two of these types of works invoking the global shipping industry, this one and another using the Maersk Sealand moniker and logo. In both cases, the inclusion of these logotypes and colophons, how they behave within the work, is quite literal. *Hamburg Süd Trellis* uses both the grid of the representational wooden trellises with the field of characters in the company's long name to crowd the image visually. The floral and vegetal shapes then weave in and around them. Additionally, I was playing around on paper, painting the shipping insignias and also making drawings around the comparatively busy print design motif of the millefleur, a medieval and Renaissance tapestry motif that consisting of many individual flowers and plants on a ground resembling grass and huddled densely alongside each other, rather than as a wilder, twisted and overlapped arrangements. Stocking the surface, so snug with these components, aids the viewer in accessing the representational and more abstract qualities discretely based on how far away they are standing. My own experience of this came after it was made and hanging on a gallery wall. As I photographed the work in its finished form, I took shots from across the room, more tightly cropped, and details up close. Because of the work's overall size, you can't see its edges if you stand just before it. You can see a threshold where type becomes texture, a woollen noise where the edges of each letter or graphic outline dissolve and the tiniest detail comes into view—a shift away from regarding it, from making sense of a picture, takes place. You move closer until your attention is now primarily moored to its material and substantive features—you have begun to include touching if only in your imagination, to help inform you of this surface.



One can observe this happening in most, if not all, of the tufted drawings. But this work, and its subsequent documentation, was the key to noticing that crucial tension ever-present in the archetypal textile notion, the tension between being something that covers a thing and that aspect that asserts that it *is* a thing. Now, there are other ways to tease out and test that which yokes the object and the surface together. It is a significant collection point where language, in English anyway, can't smoothly encapsulate the overall dynamism of such a fundamental piece of technology. For myself and my practice, this is what makes *What Happens When...?* thesis structure seem so compelling. It summons the body and the actions that take place in and around it. It first takes aim at how it's made, introducing drawing, or at least my particular vernacular of drawing, as a way of excising it from the viewer or maker's existing language. This is not done as a correction, as stated throughout this research, but as an experiment or chance to explore one material or process via the tenants of another process.



Hamburg Süd Trellis, 3x2m, wool on backing cloth with Carpet Grippers, 2019



*<https://brooklynrail.org/2011/07/books/echos-accent>
 In a 2005 Studio 111 interview with Charles Bernstein and his undergraduate students (which is archived as a sound file at PennSound), Caroline Bergvall emphasizes that "having accents is part of being in language and also being in writing." She later explains that "thinking of the body as always having an accent one way or another... that's something that's crucial in my practice... the way that your, your body, your body is marked; it has a social accent."

Abstraction

No flowers, no figures, no words, nothing but stitches, a rat's nest of wildly spasmodic streaks. I wanted the viewer released from all of the other aped and mutated references to carpet as image and to be able to follow the stitches to their many abundant solutions. Because there is relatively little blending happening with the colours, you can track the individual and the miniature journeys each line or shape made.

On some level, the gun is only capable of approximation. Its chunky wool stitches keep the viewer aware of a degree of objecthood that paint's fluidity manages to escape most of the time. The pile, particularly here where I'm asking the viewer to discern between individual strokes of the machine—to imagine a degree of movement on the part of its operator, is seen as a collection of discernible strands of yarn.

The broadsheet is possibly the most considerable abstraction attempted in this project, occurring out in the open, made up of things, not as inherently plastic as paint or clay.

Field Notes

Michael Taussig describes the fieldwork diary as something constructed out of a level of failure, where an experience is poorly

reduced to a record of experience. Regardless of this impasse, he believes the field note diary entry can inhabit other characteristics, a "shadow text"⁵⁷, that incorporates non-verbal elements and distinguishes between the "explicit" and "implicit" dimensions of an event or encounter. This distinction of field note describes several of the little chapters in this manual. In many cases, the chapters never evolve beyond the brevity that a field note typically initiates. And when I say notes, I am not just referring to text. I'm also talking about the drawings, print design patterns, and other visual ephemera that furnish much of my studio practice between the years of 2016 and 2022. Some of these "notes" are presented as collages or museological displays—artefacts and traces of movement in the service of considering the textile, the drawing, and their representation in text form. Some of these items are made, like a sketch of a Maersk logo on a Post-It-Note, and some are more like souvenirs, a piece of dried coral from a beach in Hong Kong.

Throughout this manual, you see collections of objects and drawings laid out on a black felt background and above a variation on a calligram⁵⁸, or poem written in a form or shape rather than in straight lines of verse, relating to it. Some of these notes make their way into the text in very didactically direct ways of telling. At the same time, others penetrate the newspaper columns and margins as a type of ornamentation but also an interruption. Like so many

notes, sketches, coffee cups, books, receipts, bundles of raffia, and USB cables, like the sewing machine, homemade badges, loose change, lip balms, and face masks, they provide a level of mise-en-scène. They perform a balancing act between telling the reader/user of this manual virtually everything I can think of about the "workshop" and other Places where work is done or experienced, as well as being a formal agitation of the page.

Propaganda of the Deed

In the early 1900s, the painter Juan Gris illustrated satirical cartoons for the anarchist magazine *l'Assiette Beurre*. His paintings and the works of many socially or politically minded artists since have tried articulating their artistic labour into activism. The writer Michael Paraskos has argued that one cannot simply be considered an activist or active agent of these ideals simply by producing propaganda instead of a still life.⁵⁹ He suggests that producing art consisting of certain radical themes and subjects is not equivalent to being radical. If anything, this argument suggests that it simply reduces these radical motifs to the realm of genre.

⁵⁷ Taussig, "I Swear I Saw This", 100.

⁵⁸ SEE >> pg.60

⁵⁹ Paraskos, Michael. 2015. "Four Essays on Art and Anarchism". Orange Press.

Ornaments & Crimes

Ornaments & Crimes (O&C) is a supplement made between August 2019 in HK and December 2020 in London. Like with Duration's code/poem or the section about Berger's Experience of Drawing, this section is an exercise. Started as a writing exercise, *O & C* comes from a set of questions I found on the internet for helping new writers conceive the overall backdrop to their science fiction stories. A world-building framework to help make an imagined universe come across less pedantically and with less need for exposition.¹ It's inclusion here is important because, even though it is unfinished, it draws a line from the descriptive and ever-mutating Checklist through to a point of total immaterial engagement with the process of carpet-making. It captures extrinsic impulses of practice not physically linked to the experience of using this particular tool or in service to the technique of drawing with carpet. Other supplemental materials represented in this publication ultimately serve direct or indirect approaches to building tufted drawings. In the case of *O&C*, I was more interested in exploring a more literary line of projection onto the gun. When I first encountered the gun and began using it in my studio it felt strange to be using something that seemed so industrial and removed from my day-to-day experience. It did feel like I was holding some sort of strange bridge—between places, between time periods, between people, between consumer and industry, and between a hierarchical and a non-hierarchical way of working. With all of that in mind, I imagined a scenario where a carpet maker, someone who sat in between myself and an imagined counterpart, somewhere in the world in a warehouse or a factory somewhere making commercial carpets. It was a hybrid of my own experiences as an art handler and fabricator, locations I had been and indignities I had tolerated as I built, delivered, or installed expensive luxury objects for some of London's wealthiest collectors. The gun's having both a manufacturing function as well as being handheld, alongside my thinking of the tufted drawings as a form of deviation, gave me the idea for a story where the fabricator, not only uses the gun in some wayward or disobedient way, but that also uses the overall structure of the company they work for as extensions of this process of transgression.

What I struggled to do in this exercise was complete the narration of this idea itself in its long form. But this is not what's important for the purposes of this user manual. In the end, I still wanted to show evidence of a kind of industrial or manufactured drawing process as an extension of my thinking with and around the ZQ-II. Like I spoke about in Scale with relation to the whole body being a hand holding a pencil, each aspect of the commercial process in this piece of writing was capable of a similarly wide range of articulations and manipulations in this story. And like with the section on Duration, time, in this case, patience was important to the types of deviations made within each commercial rug. So the aspirations of this assignment is what is most significant for the user. The text itself is important to see its relatability to other iterations of tufting that are performed elsewhere in this broadsheet.

1. In the beginning, it happened a lot. The weight of the machine and the violence of its moving parts made it difficult to maintain control. Initially, you tend to lean back as the 'needle' thrusts in and out of the mesh. Instinctively you doubt you're doing it correctly or that any device with that much agitation and snap built in, not fixed firmly to the ground, is doing anyone any good. In that first second, when you first see it in action, it has all of the initial spectacle and existential fear of an actual gun. Even a morbid gravity can pull you toward it, inviting your fingers to its clattering gears while also warning of its desire to make quick work of them.

¹ <https://writersedit.com/fiction-writing/the-ultimate-guide-to-world-building-how-to-write-fantasy-sci-fi-and-real-life-worlds/>



The factory is a place that primarily relies on people rather than large machines to construct both mass-market and bespoke tufted carpets.

Sometime, during some future recession, our main character lives.

They may refer to places outside of their employment, but generally, this space where you experience them is bracketed and confined. Their voice or way of speaking is an interior one. It's something the reader should know is happening as they work.

They used to enjoy making these objects. But much of the time, they churn out pretty drab stuff. They think about other jobs they could be doing and feel better about getting to create something amazing to regard, to witness the occasional jewel in the crown of some lucky person's living or dining room set.

>
*But once primary backing is tightly stretched
And the assignments have been allocated
Us operators set ourselves to the monk's cloth.
It's neither workshop nor atelier.
Neither a warehouse but maybe a factory
But we are not kept, or not exactly immobile
Not the furniture: not the shearing machines and forklifts.
Like water.
Brick and concrete, corrugated steel and canvas tents, and damp
Cater to corners of 'industrial crafts'-advertised as 'handmade'
Or constructed by 'master' this or 'master' that.
Not entirely a lie. Some are. I'm not.
It's mostly sales vernacular.*

>
*Behind a shelf is a painted sign
It welcomed visitors, a showroom
Artisan Workshop confirmed the care and precision
Expected by the clientele.
These words, actually written in a language most of us don't speak
Was a signpost to all who can.
Things determined by pride and skill, and hierarchy, but soft hierarchy,
a formality.
An inscription of quality on their backsides. Which I hear does really
happen.*

*Some romantic standards for interior furnishings:
That they be made by us.
Technical human magic; technical deftness over their material
Through imperceptible and tacit negotiation.
Those that market the things we build are challenged to invoke
The author, the fabricator, and build a sidecar for the customer to sit
in.
This is empowered by them, their taste, no?*

*Conjured by the terms above there are chances for the user
Or consumer or window shopper to view adjacent imaginaries to what we do:
Quality is something slow and thoughtful.
The gun is a machine gun
Pumping out geometrics in a day and florals in a week.*

2. I don't exactly do any of these things in quite the same manner as the operator, but everything included here stems from an adjacent experience.

My first impulse is to describe a factory scene in one of China's newer industrial hubs, such as Guangzhou or Shenzhen in the Pearl River Delta. At the moment, I'm writing this from a hotel in Kowloon City in Hong Kong. I have never been to these places on the mainland, except for one in the Special Economic Zone of Xiamen, but only for a day. I find it problematic to depict this narrative anywhere but a type of non-place, somewhere with no proper nouns, no names of people or places. Somewhere between all of the places I have ever lived, somewhere in the industrial estate of my mind.

The operator is someone who is now not only bored but anxious. The place is cold and damp and doesn't have a place for everyone to eat their lunch. They sit on the various stacks and crates of materials dotted around the large room where they work. When it's nice outside, they sit on the piles out in the yard. It's next to a raised bed and some cracked terracotta planters where someone had once attempted at a garden.

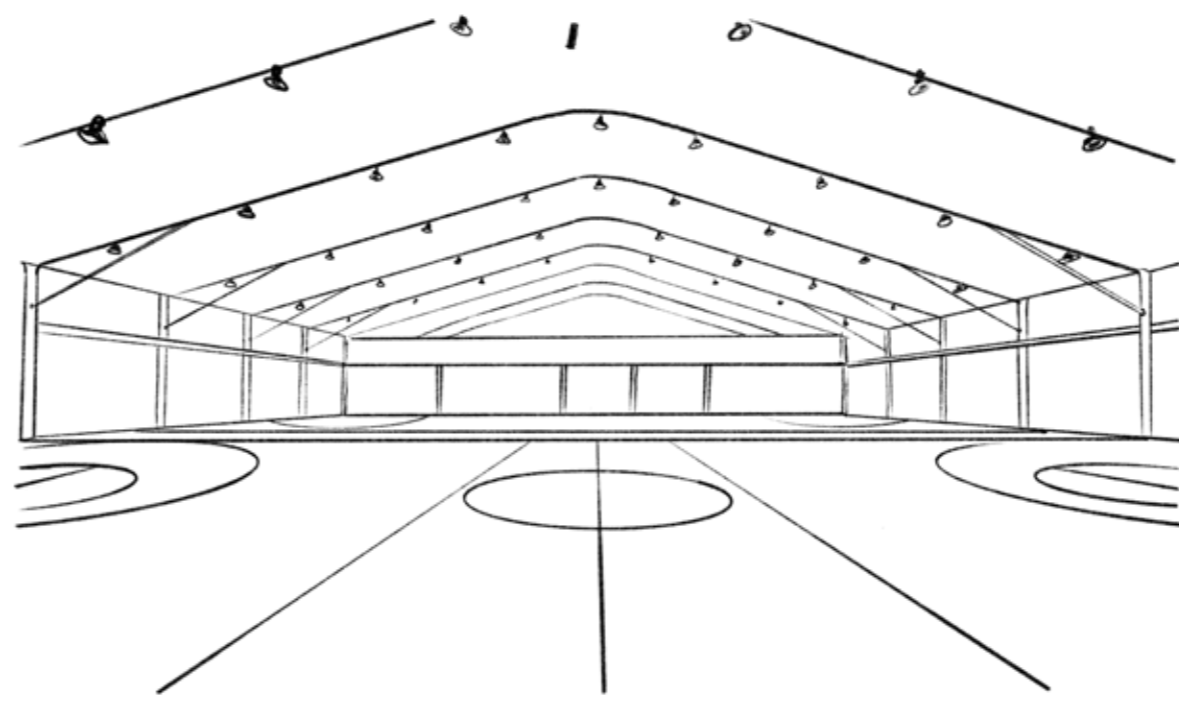
Operator's note (written on the back of a receipt during a lunch break):

*gun: a tool.
messages sieved through screens.
muffle voice/body.
beware of rich and superior quality.
beware of all quality!
beware of romantic proxies.
beware of those in praise of the hand
beware of sharks.*

This is a world-building exercise designed to suss out some of the more problematic relationships I drift to while making my tufted carpets drawings. Built from the things I have probably recently read and the kind of misanthropic outrage felt when reading the news or looking at Jacob Rees Mogg's horrible Tory face. It's a cathartic mini-play that puns and rattles up through my hands, arms, and across my shoulders, until they reach my head.

So the operator one day decides to make a slight detour from the design they have been tasked with: a modern-floral-boho-classic of roses that elevates your noble home without you having to worry about your garden wilting. They add an additional petal to one of the flowers. Later that same day, they also tufted a vine that snaked in and around the composition.

In subsequent jobs, they continue making small and imperceptible additions. With each decision, they start feeling a sense of authorship, albeit without anyone else's knowledge.



>
*Tufter doesn't have a very nice ring to it.
Regarding what I do in this place
I guess I'd rather not be referred to at all by others.*

3. They were made very slowly. At first, working this way seemed most pragmatic. Knowing when to begin production on these annexed moments is vital to not getting caught. Getting caught wasn't that great a fear, even at first. It was, for the operator, a line drawn between the predetermined carpet they were responsible for constructing and whatever it was they were doing. The operator didn't consider these two activities to be the same.

The flowers made for them and those made for someone else were different.

This exercise was once just a list, a checklist. This checklist was for me. It was a set of instructions to help me move around the universe I felt I was building with the gun as a drawing tool. It started as applicable, then more outlandish suggestions, quickly removing any instructional value altogether.

The operator starts writing messages, curling ornamental codes amongst the grapevine, chained together from rug to rug as in a sequence. Like my checklist, they were irreverent phrases, strings of words that they thought were flung far into the ether.

It started as a flirtation. Heavily camouflaged still, they understand that to stay obscure is a line drawn between them and many other things. They've cultivated the idea that if they start to eek their way out into the light that others will respond in solidarity and soon there will be some kind of shadow brigade of carpet makers, all secretly enjoying themselves, propelled by their new found agency, all under the guise of just executing briefs. But ultimately, the operator sees the foolhardiness in this campaign. Like



a flipbook, the operator imagines their added tendrils and quatrefoils, sometimes even sneaking in whole words and phrases, animating from one rug to the next, like watching a signal fire ignite one still image at a time. They know that because of the limitations to altering the expected work, they risk being caught. Because of their superficial commitment to the ideals of their fantasy, they choose instead to chip away at their project from a crouched position, a defensive position, one surrounded by blind spots. And on some level, these blind spots egg the game on further. It does serve as a blank page. I guess there is something in this gap that I'm trying to describe. Something altogether anxious and exciting.

And so it moves like mud, not out of any arch sense of epic control or to undermine the factory, but maybe more in a passive-aggressive capacity. It continues for years. What started as fancy, as a restless impulse to determine the next stitch, became an uneasy feeling of self-satisfaction, where stealing no longer felt like stealing anymore.

>
*Assignments given to us had more 'modern' themes:
Asymmetric blobs and geometric chevrons rendered in a multitude
Of colourways.
Maintaining interior character through continuity.
Handsome, maybe.
But not overly attractive.
Nor discernible from your interior's cast of characters.*

*Often times we had only stripes
Big fat bans of bright
Pumping out, on and on
For months it seemed we were making these just to throw away
They were such non-things.
Imagine buying one of these over anything else put in front of you.*

*In nature you imagine that everything dovetails into everything else in
some way.
The maintenance of balance.
But these feel like they have no point of origin.
But I'm the point of origin
The Earth's sweaty underarm, the impossible vacuum-formed thing
Existing to flow from vendor to vendor.*

*I'm no snob but
They are made in fugue states
And still with fine finish.
I could already see it poking out indignantly from a landfill
Or rolled-up in front of someone's house
With broken toys, board games, and gothic romance paperbacks.
Born with determination to be waste. Born with vacancy.
An absence that this was meant for anyone
But instead was conceived by the law of averages
If priced low enough someone would buy.
How this is achieved is both familiar and completely overwhelming.*

4. At times, the operator's vignettes could describe the rug, the overall context of where they're made and the details of the operator's secret additions. Other times as a brief or instruction for the next order or project requested. The operator often describes speculations on where they see these minor mutinies leading. These are spoken of in terms of images they would like to see created; these span from playful and outlandish to outspokenly radical.

The episodes include monologues by the operator wherein they struggle to imagine their private campaign as socially constructive or a form of activism. They think of it as a playful and subversive form of social praxis, teetering between notions of connecting with their fellow operators and the clientele who enjoy these objects or just deviate or meander, allowing the stitches to travel astray from their predetermined instructions for the sake of it.

The factory is described as a place that once invoked a sense of simple magic—summoning the idea that someone could spend their day tufting flowers and other beautiful ornaments and that these objects would adorn people's homes. The factory is also described in terms of its banality, rigidity, and top-down order. These traits are at the heart of what conflicts with the operator. They understand that part of what determines this tension has to do with the fact that a gun is a hand-held tool. They know that these shapes and floral patterns need nothing more than the operator's loyalty to the design. If they were at the helm of some other stationary machine, their temptation, their ability to deviate, would be less available. This is what makes the gun unique and what propels their imagination.

As they continue to pursue this series of improvisations, they slowly begin to feel that these moments are playful because they're out of place, alien to what propels the operator's employment at the factory. Work and play and flowers and textiles - these essential characteristics begin to separate themselves as if they were in a centrifuge. Sometimes the operator takes their foot off the gas a little and steps back in line for a while, letting these components congeal together again. They would consider this tactic all part of the way they control time -strategically reaching whatever microscopic goal they have set for themselves, weaponising patience as a form of subterfuge.

>
*And now we're mostly occupied
With what was once mostly classical European and Persian themes
From colour plates of old catalogues
You can witness our era losing
The literal and figurative threads of why a flower was drawn that way
Instead of that way.
Sales pitches slither under the doors of exact epochs
Making you feel like a link in its provenance.*

*We are not here to be emboldened by style
We live in an interchangeable configuration
Of the 100 years of books we still have left on the last 5000 years.
Who gives a shit if a human makes a bunch of stripes
Or polka dots or Tweety Birds with
Our machine, our technique, its chattering gears.
In less than 200 years this thing has hardly been improved
A tool caught stifled in some cost-cutting time machine.*

5. Um, wait, let me back-pedal some of this a little, first, by saying that the reader will have to know that this is a test, a practice run, a pillow to scream into occasionally. It's a series of surrogates whose function is to behave fallibly and partially. It's meant to catch the different ways I see myself using language to construct an internal logic related to values applied when tufting. It is not about isolating errors before others do, but rather clarifying and differentiating ways that I, as an individual, develop meaning from the practice of textile production; this includes performing the role of interlocutor between different kinds of 'voices'. The term textile invokes broad associations, some more visual or tactile, linked to a subject like fashion; some philosophical or tied to language, functioning mainly as theoretical analogy; and some related to personal experience and memory. My earlier comments about my job paint a dim view of things but are ultimately in the service of recording other ways of formulating an expanded textile practice, or at least to provide a running commentary on the actual, physical trials with this machine.

*My station consists of a small metal stool and an upright:
///Aluminium Box Section Frame with Carpet Gripper
Attached to stretch and hold the Primary Backing Fabric
Used for Hand-Tufting
With Rail-set for horizontal travel of balancer supporting
The Hofmann Handtuft Gun, and Balancer to counteract and
offset the weight of
The tufting gun during vertical movement ///.*

In the hotter months we move the operation outdoors
 And work underneath
 a large tent covering a basketball court.
 Tiny clouds and particles of wool coat all surfaces
 like a pollen
 Nesting in the back of your throat
 I imagine there's a courtyard
 In the middle of a nearby block of flats.
 Perfectly placed, unwittingly
 For the coloured swarms of fuzz to collect:
 Cotton spider webs through a prism.
 I imagined a small city park in a port city
 Nestled halfway up one of the many
 granite hillsides.
 In perpetual shadow of a half-dozen high-rises
 Staggered along a dramatic vertical grade
 of rock and tropical humidity.
 Despite drudgery and daydreaming,
 the rattle and the hum
 Despite much of what I've said before.
 I think of those things.
 What we do is for indoors and we are out.
 Carpet, the spun material
 Isn't always entirely natural and
 Letting acrylic and polyester fluff just float
 away is upsetting.
 >



As I hold the gun
 Focused on the even columns of stitches
 Steering its advancement
 My posture: a firmly planted contrapposto
 The rate at which I fill the design as the summer sunrise
 Slices the basketball court in two
 How fast or how slow and ultimately how much yarn is being
 Deposited into a given set of stitches.
 There's a certain kind of meditation taking place
 And that's when I struggle to think about much else besides
 The motions and materials, situating themselves, tightly
 Within these passing fugues I am limited to a particular spectrum of
 concentration
 Daydreams manage rarely to leave the perimeter of carpet-form
 And instead churns out a feedback loop of cheap epigrams and one-
 liners
 Doodles and other bad graffiti.
 >

6.
 What, if only parenthetically, would happen if they began trying to
 communicate with those individuals who purchased these particular
 rugs? The customers. Aside from blatant language, how would/could they
 accomplish this? Not after purchase, but through the object.

Do these messages and interjections and subversions become more and more
 apparent? What if they could convince others to do the same?
 What if the people on the other end began to respond somehow? How far
 can we push this line of thought? How much excitement can we squeeze from
 the blank spaces before they become blind spots again?
 >

A luxury yacht...
 The cohort works on different appendages of a central motif.
 A cannibal blend of medieval Celtic with interruptions of Persian
 flora
 And blocky Greek borders.
 It's easy to see where they are cut and pasted together.

At its most flamboyant and uncommon
 Clients demand the inscription of a mood or feeling 'illustrated'
 Our most illustrious clients, indeed.
 But rare as I said.

Given to construct newness through the predilections of others makes
 me uneasy.
 Imagine these forms in their production
 Backing cloth stretched, standing upright and bare
 I am working on the backside
 Underside if you think of them as finished.
 The user stands topside looking down upon it
 Being seen on one side through something not-so-invisible
 That separates my hands, the motions of the body
 And the person on the other side
 Those who feel gratified by their things in praise of the hand
 Still lack the imagination to see this attractive surface as a social
 impediment between us.
 Beware standing, beware regarding, beware sitting or undressing
 Beware Quality!
 >

7.
 Useful points of reference...

- Martha Rosler's SERVICE A Trilogy on Colonization
- Studs Terkel's Working
- Roberto Esposito's Persons and Things
- Violet Newstead's Whoops! How to Poison Your Boss
- William Morris' News From Nowhere
- Marge Piercy's Woman On the Edge of Time
- Carnaud Métalbox's A Towel is a Tiger Cage
- Penelope Spheeris' The Decline of Western Civilisation
- John Robert's The Intangibilities of Form
- The Descendants' Two Things at Once
- Robert Penn's The Furniture Sits On You
- David Markson's Wittgenstein's Mistress
- Stewart Brand's Whole Earth Catalog
- Helen Snowdon's Craftsmanship in the Machine Environment
- The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts

Camille Henrot's Is it possible to be a revolutionary and to still
 love flowers?
 Giorgio Agamben's Notes on Gesture from Infancy and History
 Ivan Illich's Tools for Conviviality
 Siegfried Kracauer's The Mass Ornament
 J. Neville Bartlett's Carpeting the Millions
 William Gibson's Neuromancer
 The Libertarian Handbook to Textile Ecologies
 Jean-Luc Moulène's Objets de Grève
 Henry James' The Figure in the Carpet
 >

A palette variation of No.9 Fresh Wood Ashes and No.90 Peach Blossom
 discreet pale greys and soft pink tans
 with darker No.40 Imperial Purple* outlines
 A popular contrast to the snow-blindness of beige.
 It was the first
 And urgent was the extra petal
 Registering that anything was happening at all
 Something to save both of us, the cloth and I, from disappearing.

Scanned its surface for combinations of risk and total concealment
 Committed like a reflex
 The physiological programming that keeps my head and my hands wired
 tightly
 Paraddiddled a quick and mild transgression.
 Treating a passing boredom with granules of insurgency.

These objects are not images, they are surfaces
 Visible to users in a most peripheral way.
 Within the confines of even a large job
 An aped sense of scale persists
 Splitting the desires of clients
 With the physical world.
 Initial manoeuvres were wee, cautious
 But each advance migrated from routine
 Towards mounting control.
 A jailbreak.
 The cloth, the gun, the yarn, the shipping, the clientele
 The drum, the chime, the scrape, the splash, the jerk.
 >

8.
 The operator starts to refer to their process as tending to a "garden".
 The analogy is obvious, but at this moment, it helps them to think
 through the idea that they're operating at two different production
 registers when working on these textiles. One is obligated to fabricate
 tufted carpets, and the other, an errant and deviant mark that abides
 by personal and subjective order. When thinking about these marks as
 deliberate strategies in a larger enterprise, the operator can draw
 lines from one set of stitches on one rug to another rug completed at
 a later date. Success and failure are bracketed between these operations,
 determining each rug's place within an overall ecology of carpet.

>
 It's nice to have a garden to tend to
 To put your unrefined delights and indictments of the world
 into some abstract order
 Each column planted as a way to firmly claim what you know so far
 Added with the expectation that it will grow to later to reveal
 something new.



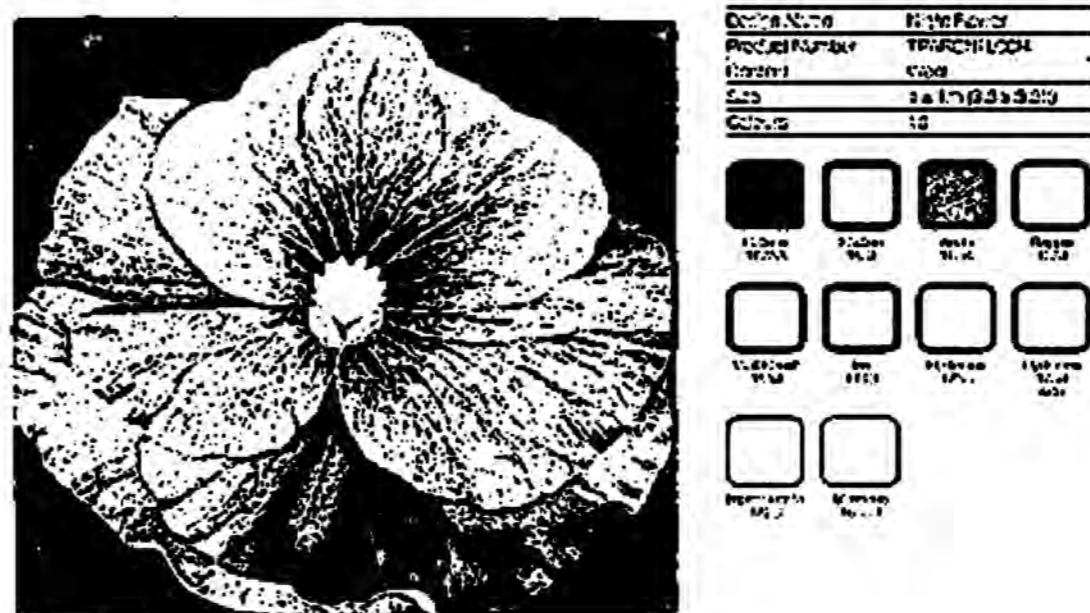
Caring for an undermining scrawl
 Or protracted graffiti sequence.
 Miniaturisation.
 What it might feel like to make jewellery.
 Or, to use the dainty tools.
 A desk that seems clear of objects
 But as you approach has an arsenal of fine metal instruments and
 clamps
 Stones and magnifying lenses neatly
 Occurring within the halo of a desk lamp.

A know-nothing of jewellery
 A scale-model of the outside's influence on the tip of a needle
 Once you leave the desk you were excised from it entirely
 Removed from the vignetting of the lamp and the lenses.

2 Colour swatches have been appropriated from a copy of Werner's Nomenclature
 of Colours, Adapted to Zoology, Botany, Chemistry, Mineralogy, Anatomy, and
 the Arts by P.Syme, 1821.

>
 The curse of the "project" meant that I could fit inside it and lose
 orientation.
 Its autonomy: a sovereign campaign creating its own idiosyncratic order
 of things
 And laying down a grid, a bed, a locale,
 Assigning them strange utility towards some common course.
 >

9.
 The operator at this stage in the story could try to describe how they
 imagine their secret activities fitting into or overlaying the usual
 routine of the factory. They know that the work they are doing is not
 their own. They know the kinds of clientele that the work is for. They talk
 about how little these people know of the place that makes these generally



beautiful objects. They imagine a regime of production imperceptible to
 anyone but themselves. They do this at first to combat boredom but then
 slowly see it as a way of re-activating a critical and creative component
 lost somewhere in the workaday repetition. They compound this banality
 with a larger socio-political reality that extends far beyond the self-
 centred indignities in this place. This fear and anger provoke a need for
 retribution. They know this feeling isn't a very refined one, but its lumpy
 and caustic state satisfies something within them nonetheless. And since
 this operation is unknown to everyone, they feel little shame. Ultimately,
 they are not propelled forward by this but by what they refer to as the
 "project" that emerges from these minor carpet additions. Ironically, what
 is supposed to function as the part of this exercise that is not supposed
 to come across as dystopian is quickly beginning to sound that way.

The operator imagines an entire system of communication and subversion—a
 map of the future. At the outset, they saw this whole production as a
 way to pass the time. But as boredom lent itself to enterprise and small
 challenges opened up to a much larger tacit working language, the operator
 took it more seriously. Being able to separate activities from activism
 and craft from conspiracy was getting harder to do.
 >

Pride in work grew out of a need to cover my tracks
 Quality gave cover to crusade.
 Changes hidden by otherwise perfect execution.
 A sequence, a succession but not an animation
 A leaf doesn't dance across the 'rug':
 The rug being 10 or 20 or 100.
 I wish it did. That's pluck.
 In reality, making a leaf dance from one rug to the next, to dance across
 the collective rug, this protracted and sleepy enterprise, was something
 I wanted to do but simply lacked the finesse needed to perform it. But
 imagining this sleight-of-hand helped amplify the project in my mind.

And being capable of such exhibitionism incited something that gathered
 up all of my usual anxieties
 And then sharpened it at the end like a stick.
 Line them up!
 I want you to see them. But also not see them.
 I want you to doubt them. Be suspicious.
 I'll tell you when it's too late not to be.

Started to keep a list
 Logging changes with small illustrations
 Almost as satisfying as tufting
 The notebook formalised it.
 The project expanded outwards
 It was given a horizon and plotted points
 Way-station to way-station piloted through a gloom
 It felt like good admin for whimsy.
 An ellipsis of control and self-doubt.
 ...

>>>



(Note) Because of the virus, I have been mainly left to my own devices. No work, no social obligations other than phoning my family in Virginia weekly. On an average day, I attend to half a dozen "projects" of my own—building junky tables, hand-painting junky tables, sculpting small fruits from wax, cleaning out the basement, recording music in the basement, printing a newspaper about gardens with friends, growing mushrooms out of toilet rolls... On top of this and underneath all of this is fear, isolation and anxiety by way of all measures of communication. The extent to which a government can care for or absolutely fail their community is laid bare in this moment. One becomes aware of the difference between rules and principles—are you outting others at risk or simply breaking the rules. And in light of all of this darkness, I have never been in service to my projects as much as now. (Written between May and August 2020)



man w/
eye shadows
blush
FLORAL - MOTIF - cut-out
PICT
DRAWING
SWAMP
DRAWING
CAPED
NUDE



Small
Flower painting
w/ strawberries
and clam shell
Baw
seeded
reg
shaped
shell trio



Exhibition view, Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note at Beers London, 2019

hsbc/Maersk Sealand, 2019

These two works were not made alongside each other but consecutively in the unique studio context of an artist residency in Hong Kong during the summer of 2019 at the Academy of Visual Arts (AVA), Hong Kong Baptist University. *hsbc* was the first work begun in the studio after I built my tufting frame, and slightly later, paints and other traditional drawing materials were purchased. Wool and poly twine were brought along in a suitcase from London. I then alternated between the tufting frame and my desk for the duration of the residency.

The machine is heavy, so it's necessary to rest frequently. Not resting enough can lead to a noticeable lack of general control and making restless decisions. Anxious to keep going or continue can produce a dyspraxic cloud that inhibits my ability to hold some overall projection of the work in my mind.⁶⁰ It reduces the decisions to the local level with little thought about what's going on elsewhere. So, as a form of exercise and a respite from the gun, I used paints, pencils, and pastels and made prints. This goes for most of the works, not just those made in HK. What was unique here was that I had a big enough studio to do them all at the same time as tufting. The studio in East London (Homerton, 2019) was not big enough to accommodate the tufting workspace and a small desk, so much of this exercise is achieved at home; my cramped bedroom is considerably bigger than my last two studios.

With being able to do all the work in one place and then just go home (I lived in a hotel for two months), I consolidated and merged the daily drawing exercise with the more tournament-level work of the larger tapestries. What would eventually resemble, to me anyway, a more finished piece of work than a small painted something on stolen office stationary. To be able to tap in and tap out of tufting and switch over to paints provided longer periods of active engagement with the materials and related subject matter; a flow.

Halfway through the residency I introduced a writing project that I had not done much with at that point. *Ornaments & Crimes*⁶¹ was added to the rotation of painting and tufting. This way, for the first time most of the primary practices were happening all within the same space.

60 SEE THE ENVELOPE>>pg.46&48

⁶¹ This version of *Ornaments & Crimes* stemmed from the checklist and writing exercises, such as the coded poem in the *Duration* chapter. Besides the printed edition in Hong Kong, a newspaper broadsheet was printed to accompany the exhibition *BOREDOM/MISCHIEF/FANTASY/RADICALISM/FANTASY* at Collective Gallery in Edinburgh in 2021 (postponed from 2020 because of the pandemic).



From *Hong Kong 2019-2021*, by Hotam Press

hsbc

This was the first work to use the monk's cloth. I began by simply stitching short lines and shapes sparingly, making the marks as small as possible and leaving as much space between each drawn mark. Then I added ornamental themes I had seen around Hong Kong. Motifs resembling fish or dragon scales. Eventually, I stitched over these in favour of building up a more layered image. These layers ranged from watermelon slices to checkerboard, to spider webs, to HSBC logos, and then filling in areas that emerged when these layers intersected. During my stay in Hong Kong, I only made three tufted drawings, all of them in a rectilinear format. *hsbc* looks like it has a section missing. I left a small corner of the frame available on *hsbc* to make a third, much smaller work. I wanted to try again to make something smaller, something like *VB* but on the monk's cloth. In the end, this drawing later became a sketch for the work *RaspberryJail*.⁶² None of the works in HK besides this one utilised a trellis motif.

At some stage, the layers that had been built up started to feel as the status of drawing, with its figure/ground relationship between the mark and the backing cloth, was beginning to disintegrate more and more as I kept pumping more and more yarn into it. It felt like I was approaching the frontier of carpet-ness. Compared to the lean low-density of the work's early stages, this was quickly becoming more and more of a solid pile. I then removed much of the yarn from the image by hand, pulling the strands from the front side where I could see it was the thickest. The removal of yarn from these drawings feels wasteful, but it is another way to address mark-making, to think of it as carving or the removal of material.

62 SEE>>pg.64

Even after this editing, the drawing still felt like there were just too many discreet images happening at once. My impulse when this happens is to superimpose some pattern or motif over top of it to integrate all of those individual images into something more unified. The HSBC logo, like the dragon scales, at first seemed too location specific, but at that stage, I was already working with the checkerboard image I had laid down before as part of the ground. I wanted a geometric theme to tie all of this information together ultimately. There was something particularly matter of fact about using this choice, on the one hand, a simple red and white series of triangles. On the other, I was in Hong Kong at a time when many institutions and corporations were incredibly nervous about looking either pro-China or pro-protester. HSBC isn't particularly in need of walking this line. Still, its ubiquity, both in terms of global advertising and actual brick and mortar branches, can be internalised as a sort of malevolently passive answer to which side they're likely on. Their branding, their logo, is a shield, a defense, and a symbol to dissociate individual responsibility, but that also generates a sense of institutional reliability. I gravitated to this graphic to record, as in a diary, not for the symbols and manifestations of the people in Hong Kong, but to record what I do and incorporate flecks of what is happening when I leave the studio and go out on the street, and build them discreetly into the textiles somehow.

Maersksealand

Hong Kong is a major shipping hub, and one of the first things anyone sees as they drive from the airport in Lantau Island to anywhere else is the port. My taxi seemed to wrap around this colourful heap of shipping containers and cranes, providing many different vantage points. Seeing these containers and the logos emblazoned on them didn't immediately make me want to use them. Still, it did manage to stick around long enough to make it into some of the little paintings I got around to making and then eventually into *Maersksealand*.

Global shipping seemed like a good surrogate for industrial textile production that I could find: the names and logos of many companies enjoy a relative ubiquity. They are the very forces that bring the tufted carpet-form to consumers. Specifically, Maersk seemed the best candidate because it was one of the biggest brand names, its full name being Maersk Sealand, and also because of its logo—a 7-pointed star. Between these elements, I was able to build a motif constructed from the star, the individual letters of the name and the images that Sealand might conjure, like scallop shells.

Other formal intentions going into this work included the use of a black ground on the monk's cloth's cream-coloured backing cloth; more use of the black and white poly bailing twines, a material

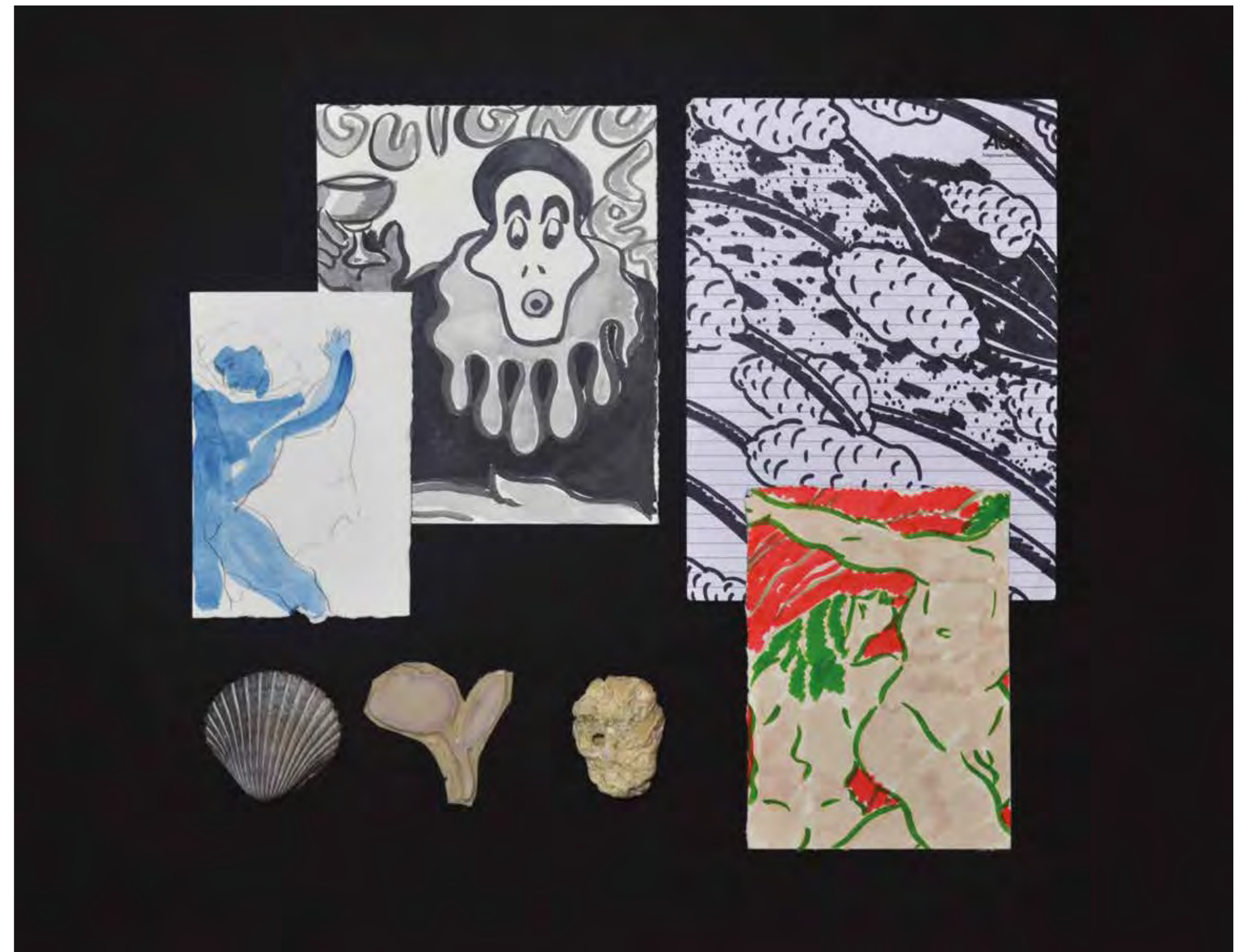
I first used in Virginia Beach prior to the Hong Kong residency for the commission *Puffy Red Black Green and White with Lozenges* for Black Tower Projects in Sydenham, London. Unlike *hsbc*, with its dense overlay of images and patterns, I decided that *Maersksealand* would be much more graphic, circling back to the earlier work of *Julio Flores* and *Doomsday Rug*. Some of this had to do with time constraints. The length of time it took to resolve *hsbc* took much of the residency time. There were so many small drawings and paintings that had already been made that I had many reference materials to build off of.

This was the second finished tufted drawing made in Hong Kong during the residency at AVA. The impulse to make this one came from an earlier desire to find some slightly more visible industrial link to the carpet gun, an interest from works like *Hamburg Süd Trellis*. I mean that because the machine still lives in relative obscurity, I needed a proxy to represent its more commercial and manufacturing elements. It was an attempt at engaging with some industrial and corporate aspects of the larger constellation that is textile history and practice. Perhaps one can view capitalism in a similar light as the idea of the textile as a material, one without necessarily determined limits; a fabric, like space-time; an elasticity that bends around and covers, that pliantly accommodates. It reminds me of the first chapter of Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* which states that it's easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. There is something notionally equivalent between the textile and the conglomerate, or the textile and capitalism. That which accommodates, that which is mutable, that which is durable, that which furnishes our world and social relations within it.

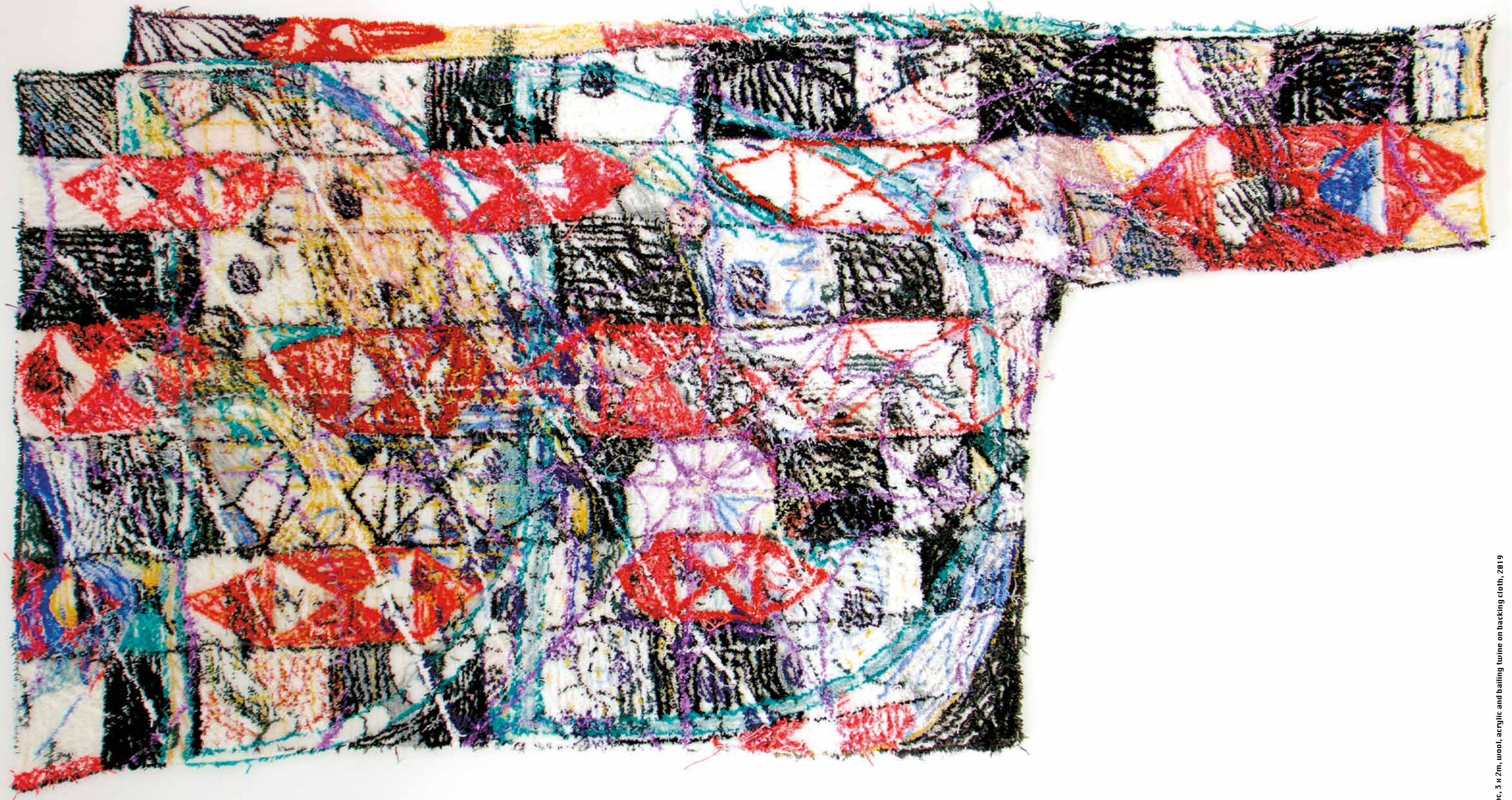
I was taking liberties. In thinking of the textile as a form of chronicle or ledger of actions, both literal and symbolic, and applying them to something like global shipping or finance, I had hoped to provide a visualisation or objectified form of such interminable enquiries. I was attempting to engage with this relationship at first by just engaging with textile-making, second, by saying that I was doing so explicitly, and third, by constructing a motif or pattern to reinforce these sentiments. What was ultimately more interesting for me to observe was the struggle that took place on the pages of this operating manual, as a result of trying to mine for social or political engagement with the ZQ-II—and doing so by only talking about myself, hovering above it all, above the stakes. It was one of the last works made in this research project that left me with a feeling that whatever activism or engagement I was searching for was already there. It was already in my textiles and related to other textiles. The conceptual warp and weft of textile existed as a reliance between its apparent and embedded natures: what can be witnessed externally and what contingencies and conditions were necessary to call forth this embodied inventory.



SHELL
RESIST MASS EVICTIONS BADGE
pink oyster mushrooms BADGE



GUIGARLET PIEROT
FRUITS & WIPES
BLU-DANGER
TWO HUES
SHELL UNO-FLOWER
CAPAL



hsbc, 3 ft 2m, wool, acrylic and baling twine on backing cloth, 2019

*The Sixth Rep:
Notes on 'Against Ordinary
Language: The Language of
the Body'¹ by Kathy Acker*

‡

"In a gym, verbal language or language whose purpose is meaning occurs, if at all, only at the edge of its becoming lost."

The author, Kathy Acker, describes a crossover from a verbal to a bodily or gestural state to construct or express oneself. Something similar takes place when I am in my studio or when I am obliged to describe or contextualise what happens

¹ Acker, K. (1993) "Against ordinary language: The language of the body," in *The Last Sex*. London: Macmillan Education UK, pp. 20–28.

in the studio, to account for formations trapped between worlds. I believe this, at its core, is the part of me, the part of my research that requires me to put forward so many entry points. i.e. technical, theoretical and personal. At times, I can chalk this up to a recent diagnosis of dyspraxia, but this is just my way of relieving myself temporarily from the responsibility of looking. Looking into blind spots is hard. You can feel your biases fill in the available space like a fog. And trying to line it up all up still feels like it doesn't add up. Trying to describe a dream carries that same elusiveness, where no matter how hard you try, you fail to strike the same emotional chord that gave your capricious narrative meaning. One challenge of this research is to present to the reader a case study that reports on the effects of using a commercial textile tool expressively, errantly. The physical findings are recorded: tools, materials, location, colour, shape and sound. But they do not disclose the nature of their contingent use with total accuracy.

Acker then says that in the practice of bodybuilding, muscles must first be broken down before they can be built up. She says "it is necessary to work these areas in isolation up to failure." This is done as a means to locate particular groups of muscle, to break them down into units and categories. She uses the term "negative reps" to describe working the muscle's ability

to move and consume, surpassing its previous abilities. For my own process, it is not in the death of but in the mutilation of the material that sees the needle move that provides feedback. My ability to speak on the mark or the textile is requisite to garnering a doctoral award, so it becomes essential to the project's motivations. To communicate through drawing or cloth can be achieved in a non-verbal manner; there are many strong cases to support the notion of art as knowledge production already, but because this communication is taking place here, in a doctoral setting, it must become like anything else that has influence over my research. Throughout the thesis, I talk a lot about where I make things: the people who affect what I do and the choices and stresses that shape the tiniest of stitches, and so it should be highlighted that the PhD is as much a consequential ingredient as the tufting, the writing, and the studio. The need to write the contextual document to qualify the submission fuelled much of the writing at the outset, particularly during the various covid lockdowns in 2020–21. In my own way, I, like Acker, have been working towards failure, working to break down the constituent part, pushing through previous forms and on towards something stronger, stranger, enlarging and manipulating specific domains barely perceptible outside of the body.

Throughout this research, there is a steady interweaving of the what happened and the what's happening. There are lists and descriptions, objects and drawings—static artefacts—and then there are moments, usually in the writing, where you can track the end of a description and the now-ness of active formation. There's a sense of temporary abandon from the document as contextualisation rolls back into the practical submission itself. The PhD requirement to contextualise this practice-based research provided it with a chance to experience the material in constant motion—ready to be newly consumed at any moment—in this case, it is writing. This means that certain aspects of this project maintain a level of encounter that the textiles will not. Whether or not the tufted drawings are exhibited, their access is limited, and the experience of their surface and what can be communicated by viewing them is subject to being able to see them physically. Photographic evidence is not interchangeable with the synthesis of the visual and tactile modes of viewing occurring when viewing these objects in the flesh. But the portion of this researcher's voice that is written will indelibly persist and remain accessible to a broader audience.

‡

"By trying to control, to shape, my body through the calculated tools and methods of bodybuilding, and time and again, in following these methods, failing to do so, I am able to meet that which cannot be finally controlled and known: the body."

At times during this research, I stop to reconsider if this is a thesis about textiles, or drawing, or their relationships to language, or even the tool at the heart of this enquiry. It occurs to me that these are just fixed points to trace a line of thinking along a path. These primary subjects can feel like. The tufting gun is still at the centre, but not always for its capacity to tuft. It is the antennae, the stylus that picks up everything up and delivers it. It is the chief link that brings together how an artistic practice is located and observed. Kathy describes the repetition in the gym as still always subject to and "controlled by change and by chance". She describes her routine and observes that she is unable to perform the usual number of reps. She looks back at her regime for any telling divergences. She goes back through the record and finds nothing:

"I barely managed to lift this weight at the sixth rep. I looked for a reason. Sleep? Diet? Both were usual. Emotional or work

stress? No more than usual. The weather? Not good enough. My unexpected failure at the sixth rep allowed me to see as if through a window, not to any outside, but inside my own body, to its workings. I was being permitted to glimpse the laws that control my body, those of change or chance, laws that are barely, if at all, knowable."

This physical discrepancy is seen as evidencing something unknowable, a small and nebulous trace of the body echoing in the external world. What is tallied at the end of the day by this thesis is both a physical and conceptual set of repetitions (or exercises), and to reach the sixth rep's failure is to interface with a wholly personal communion with one's own body.

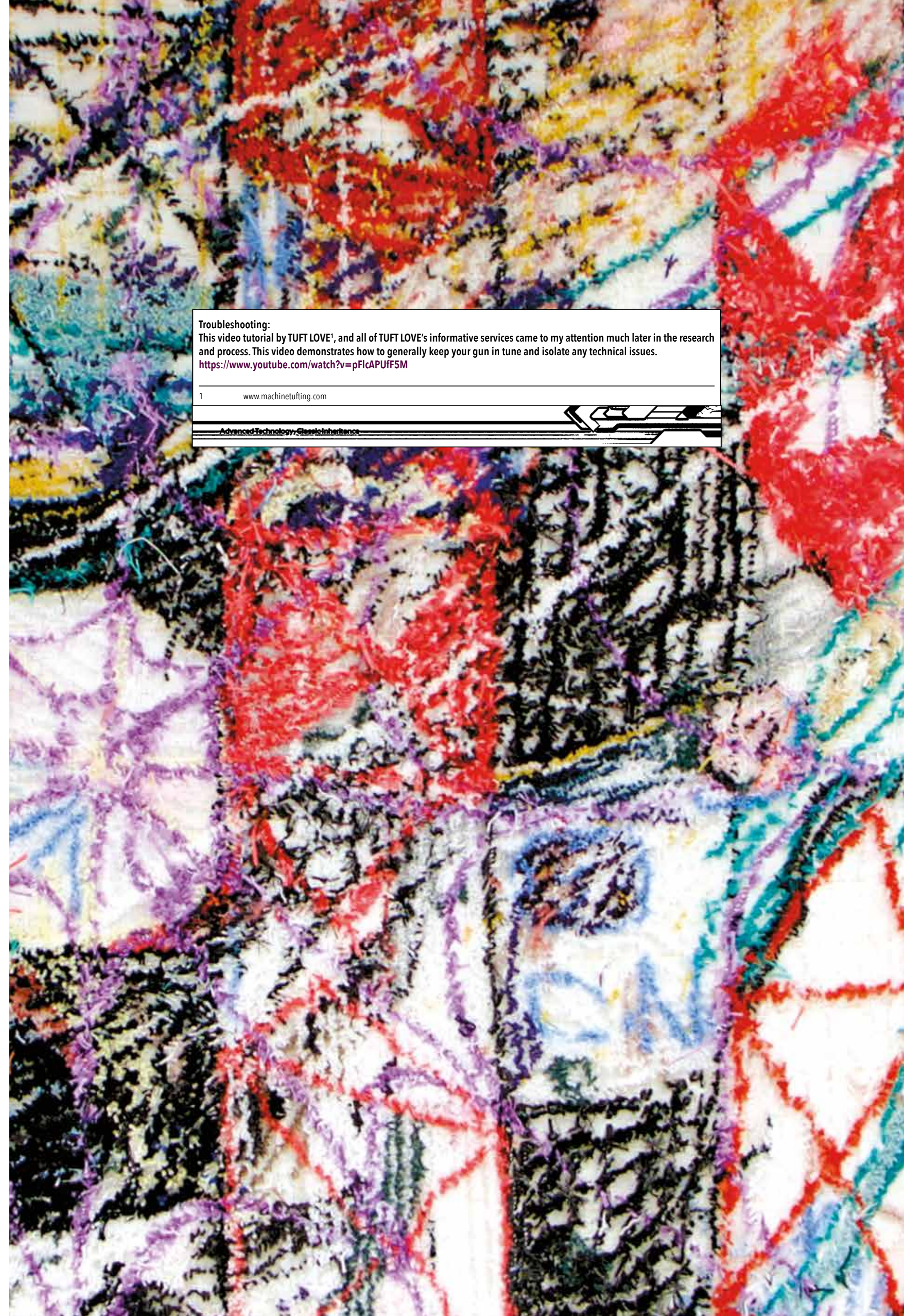
May 2021



TWO ACTORS
SUPPORTING
A DRUNKEN
THIRD



SPLOTCHES OF PAPER, TORN
HEART
ON A CALVA



Troubleshooting:
This video tutorial by TUFT LOVE¹, and all of TUFT LOVE's informative services came to my attention much later in the research and process. This video demonstrates how to generally keep your gun in tune and isolate any technical issues.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFlcAPUf5M>

1 www.machinetufting.com

Advanced Technology, Classic Inheritance



Maersksealand, 3 x 2m, wool, acrylic and baling twine on backing cloth, 2019

Trellis

Trellises get used in a few different works. When I think of the trellis I think of fixed points. The tufted image of a rug in *Julio Flores* (2017) was a fixed point, a format within a format. After that, I moved on to *Doomsday Rug* (2018), where the fixed points were in the form of a repeated pattern. I drew a grid on the backing cloth and then improvised a repeat. I was either working off of or working from these anchor points.

In the case of *Hamburg Süd Trellis* (2019), I made a trellis motif alongside the letters of the shipping company Hamburg Süd's full-length name. I saw these characters as extensions to the trellis. The flowers and vegetal growth around this framework were then improvised, a variation of print motif and abstraction that gets taken to a much larger and more obvious point of tension in *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net* (2021)⁶³.

The trellis motif is there to commune with the conventions of decorative carpet imagery and comfortably leave the flowers' depiction meaningfully unresolved. It's also equitable in some way with the format of the user manual in this thesis. Both are meant to locate the viewer or user within a familiar context and then find legible ways of transgressing these modest boundaries.

Talisman

A token, or portable instrument for magic; a stone, a sword, a bowl, a guide. It is an envelope for those things that cannot entirely be communicated. All in all, it bundles the *obtuse* or *third* meaning, and is a collector of things I'm not entirely sure of how to say. This talisman teaches and reveals obscurement; short, thick contractions of subject and performance, and the water-logged periphery of near-total admission.

*Is that how a talisman works, I wonder, setting traps made of third meanings?
The dangerous spirits out to get you are deflected by the design that is the talisman,
kept busy trying to figure out the meaning but cannot.
Their mistake. And one we repeat endlessly ourselves, too.*⁶⁴

It is, I think.
A take away of what's been taken away.
A secret thesis of what we didn't lay down;
a ladder made of all of its negative spaces.

But that's how it was written!
We did it this way, didn't we?
We took our stone, our bowl, our pages and fixed a stare to the air above it.
It is carried and spread and roamed over,

*Looking at a picture of the landscape is easier than looking at the landscape.
The past, upon scrutiny.*⁶⁵

Wasn't the gun our sword, our bowl?

It is, I think.
That's just the way we know to roam.
The token provides a ground, and a past,
and we beget some sort of future through it.

The talisman is newsprint made of opaque brown glass and staring out the window at dogwalkers. A published noodle on the flesh and the polypropylene; and on the wood and the lambswool; and on the metal, the humidity, and the striation of carpet.

*"I don't even have thoughts, I have methods that make language think,
take over and me by the hand. Into sense or offense, syntax stretched
across rules, relations of force, fluid the dip of the plumb line,
the pull of eyes..."*⁶⁶

⁶³ SEE >> pg.77

⁶⁴ from Michael Taussig's *I Swear I Saw That* pg 6.

⁶⁵ from Rosmarie Waldrop's essay *Thinking of Follows*.
<https://writing.upenn.edu/epc/authors/waldrop/thinking.html>

⁶⁶ Ibid.

The talisman: the gun, the stitch, the word and the page
lay against each other's chests, trying to syncopate their breath without success.

We have succumb to a methodology of exacerbation.

*Jabès, like the German Romantics, holds that the fragment is our only access to
the infinite. I tend to think it is our way of apprehending anything. Our inclusive
pictures are mosaics.*⁶⁷



RaspberryJail, 2019

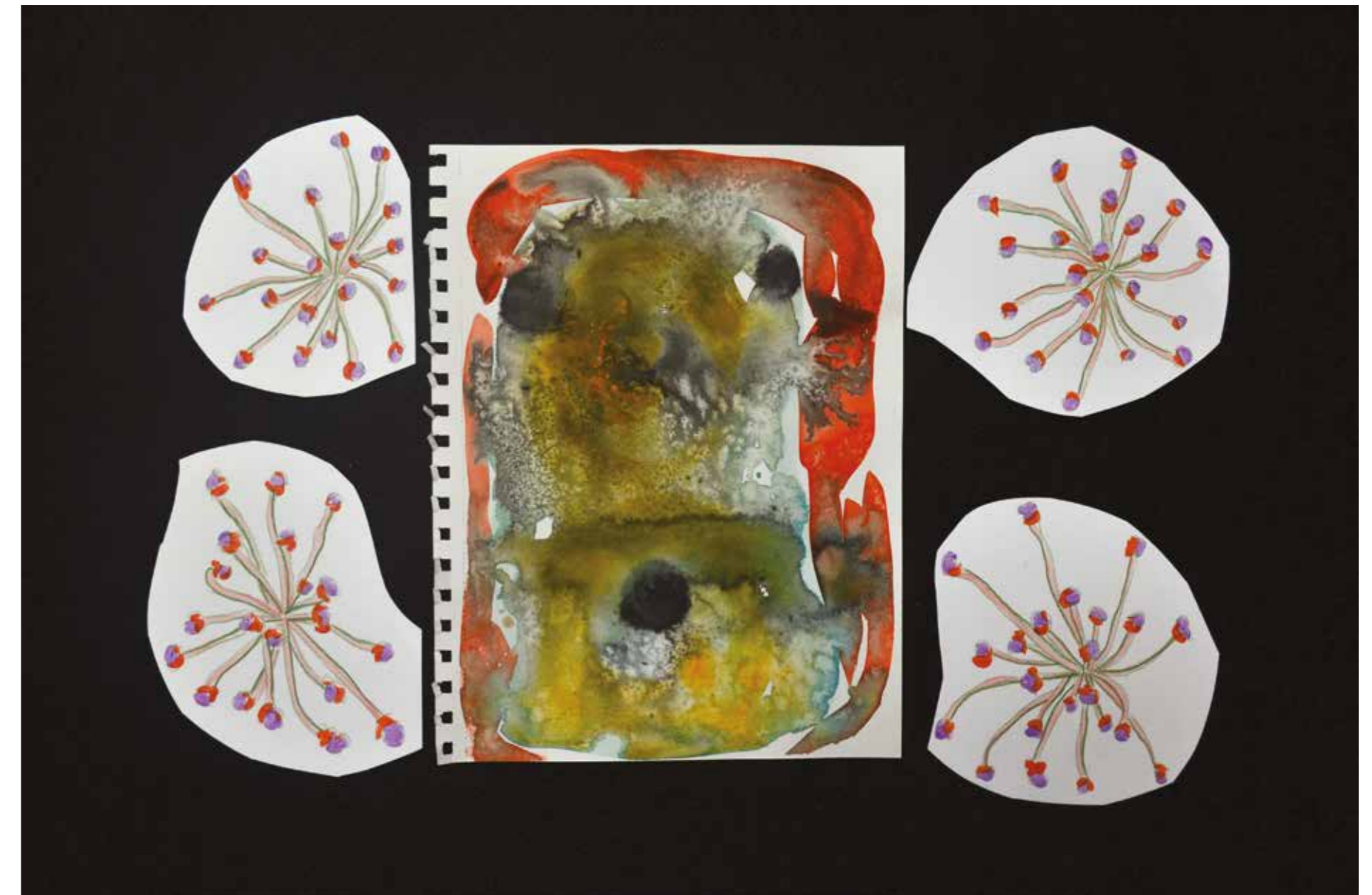
Starting from *Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note*, I thought about the substrate as depicted visually as a subject in its own right. I thought of William Morris and his trellises or vines constructing a sense of architecture that everything else mainly penetrates or occupies: flowers, birds, and fruit. The experiments I tried were more comic depictions of latticework or structures composed of grids like netting or prison cell doors. Any other examination of the substrate was implicit within virtually all works that used a separated stitch, rather than the dense rows of the conventional tufted surface (like was used in *Tetracontameron* and all other commercial carpet products). Initially, *Doomsday Rug* loosely performed this notion, using decorative repetition to act as the skeleton for the overall work. Most of these works I observed later were developed through this recurring idea of a skeleton. Having a framework meant gifting a sense of mobility onto individual characteristics of the rug-thinking of flowers or grapevines as architecture meant being able to extend it further towards thinking about different writing structures, outputs, etc.

The drawing started with an idea first considered in *Argyle*. In that work, I imagined a repeat pattern that you might come across on a shirt or a dress, or maybe even the carpet of an airport but blown up big--an extreme zoom--and in this dramatic enlargement, a type of microscopic world of detail begins to emerge. In this case, I went with my first impulse as I stood in front of the stretch polypropylene weave: giant raspberry shapes, or maybe more like an approximation of them. It's possible I had Morris' *Strawberry Thief* pattern on my mind, or more accurately, the title itself. My *RaspberryJail* to Morris' *Strawberry Thief* seems almost too lined up. The contrast present in pairing up the words "strawberry" + "thief" makes me think now as I write this (April 2022), that there was something still stirring from the "Some Pig" motifs and drawings from 2017. The tension that the words themselves strung up between a benign and almost complete abbreviation of meaning and my immediate association of the word "pig" used pejoratively to refer to police.

The title of the work, like many previous ones, is meant to be at first descriptive, stringing together some of its most prominent characteristics, but this is done as a way to draw the viewer's attention to some of this object's most apparent pictorial qualities. *RaspberryJail* takes the "raspberry" and the "jail" and crunches them together, without a space but distinguished by their capital letters, to operate as a unified conglomerate and a set. But the title is there, like this operating manual, to take all of these signposts and assemble them into something that highlights one of my primary aims of this thesis, to build a poetics or poetic awareness around the matter-of-factness of description. In composing a title like *RaspberryJail* or *Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note*, I wanted to keep the viewers attention firmly on what's in front of them rather than lead them too far away from the details of the work itself. My objective is to use the naming of the work as a way to compress and expand an arrangement of properties that intersect each other: the oily-woollen gunk build up the gaping holes-tennis elbow-crossing your eyes till it makes sense enough-a perfect stitch-the fatigue of climbing down a scaffold tower to fetch a single thread-the pigs-a stripped bolt-exploded drawings.

It is a process of telling and over-telling, as well as a process of developing a system of gaps that aid in defining the differences between the declarative and the interpretive poles of art practice and research, or more often than not, drawing a line as close as one can around a gap, to encircle what you can't see and somehow attempt to activate it, through its own absences. It's not missing content; a missing film still doesn't mean that you can understand what's happening; it's not an unknowing entirely; instead, it's more like witnessing the suspension from one manifest unit to another.

⁶⁷ Ibid.



PLURAL
CUT-
OUT

WATERCOLOR OR
SALT
TEST

PLURAL
CUT-
OUT

PLURAL
CUT-
OUT



SOME PIG
RED HARBOR
MIX-UP

SOME PIG
BEYOND HARBOR
MIX-UP

SOME PIG
GREY HARBOR
MIX-UP

SOME PIG
RED STATE
HARBOR
MIX-UP

STANDARDS



RaspberryJail, 2x3m, wool and acrylic and bailing twine on backing cloth, 2020

Broadsheet

"I know although we no longer do such a thing very often, it is this half-forgotten gesture of scratching which is the essence ("eidos"), of writing. It has nothing to do with constructing. It is, on the contrary, a taking away, a de-structuring. It is a gesture of making holes, of digging, or perforating. A penetrating gesture: to write is to in-scribe, to penetrate a surface, and a written text is an in-scription, although as a matter of fact it is in the vast majority of cases an on-scription. Therefore, not a formation, but an in-formation. I believe that we have to start from this fact, if we want to understand the gesture of writing: it is a penetrating gesture from which informs a surface."

from *The Gesture of Writing (1991)*
by Vilém Flusser

Somewhere between Flusser's statement about the act of writing and the kindred penetration of tufting is this operating manual. A broadsheet rather than a newspaper. It has no news, no updates,

no loop to keep anyone in, but it is, as it suggests, broad, a relatively open space in which to view. And this is the key to why it's not some other format. A softback book (27cm x 21cm) that was originally given the working title of *Company Overview* resembled more of a user manual in the style of the Haynes Manual series but was scrapped and replaced with a broadsheet presentation. The *Company Overview* pages could not offer up as many options for reading/viewing. By this, I mean that when you look at the broadsheet, in this case, there is a visual and organisational sense that you can read any one micro-chapter that you prefer. It is a format that encourages the eye to wander. With the previous version, I was mostly limited to only one or two chapters, the images and font size providing additional limitations. Ultimately, the experience of the page in *Company Overview* was out of sync with the content or the way I would like the user of the manual to encounter it.

The broadsheet format allows for many different subjects to exist on the page at the same time, along with images and other forms of interventions. Since there is no spine, the paper can be laid out flat, allowing images from one side of one page to drift under and over the text and through to the other page. The publication can be spread out flat before the user and can be perused and cherry-picked like a conventional newspaper. Though there are some chronologically linear elements to the publication, such as the order in which the finished artworks come, most of the chapters describing this practice's terminology can be read in any order. There are elements within some of these sections that are specific to particular events, like being in Hong Kong, or that describe distinct phases of making. The chapters describing the finished textile works like *Doomsday Rug* or *Hamburg Süd Trellis* are also displayed in a timeline, but ultimately this text is designed to be grazed on in small portions.

Graphically, the broadsheet's overall layout is based on a number of references: the columns in a newspaper, the black and white technical drawings of an automobile owner's manual, DIY zine publishing, artist books, and illustrated encyclopaedias.

68 <https://www.flusserstudies.net/sites/www.flusserstudies.net/files/media/attachments/the-gesture-of-writing.pdf>



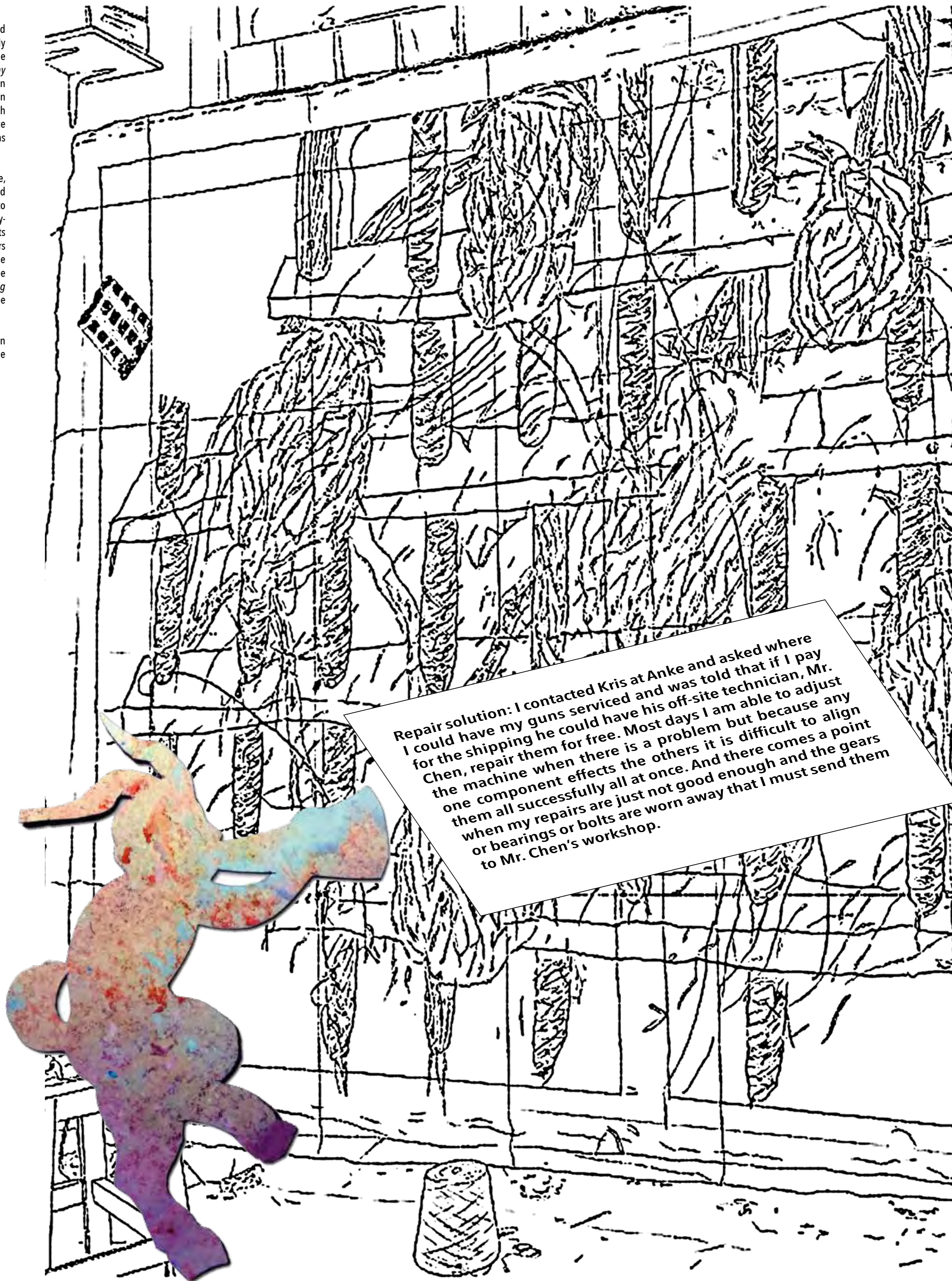
FEB CALENDAR mock-up

APRIL CALENDAR mock-up

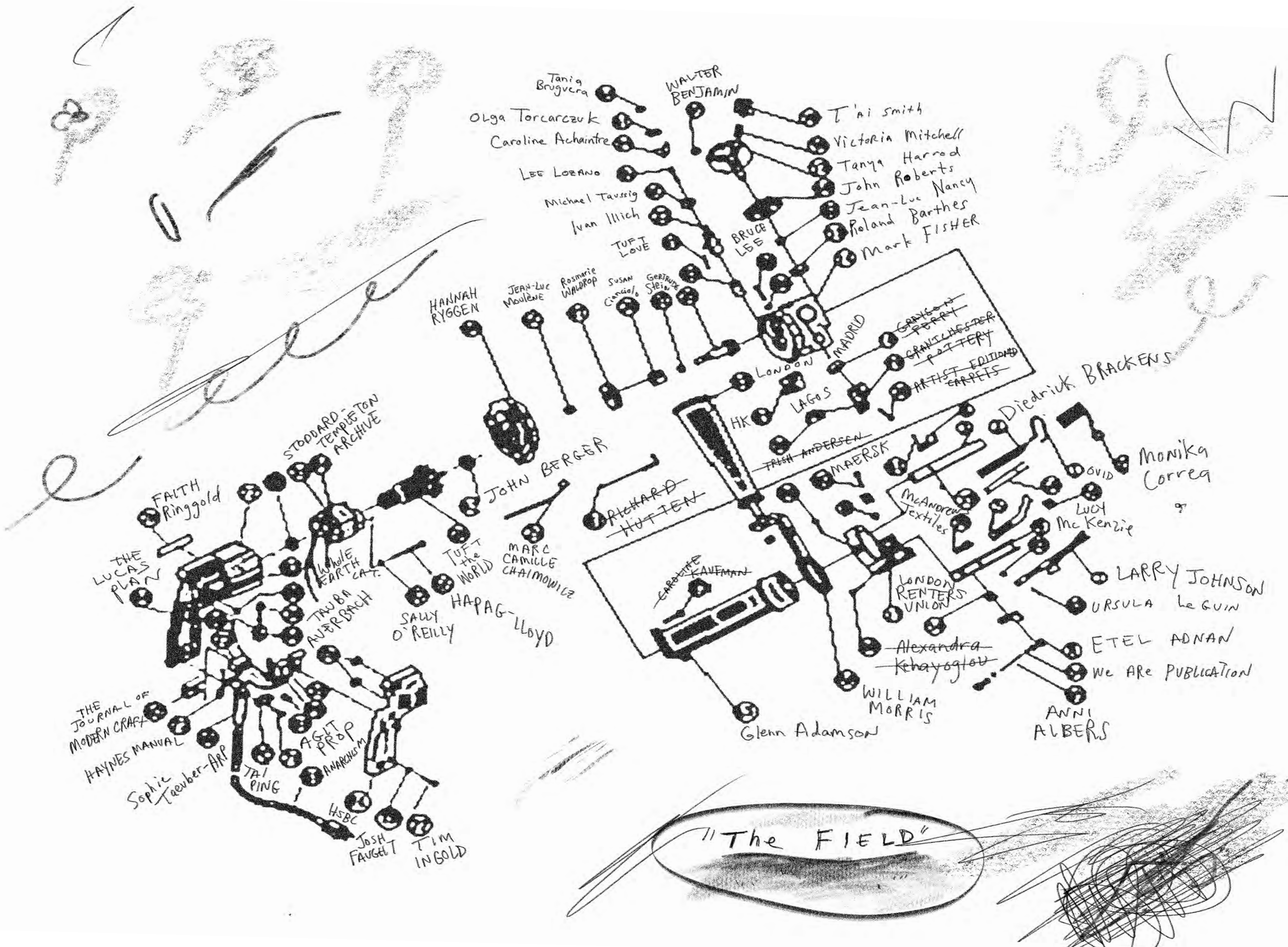
JULY CALENDAR mock-up

PAINTED WT WT BLOG FROM DRAFT

AK CORAL



Repair solution: I contacted Kris at Anke and asked where I could have my guns serviced and was told that if I pay for the shipping he could have his off-site technician, Mr. Chen, repair them for free. Most days I am able to adjust the machine when there is a problem but because any one component affects the others it is difficult to align them all successfully all at once. And there comes a point when my repairs are just not good enough and the gears or bearings or bolts are worn away that I must send them to Mr. Chen's workshop.



Tania Bruguera
WALTER BENJAMIN
Olga Torcarczuk
Caroline Achaintre
LEE LOZANO
Michael Tavarig
Ivan Illich
TUFT LOVE
BRUCE LEE
T'ai Smith
Victoria Mitchell
Tanya Harrod
John Roberts
Jean-Luc Nancy
Roland Barthes
Mark FISHER

HANNAH RYGGEN
JEAN-LUC MOULÈNE
Rosmarie WALDROP
Susan Cianciolo
Gertrude Stein
London
MADRID
LAGOS
HK
ANDERSEN
MAERSK
GRAYSON PERRY
GRANTHESTER POTTERY
ARTIST EDITIONS CARPETS

STODDARD-TEMPLETON ARCHIVE
FAITH Ringgold
THE LUCAS PLAN
WHOLE EARTH CAT.
TAWBA AVERBACH
TUFT the WORLD
JOHN BERGER
MARC CAMILLE CHAIMOWICZ
SALLY O'REILLY
HAPAG-LLOYD
RICHARD HUFTEIN
CAROLINE KAVEMAN

THE JOURNAL OF MODERN CRAFT
HAYNES MANUAL
Sophie Taeuber-ARP
TAP RING
AGIT PROP
ANARCHISM
HSBC
JOSH FAUGELT
TIM INGOLD

Diedrik BRACKENS
Monika Correa
LUCY Mc Kenzie
LARRY JOHNSON
URSULA Le GUIN
ETEL ADNAN
We ARE PUBLICATION
ANNI ALBERS
LONDON RENTERS UNION
Alexandra Kehayoglou
WILLIAM MORRIS
Glenn Adamson

"The FIELD"

"Sometimes I start to doubt that it will work. After all, what it has in it can only be what we can put into words - what we have words for. And in that sense, it wouldn't be able to hold everything at all.
 We should have some other collection of knowledge, then, to balance that one out - its inverse, its inner lining, everything we don't know, all the things that can't be captured in any index, can't be handled by any search engine. For the vastness of these contents cannot be traversed from word to word - you have to step in between the words, into the unfathomable abysses between ideas. With every step we'll slip and fall.
 It would appear the only option is to get in even deeper.
 Matter and anti-matter.
 Information and anti-information.

From the section Wikipedia from the novel *Flights* (2017) by Olga Tokarczuk, Fitzcarraldo Editions

I include this quote from Tokarczuk's novel because it illustrates very lucidly the phenomenon that I have come to chase in this project, the gaps in between what a textile can manifest within a viewer or user and how a document like this broadsheet can ventilate a degree of this experience through language. In between these two forms of articulation is some other, a category of dogged adjacency, an understanding that some intra-sensory way of seeing is perhaps occurring.

So rather than the textiles having to solely do the work as a body of knowledge best suited for practical, or practice-based, enquiry, or the broadsheet's contextual role, its concreteness, its report necessary to extract any transmittable know-how on to the next researcher in the field, what is ultimately happening here is that these two mechanisms of textile are being activated in relation to one another so we can observe what happens in the magnetic field between them. Roland Barthes refers to this as its *obscure* meaning or its *third*⁶⁹ meaning, an experience beyond the informative and the symbolic elements of the artwork.

BOREDOM>MISCHIEF>FANTASY>RADICALISM>FANTASY (FLOWER-NECKLACE-CARGO-NET), 2021

The project for Collective Gallery's City Dome space, a 19th century decommissioned observatory in Edinburgh, is the final episode in this series of research experiments around using a carpet gun as a drawing tool and subject. The show entitled, *BOREDOM>MISCHIEF>FANTASY>RADICALISM>FANTASY (B>M>F>R>F)*, consisted of the largest drawing in this thesis, *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net*, and a printed newspaper, *Ornaments & Crimes*, with both practical information about the tools, materials and people involved, as well as more conceptual or oblique pieces of writing around the process of carpet tufting (effectively, a miniature version or practice run for ZQ-II-'16-'22). Together, the writing provides a level of accessibility to the larger tapestry work. It is not something it necessarily needed, the textile itself is, on its own, a striking object, taking up enough space where, not only does it have a sensually tactile encounter, but it also has an architectural function. As with each of the tufted drawings, the "work", as can be encountered directly in an artwork, is clearly viewable. The thinning tufted piles and their trailing counterparts that dangle from the reverse side tell enough of a story that it doesn't require some didactic steward. But as we've seen, the available literature is its own story, a shadow encounter with the tapestry.

Once you enter and are confronted with this looming shaggy mass, the viewers are invited, by virtue of a large gap on either side of the cloth, to walk underneath it and walk all the way around it. The work spans across the ten-metre-wide octagonal brick building bisecting it softly, heavily. On one side, as you enter the space you confront the face of it, a roughly eleven-metre-long drawing (if fully stretched) strung up by thin black steel cable. The height of the drawing is five meters tall, in the space it sits planted about four and half metres, its surplus bulk collecting in a small folds on the clean concrete floor. Half a metre above its top edge is a lighting rig, its one of the few additions to the space. Above that is a five-metre-tall dome, the telescope that used to live in the space long since removed. Because of Covid-19 the front and back door of the space was required to stay open. Because of this, the large tapestry slowly heaved back and forth like some kind of giant breathing lung, a halo of coloured wool particles sprinkled onto the floor around it.

⁶⁹ Roland Barthes, *The Third Meaning: Research Notes on some Photographs from Eisenstein*, Cahiers du Cinema, July 1970.

*Tip: Buying from vendors in China is considerably less expensive than buying from a new boutique tufting website in US, UK, or Europe. Alibaba.com seems to host many vendors selling tufting equipment. Contact them instead.



The APPROACH
 (TOWARDS A CONCLUSION)

B>M>F>R>F⁷⁰ is a drawing and operating manual but also a membrane, a nest, a plot, a cloud, Arachne's web, an index, a wall, a bouquet, a parody, a skeleton, a map, a screen, a shipment, a standing stone, a carpet, a game, and a form of conclusion to this block of ZQ-II-driven research (2016-2022). Compared to the other works and doodles and other scratch presented here as part of this research practice, this work takes on the most significant number of roles. Its expanse, organic shape, detail and location give a degree of access that this project didn't know it needed. *Julio Flores* was the first large work in this research and one that came at the beginning and was the first work to explore the different ways one can not make a carpet with a carpet gun. It gave this work access to thinking about the figure/ground capabilities of this particular commercial technique, to thinking about the ways we distinguish a stitch from a mark and how these ideas materialise through language and proximity to other material cultures; it was the first to think of these materials: woven cloth, yarn, gun, and the body come together to fade in and out of image and object. *B>M>F>R>F* continues to test some of *Julio Flores*'s initial findings. What started as being called *The Checklist* is now part of what has become an ongoing writing project called *Ornaments & Crimes*. The final work in this thesis took on board the straightforward set of instructions laid out in the list for trying out different shapes and ways of hanging or presenting. In an initial draft of *The Checklist* I tell myself at the outset to "break with squares", meaning to try more organic shapes, sometimes to move away from shapes that might conjure up thoughts of rug-ness. The list itself becomes harder and harder to follow as time goes by. It literally and more naturally becomes a tool for examining the practices of drawing and textile making, how they intersect or repel one another and how some of these battles are better staged on the page instead of on the backing cloth.

Checklist (from 2017)

- work double-sided
- present work face down
- present work face up
- on the floor
- on the wall
- under glass
- break with squares
- behind glass
- laid atop a chair, over a wall
- over a person or group
- wide stitches and dense
- with text and without
- with figures and with abstraction
- with and without Donald Duck, flowers, heroes, logos, straight and wonky lines
- superimpositions
- ones with song lyrics, slogans, description
- big and small
- works that stitch together other works into a single work
- organic shapes, square ones
- professional finish
- no finish
- left on the frame with other discreet work
- work given over to the group, or a group
- updating the Doomsday clock from 2.5 minutes to 2 minutes unfortunately
- with and without latex
- awareness of parody, awareness of the body, and of the machine
- think of those who built the machine and those who made carpet from it
- make some black and white ones
- copy famous designs
- copy them quickly
- sign your name and date them in large script
- roll some up like crepes
- make them bigger than the space they are intended to be exhibited in

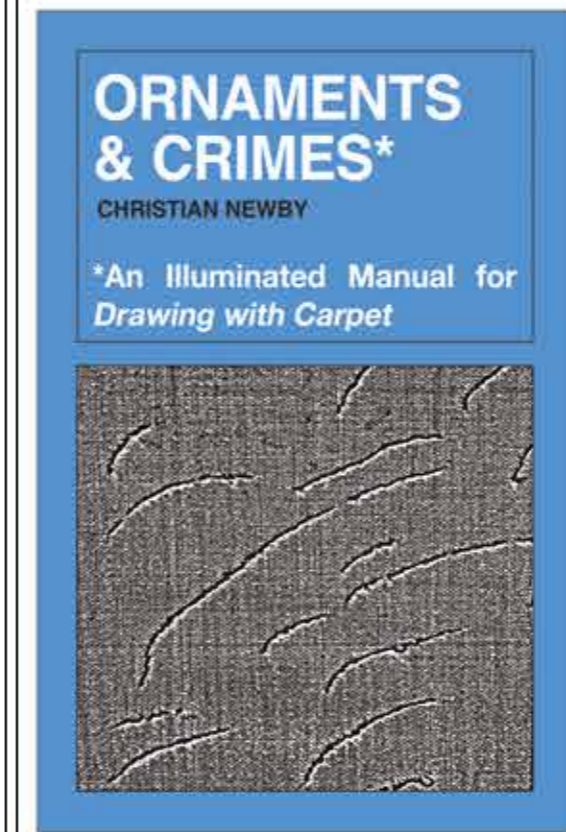
⁷⁰ We are still in the mini-chapter *BOREDOM>MISCHIEF>FANTASY>RADICALISM>FANTASY* but are also approaching the end. *B>M>F>R>F* is presented here as a transition or cross-fade into something new, something that carries with it a lightness, an internalisation of its subjects and the logic it has cultivated in connecting them. It proposes to you, the user of this manual, a unique form of sense-making from its host of contingent images, stories, conflicts, characters, tools and settings. Together *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net* and *Ornaments & Crimes* (as it was published for this exhibition) mark the end of the tufting gun as a subject.

This footnote and the grey-out text box that abruptly wraps itself around the latter half of this chapter dedicated to finished work is a way to manage a feeling of open-endedness without simply lopping the head off of an idea mid-sentence. This section is designed to suspend a sense of doing and finishing (as much as this broadsheet can do, in any case). It's the cabin light coming on, preparing its passengers for the landing. There are still some things left to do before that eventuality. Rather than provide a section called Conclusion, I thought it better to pinpoint a location where I found myself in a natural descent into what becomes a conclusion over the remaining mini-chapters.

So this operating manual's Conclusion commences with this portion of the *B>M>F>R>F*, and continues into the chapters Pseudo-Syntax, Textile, Part-timer, and the Outgoing Checklist.



SOME SECTIONS FROM FLOWER-NECKLACE-CARGO-NET.



ORNAMENTS & CRIMES*
 An Illuminated Manual for Drawing with Carpet*

by Christian Newby

Collective City Observatory
 38 Calton Hill
 Edinburgh
 EH7 5AA

with help by:

Sibhan Carroll
 Kate Gray
 Luke Collins
 Aya Tsukui
 Elaine Jamieson of Shetland
 Christian/JC Rennie
 Romain Pascal & Ariane Schick
 Francis N16
 Ana Martinez Fernandez
 Volker Eichelmann
 Mark Harris
 Katy MacLeod
 Kris Yang at Anke Industrial Ltd. CARC

Howard Mills at Millstek
 Rachel Cattle
 Jenna Collins
 John Hughes
 Jonathan Allen
 Andrea Stokes
 Patricia Fleming
 Carrie Skinner
 Thalia Spyridou
 Arts Council England
 Creative Scotland
 Dayang
 Tai Ping
 Dave Wood
 On Yee Lo
 Andrew Bourne

DOOMS DAY-GUN!
 by Christian Newby

Flowers, or The Powers behind Powers

Duration

ATTACHED DRAWING

ORNAMENTS & CRIMES

Flowers, or The Powers behind Powers

DOOMS DAY-GUN!

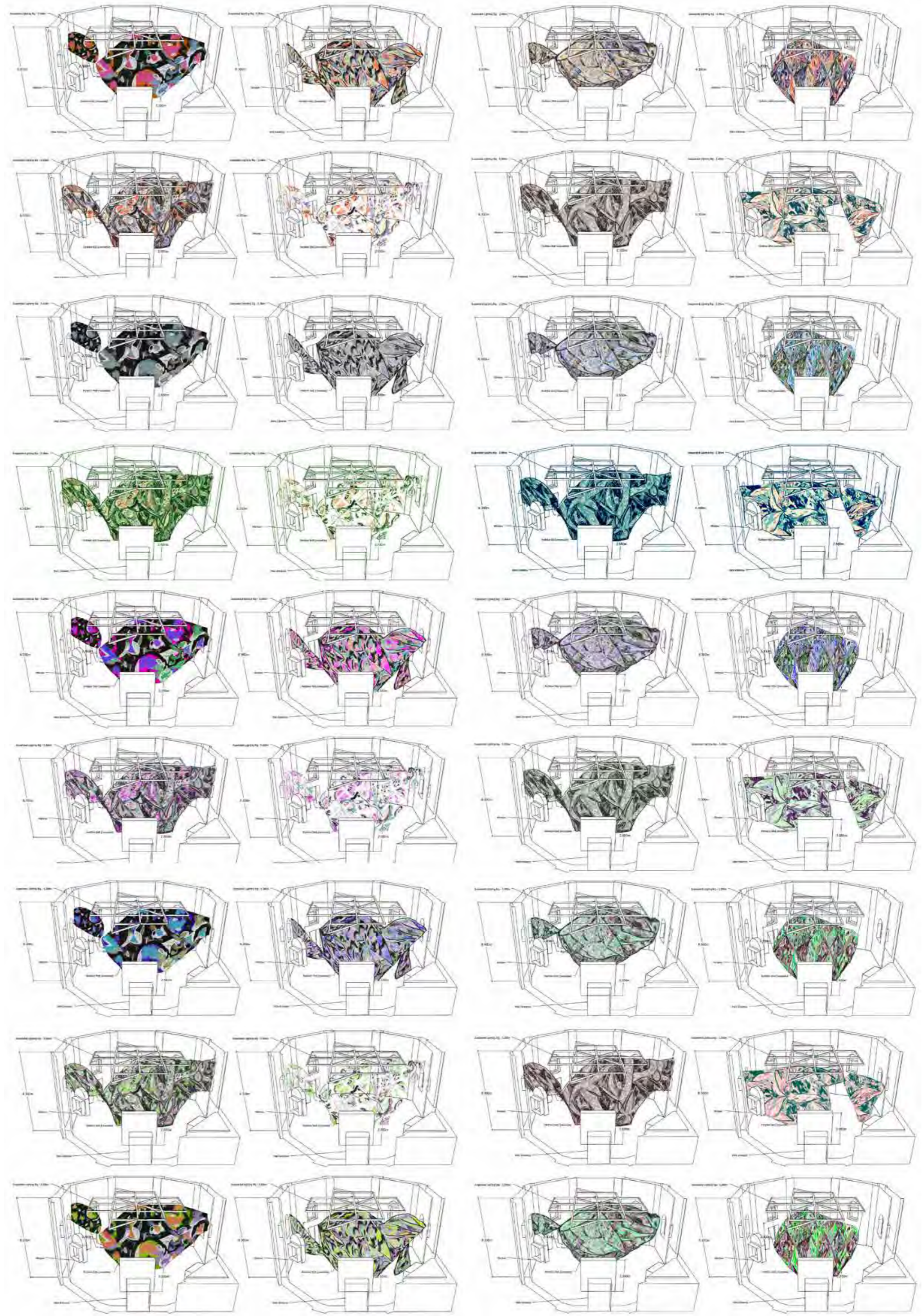
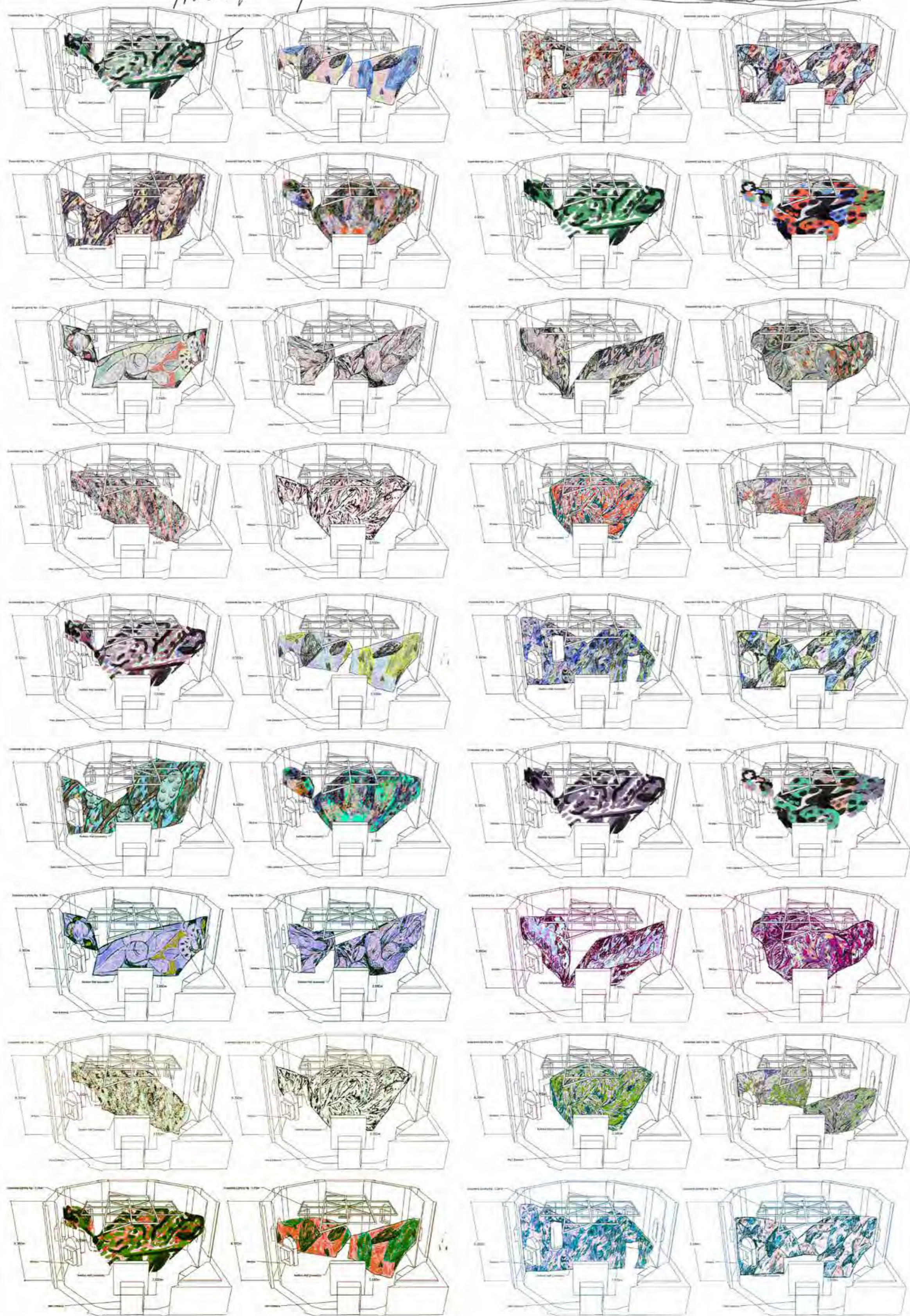
ORNAMENTS & CRIMES

DOOMS DAY-GUN!

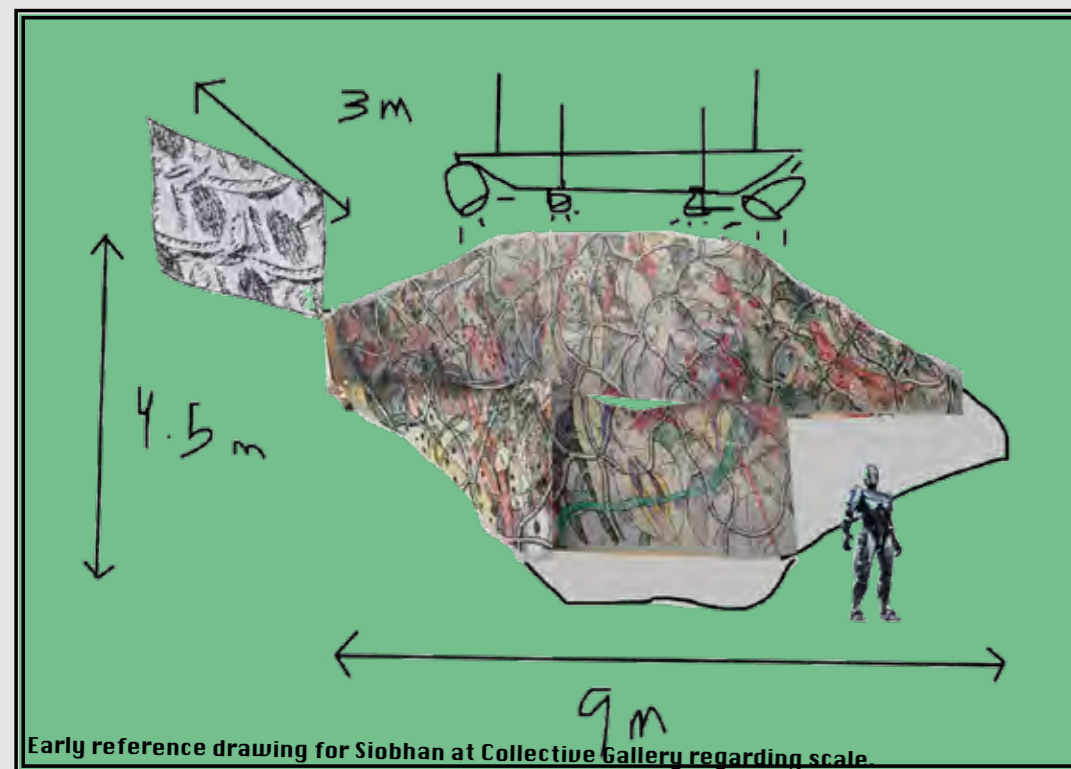
ATTACHED DRAWING

ORNAMENTS & CRIMES*
 CHRISTIAN NEWBY
 An Illuminated Manual for Drawing with Carpet

*MOCK-UPS OF Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net



- stretch them
- cut them off the frame without a straight edge
- make some stand up with the help of an armature
- hang others
- suspend
- render images
- don't
- hang 'em like drapes
- graft separate works into a single body
- hand the gun over to someone else
- show them how to use it, what it's for and what it's not for
- create sequences, narratives strung across multiple drawings
- turn it upside down and add stripes
- consider the re-tooling and misuse of this instrument as a means of innovation
- try other backing cloths, like jute
- try other types of yarn, like nylon
- dye my own wool before tufting, dye later
- frame work, stretch work, fold work, pin work, hem its edges
- make some abstract, pull away from images, highlight the stitch as a trace of the body, of the fabricator's voice
- oscillate between subject and object
- document this tool's relationship to the varying magnitudes of textile media
- make them do the thing and mimic the thing
- begin drawing with the machine, without a reference design, and deliberately start an image that will be tufted over
- think about all the different ways we talk about textiles or carpets, muddle them up, forget that all of these ideas intersect material culture in significantly different ways.
- consider that this particular context isn't just about the hand, or the body, or the worker or the machine.
- where it lies between labour and leisure
- when we talk about leisure in textiles when do we start talking about the more sinister examples? When do we talk about gender? Do we?
- if we talk about the textile in terms of its potentially endless material state, its contingent or more abstract definitions, do we or how do we link this to what we're doing here?
- do we connect this idea of no beginning and no end into how we talk about what we're doing? Everybody else seems to be doing this.
- how many versions here can we spitball for us to do that are totally impossible? (while still maintaining the integrity of our notion of the 'workshop')
- meaning that we can't add anything that wouldn't normally be used in production of conventional carpets or to document this process. (this sub-list can involve just ideas that we also know we would never do)
- make giant, shitty, 'cover versions' of the new 2018 Spring rug collection at Habitat
- representations of ancient Italian graffiti
- riff on the hanging textile currently on display in the main meeting hall of the U.N.
- red and white gingham pattern made up of swastikas
- a selection of Jack Kirby heroes drowning in a swamp of generic Persian rug motifs
- tuft out all the current titles within the Anarchist Library
- while still stretched on the frame tuft a brick pattern with a small break in the wall
- but this activity is supposed to function as a way to keep track of what ways we can show this industrial tool acting out, or performing the role of the pencil or chalk or paintbrush and what this simple deviation can conjure up from the current discourse on textiles.
- to look at distinguishing factors between this and weaving, or embroidery or if even comparing it in these terms is the right way to consider it in the first place.



- weaving and embroidering come across as two strong bodies of knowledge when you think of them as a tradition of manipulation of material, or a simple way of doing something, as opposed to the object itself you get when its done. Tufting isn't much different than the more general term of stitching but in this case you can walk around with it.
- build a room made up of only stretched primary tufting backing fabric and jump around and dance and raise the gun above our head and occasionally and rhythmically scrawl something on the wall as you chant and sing. Stitch a selection of bumper sticker phrases and curse words and incantations and Morrissey lyrics and random numbers.
- Whenever a friend comes over to visit spend a half hour before they arrive making them a custom tufted carpet drawing with their name on it.
- tuft that pasta recipe you always heard you'd see on the back of Lucio Fontana slash paintings but never found (even though you had the rare opportunity to inspect many of them up close)
- Floriographic messages tufted to punctuate any current moods or complicated confluence of moods.
- a riff on Guernica
- title all works from now on after the Habitat 2018 Rug Collection: Afrique, Octo, Kirsten and Splatter

Admittedly, I can report that I did not complete most of the instructions on the checklist, particularly those further down that started to play with the format of the list itself. Making a checklist provided a way to think about the tufting gun that wasn't related to images or consigned, at all really, to the machine or the physical relationship to it, i.e. its weight or sound or performance. Each entry reflected wherever I was, whatever subjects were hovering around my desk that day, or what tabs I had open on my computer. It was a list that pivoted in different directions based on what was already on the list until finally, the list lifted itself off of the substrate of the polypropylene backing cloth and was doing something entirely new.

Eventually, The Checklist evolves into a shorter single poem:

Checklist 2

I stole a ball of glue from Charlotte's Web
A plea, an insult, an arrangement of letters
An anecdote about making and saying
"Some Swine" is fine, but "Some Pig" is better

Considered and considering

To work on both sides, and place face up-face down
To lay on the floor, to act like furniture
Setting a scruffy scene, a carpet by any other name
Is substrate, is brought by the currents to collect in pools
To hang on the wall behind glass, and vitrined
To lay atop a chair or over someone's shoulder or over them
Stitches, stay wide!
Stitches as typefaces, as writing
To superimpose Donald Duck and flowers
And parody Sealand with shells
Stiff and wonky lines, describe rigid rose trellis and strawberry thief, anxiously

More than one together with and without finish
No finish
No smooth

Much of the writing in this broadsheet moves away from the purely contextual and into registers or voices that perform many different duties. Some are meant to be read aloud or sung, such as that of the Operator in *Ornaments & Crimes*. Other passages are designed to counter my impulse to over-describe a subject and are written as a list or in verse to leave a degree of space from one thought to the next. The title-descriptions of the ephemeral drawings and objects displayed on black felt throughout the manual employ an adjacent operation to many of the titles of the tufted drawings, drifting between shopping list and concrete poem.

One of the ultimate challenges in this project has been how to lay out the principal components clearly: the tools and techniques, etc. so the viewer has access to some basic building blocks, so they know where to begin, what home base looks like, and how these operations will build and develop, ultimately fall apart and reassemble, mutate, into something else and back again in an elliptical motion or feedback loop that always tries to move further away from its point of origin, only to periodically circle back around to the conventions of the carpet-form to rest before venturing out again. The role the handbook has in the construction of this thesis represents one of these points of origin: it instructs you how to use a carpet gun, it tells you what materials are needed, it helps in avoiding practices and materials that will cause issues mechanically, it most certainly acts as a manual for tufting carpet, but then it offers the user a channel that records the voice of authority slowly moving off-track and into territory that has them asking questions rather than answering them.

Pseudo-syntax

This is taken from another Roland Barthes text. It's from one of his own lists of terms, found at the end of *The Language of Fashion*, in the chapter called *Showing How Rhetoric Works*. The chapter is made up of a glossary of phrases briefly breaking down how he sees language operating within the world of fashion at that time (1969).

When the paragraph *Pseudo-syntax* first caught my eye, I totally misunderstood it (and may still do), I thought I was reading about the manifest meaning found with a grammar of clothing and fashion design and production, like some tacit index of how clothes are conceived of and constructed. I thought it was another useful example for me to include here to describe textile and language and how that works in relation to my own textiles and this publication. But after taking a second look at the text, it revealed that it was more about how language could be affected by the fashion industry's lording authority and ideology of taste. He describes an operation whereby "...making Fashion into an inevitable force, the magazine imparts to it all the ambiguity of an object without cause, but not one without will."⁷¹

Cause vs will. In the beginning, this research pursued a line of questioning that asked what would happen if you used the ZQ-II as a drawing tool? What might open up or be revealed about the nature of textiles? How drawing could instigate an individualistic regime of experimentation and reflection. At the outset, there was a campaign around cause, the Checklist providing some modicum of method and methodology to an otherwise loose and inbred tangle of drawing impulses and personal reference points. To say that I was going to now make this textile this way to observe it comparatively with the other works seemed rational and organised. But over time, I began to see the project was always an act of cultivation. It was always quietly communicating underground a little at a time, a mitochondrial network that spoke to multiple characteristics and histories near and far. I had been using these technical assignments provided by the Checklist as real estate, plot points for easy differentiation, and just having a plan of some kind. As more research references accumulated, so did the desire to think of them as material. The broadsheet and the handbook format were adopted with the idea that, at times, I could be, or be seen to be, presenting information in a concisely didactic manner. Clarity would maintain no matter the messiness of my studio impulses. But its dual function was also to include an underlying framework of representation for more subjective or intuitive decision-making—the supportive grid of the trellis so the vines may grow and curl around them. Phenomenologically, drawing is easy to experience; the stimuli needed to start making marks on a page are stored throughout your mind and body. A muscle spasm with a pencil in hand could get you started. But inoculating the practice's will into a woven substrate with the hopes of communicating its incarnate messages requires more legibility from its operator. The multitude of stimuli that goes into an artistic gesture is challenging to track but placed inside an established format, and they become differentials of one another—translated through the language of the tufted carpet pile, in this case.

⁷¹ Roland Barthes, *Showing How Rhetoric Works*, from *The Language of Fashion*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, p141.





No matter how simple the outcome of an industrially made rug or carpet may seem, our evaluation of them will inevitably be made up of complicated relationships. The carpet-form and the drawn carpet as it exists in this thesis are not in opposition but instead dimensions of each other, in aid of one another. Individualising a textile practice rather than linking to similar practitioners is so the reader or user of this manual can observe a sense of will—the DNA of this operator's creative will. These tendencies persist and articulate themselves throughout each experiment or iteration of wool or printed page regardless of the ornamentation that influences from the field may provide.

So the overall arc of this doctoral project has come to regard production through the lens of my making and un-making of carpet—a system of measuring artistic will composed of drawing, publishing, improvising and reacting to materials as they are externalised along the way,

ZQ-II: '16-'22, related tufted works and research ephemera illustrate a path built on caprice and itinerancy of both set and setting over a five to six-year period, to consider one of the more banal and unknown formats of textile production—the tufted carpet's economy of possibilities having previously been sustained from a deeply institutionalised conception of consumer goods and surfaces, denying any obvious points of entry in which to determine where or how the body is responsible for it, if at all.⁷²

⁷² This seems to be quickly changing with the recent popularity and accessibility of rug tufting in the last 3 years, but this is still only a relatively small population of practitioners globally.

What this research can offer goes beyond just breaking away a tool from its intended purpose. It emphasises an opportunity to examine art practice beyond the artwork itself through a system of equivalences, interrelated tools and techniques capable of differentiating choices from goals and choices from a determined product or outcome. The ZQ-II tufting gun is a tool designed with a goal. It is designed to make carpets quickly. Not a requirement by any stretch, but the gun is also designed to be used by almost anyone. It is not a stationary machine spitting out piles as a printer would. This aspect can be utilised in different ways within commercial manufacturing. For Tai Ping, this hand-held fabrication component is something they can use to emphasise craft and quality to clients commissioning surfaces for their private jets, yachts, and hotel lobbies while still providing a machine-level finish. Other enterprises might see the gun's portability as something supportive of more precarious operations for cheap labour. There is something to be said for this kind of general approachability that the gun radiates—I was certainly drawn to its initial ease of use.

Will is the drive to control whim. So will, in this context, is not driven by desire or need; it is not about fortitude, but instead, it is plasticity—*Be water!*—supple, tensile, contract and relax as needed, move around obstacles however possible. It is not automatic or random; this will is built on assumptions and discoveries about deciphering units of process within a practice and then codifying a sequence of habitual impulses and perfunctory choices into a mutable and motile index of proofs.

Textile

By reading this textile and regarding it, you have constructed it, or at least contributed, as part of its usership, to the account of ZQ-II, our protagonist textile document. By this stage, you most certainly have also ripped a page or two along the way, indelibly leaving a note to the next user that this folded broadsheet is not an artefact of research but a reminder of its materiality. It is a differentiation between the utility of the tool and the capabilities it can manifest. The term "operating manual" isn't just an instructional cue on how to engage with this broadsheet; it's also a bit of an incantation—calling on you to use it directly, physically, to touch it and regard it with a sense of textility, or textile-ness in mind. This is how we make the leap from one type of substrate to another. But rather than rely on my ability to encapsulate this process from a safe distance, I have walked you through it.

The ZQ-II became the ZQ-II between 2016 and 2022. This was when it transitioned from the upright to the italicised, from a gun to its current form, imagining the disembodied textile and building it up through personal narrative, graphic design, writing exercises and photographic documentation of research artefacts. The gun stopped being used after 2020. Its current operating value, as material and as movement, is not about its ability to correct and innovate in a technological or manufacturing sense. It's more about its precarious and mortal capacity to articulate with others by way of being a glorified sewing machine and seeing its hand-held mutability as an endowment of some form of limitlessness. The apotheosis of this roaming

element would come when it began leaping off the substrate of backing cloth to an InDesign workspace.

The ZQ-II hand-held carpet tufting gun is one of many tools for textile production built on an infrastitial⁷³ curve, or an opacity that limits our ability to trace an object's inner workings. Paths of conventional design "innovation" can often lead to an entombment of development—an opacity of formation so dense and obscure you're no longer allowed legally to observe it. Think of any Apple product—smooth and inaccessible globules that won't let you remove their batteries. What I uncovered here with ZQ-II is the open-ended formation of textile as a matrix of localised operations stewarded by, but not limited to, drawing and publishing, as seen through an first-person case study.

Part-timer

A key aspect of how this particular format came together was that I was doing it part-time. I understand that many people who sign up for a PhD don't have the same availability I've had over the last six years to do it this way. At first, I was resentful for those full-timers who

⁷³ Mike Anusas and Tim Ingold, *Designing Environmental Relations: From Opacity to Textility*, 2013



poliaca punch
+
BLOB
CUTOUT
FOR
ORN CRIME

16
CAPITANO
READING
THE
NEWSPAPER
w/
PALM
LEAF



HORSES
AND
LEAVES

STRIPES
AND
DOTS

SCENE
FROM
"DECAMERON"

HAMEQUIN
RESTING

managed to secure funding to pay themselves to do the PhD and were full speed ahead in their research. I had my fees waived, which was very special to me, having never done a degree where a profound level of debt wasn't tied to it. Part-time at first felt like a mess of ambitions and laziness. The initial aims, objectives, questions and methodologies reflected investment in the subjects I was drawn to that was somewhat superficial. But I kept searching for the thing that would weigh all the different interests in art, design, craft and social engagement that always sat in the back rows of my mind while making things. And at the outset, I was rigorous. That I was. I was rigorously trying to untie a knot I had entangled myself in throughout my academic and professional art career.

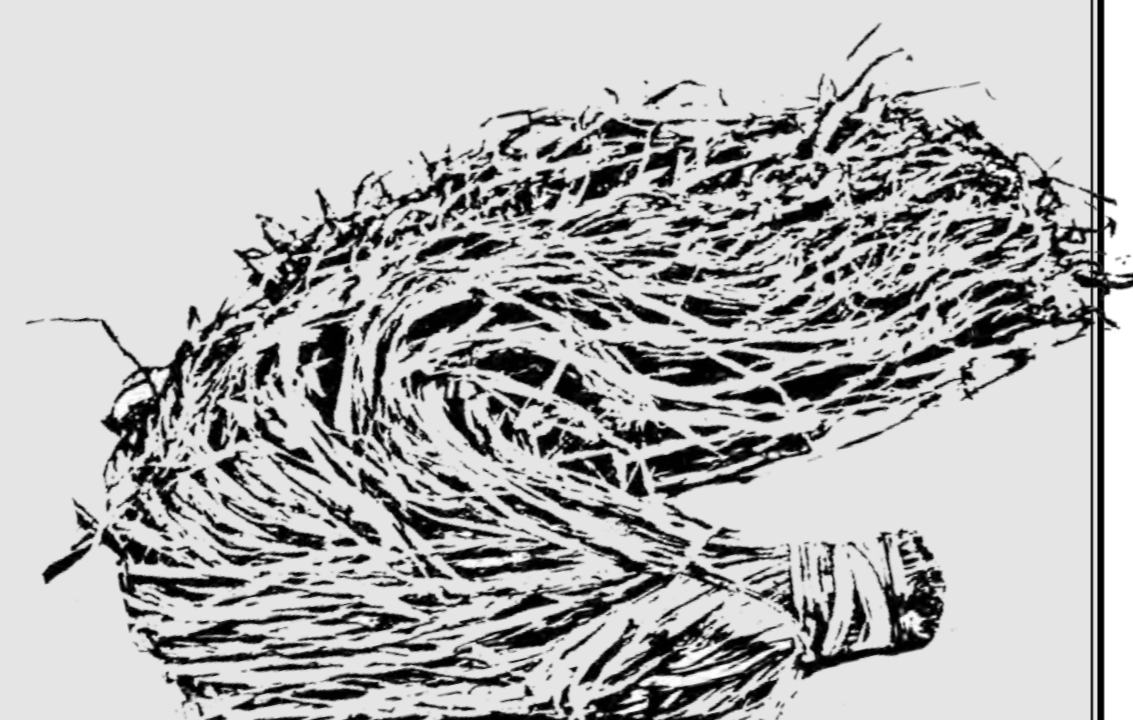
In the beginning, I spent a lot of time honing my project's questions and aims through a constant process of Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funding applications. Each time I applied, shifting what I was doing or how I would frame it to those responsible for delivering the support. The earliest form of this thesis came from using craft techniques such as ceramics and textiles, as well as print design within a fine art context. It was hollow and uncertain. This pitch turned slowly into just talking about textiles, focusing on a historical figure whose work I would place my findings next to. The artist I chose for this was the Swedish-Norwegian anti-fascist weaver Hannah Ryggen (1894-1970). This application, too, was unsuccessful. There were shades between these two attempts, variations on craft, mastery, and some degree of socio-political engagement. None would succeed in putting me into the funded full-timer status. Later on, these mimetic attempts at sounding like a doctoral candidate provided a point of comparison, showing me what knowing and not knowing my subject looked like. It was an inaugural stage of formation. After this, I was to keep working, in a sense, the way I've always worked—slowly chipping away at something; working a day job of some kind (usually art handling for galleries, other artists or collectors). I balanced a life of sustained but minimal employment to enjoy the wealth of London's unofficial second currency, free time.

ZQ-II: '16-'22 came about through having limited urgency to come up with a question or claim and then deliver it fully formed. For those hoping to finish as full-timers, urgency, or the running out of time, seemed to have been a central motivator. There were deadlines each year to satisfy, and there was always something to report, but as a part-timer, I increasingly felt that this room to amble or roam was a particular research tool in building a PhD. Part-time as a kind of tool or method supported my difficulties in organising my own thoughts. Once I had isolated one point of my artistic practice that could, in a sense, like Borges's *Aleph*, see all other points, I could sense that part-time wasn't just about accommodating the need to make money while you studied. It was not entirely about patience but the sheer removal of haste from the doctoral pursuit. This understanding came after the upgrade when I discovered that I was dyspraxic.

And part-time, despite how it sounds, was never about checking in half the time to think about the research. It was full-time consideration of the materials with twice as much time to digest what I was doing. It was like dragging a net behind you at all times, collecting building materials with ambient dedication. I say ambient dedication because it was clear at some stage that accumulation was vital to the research and a difficult task to pursue pro-actively. This realisation came quickly to me in my earliest attempts to plan out tufting experiments in my Checklist. This was when I understood the most fundamental of my findings: I wanted a degree of now-ness present at any point. As the reader/user works their way through the past (2016-2022), they will still, at least, understand my attempts at engaging them as part of the overall body of work. The touching, reading and viewing can be seen as something happening with and to the work and not just a requisite to reading specifically. It involves more imagination than it does a precise argument from me. I'm providing the user with a set of proposed ambitions and invitations from me to you to sense a transformation or exchange taking place.

At the beginning stages of research with the gun, I imagined rugs that weren't rugs but instead mutant carpetoid messengers of human endeavour, sending out signals of creativity, labour, alienation, fatigue, joy, empire, friendship, taste, and skill. And I believe these references are still visible in these objects. I felt that within the research materials that fed or carried these signals to the textile in the first place, there was a dynamism and subtlety between the body, the tool and the material—the DNA of technique. The broadsheet-travelogue-user manual was effective in exploring this convoluted⁷⁴ closed circuit. And because of this, the broadsheet is a finding in its own right. It is what was needed.

⁷⁴ *Convoluted*: folded in tortuous windings—from Webster's Unabridged Dictionary 1913. I chose to footnote this word mainly because I appreciated the definition provided by Webster's. In particular, the suggestion that the relationship between the body (with the inclusion of the mind), the tool and the material are in this sort agonising negotiation with one another, folded and twisted into each other, partially concealed but no less a part of the whole.



***AK-1**
(in pink)

€139
plus shipping



An alternative to ZQ-II, the AK-1 is another cut pile tufting gun on the market. I recently purchased one but have not tested. In addition to a new gun I am also planning to experiment with other natural fibers such as raffia for tufting.

>>>Outgoing Checklist:

Contribution to Knowledge

Explores new territory within textile discourse by coupling industrial carpet-making and DIY publishing.

Provides an integrated doctoral format, delivering a self-reflexive logic of creative and critical discovery.

A PhD submission that in its entirety is an artwork, embodying, as much as it records, the act of form-giving, a concomitant form of practice-based knowledge production.

Building of networks and correspondences which would allow others in the field to pursue similar pathways.

Using a phenomenological approach to research that foregrounds the shape of form over the form itself.

Tufted drawings expand on how the gun can be utilised.

Through experimental self-publishing, this thesis substantiates a system of trans-formation—from one form to another—as well as mutation—slowly finding new ways to grow and change—through a personal taxonomy of tools, techniques and encounters with textile-making, expanding beyond material form.

What have I done differently than others in my field?

Employed small-run DIY zine and artist book publishing as a form of textile practice.

Taken the technique of carpet fabrication beyond that of the confines of the rug or carpet object, particularly those who use tufting guns to produce art and craft works.

Presented mark-making as a differential for looking at textile production.

Used the broadsheet to record a individual taxonomy of artist production.

To use publishing and textile making as sympathetic approaches to understanding form and formation.

Identifies blind spots regarding the notions of design innovation.

What were the limitations/shortcomings?

Studio access was limited during Covid-19 lockdowns.

My limited abilities with InDesign.

Finding out halfway through this research that I had a learning difficulty.

Little to no funding.

Only realising at the end of my research how large a role that publishing played. I would have liked to have made more of these books and zines at some of the even earlier stages.

How will this research effect the future of my field?

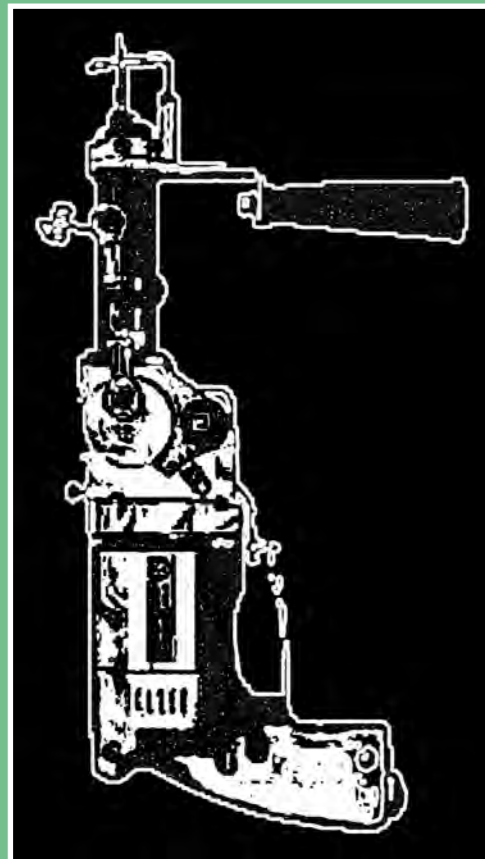
Within the subject of textile, there tends to be practice and theory discreetly separated from one another. Theory often informs or attempts to inform the role of practice. I can't make these two functions integrate entirely, but I can present how these forms relate. What cannot be seen in the tufted drawings can be seen in the broadsheet. And what cannot be seen there is felt or sensed between the two. A kind of anti-matter unit of production, a logic spun out of the interplay between approaches.

And rather than strictly describing what the experience or encounter feels like, I can present an array of writing that abides by a dual spirit of formulation as well as descriptive or theoretical. These are all generative acts, evolving from an individual system of experiences and personal narratives. My research is positioned to discuss not that it's hard to mix all of these ingredients but that the divisions that separate tufting, embroidery, drawing, or writing is practically cosmetic.

>>>this final concluding section leads us away from the terminal of amassed research. We move down an assembled concourse—passed the lambswool, and droplets of blood; passed the humidity, the air conditioning and the diesel generators; through the tensile membranes of Berger's pencilled shapes; and away from the logos, seashells and tennis elbow. As we pack up and clean our stations we can observe multiple points of egress: a continued interest in exploring drawing with the gun; a desire to develop O&C into something more fully formed and ultimately commensurate with the manifold voices employed throughout ZQ-II; using the context of fiction as the overall framework for new publishing experiments; to explore the techniques within ZQ-II with others; to collaborate as I have done previously with We Are Publication; to disseminate the methodology of this thesis to others, such as students; and to further develop my own archival voice, to record and organise generatively. Put the pieces of coral and lino-cut berries in a shoe box. Put the drawings back in their sleeves. Organise the .jpgs, the .pdfs, the .docxs and the .indds into easily searchable folders. Last minute touches to the Abstract. Rejoining the yellow pages. Line up the seashells in a row on the mantle (they might be useful later). Gather up all of the finished and unfinished sketchbooks. Make the images in the InDesign document have been saved as CMYK. Darken the salmon coloured coversheet. Export. Send final copy to the university. And then send one to the printer for the last time. Bend it in half. Turn its pages back and forth, breaking it in. And then send that to the university. Tools down. Unplug gun. With a small wire brush clean out recesses and cavities, removing any build up. Wipe down the ZQ-II with a cloth. Roll up its cable and place the device back in its case. Sweep up the scattered woollen confetti decorating the studio floor. Put the final cones of yarn into plastic bins. Un-stretch the completed work. Place in a vacuum sealed bag. Stretch a new cloth onto the frame. Pull it tight onto its teeth. Flick it and listen to it sounding like a drum.

Image credits

- 1) Front cover: ZQ-II.
- 2) Front cover: backing cloth with stitches.
- 3) Inside cover: Drawing of studio documentation.
- 4) Title page: Ginger root.
- 5) *For those users reading in a PDF format: Yarn scraps. Page footer from Dayang.
- 6) Pg. 2: Page from Dayang website.
- 7) Pg. 4: Drawing of paper that came with first ZQ-II gun in 2016.
- 8) Pg. 4: Studio drawing (Hoxton).
- 9) Pg. 5: List of parts for the ZQ-II.
- 10) Pg. 5: Backing cloth images from Tuft the World.
- 11) Pg. 5: Example of backing cloth weave sagging.
- 12) Pg. 6: Parts list for Hoffmann tufting system.
- 13) Pg. 6: ZQ-II carpet gun.
- 14) Pg. 7: Images of films and books reinterpreting *The Decameron* in some way.
- 15) Pg. 8: *Tetracontameron* (front view), 2016.
- 16) Pg. 9: *Tetracontameron* (back view), 2016.
- 17) Pg. 10: Studio materials.
- 18) Pg. 11: Studio materials.
- 19) Pg. 12: Choreography #1.
- 20) Pg. 13: *Julio Flores* drawing.
- 21) Pg. 14: *Julio Flores* (The Spinners) drawing.
- 22) Pg. 15: *Julio Flores* installation view at Matadero Madrid, 2017.
- 23) Pg. 16: *Intangibilities of Form* by John Roberts book cover.
- 24) Pg. 17: Tai Ping Carpets logo.
- 25) Pg. 17: Detail of *Tetracontameron* (back view).
- 26) Pg. 17: Detail of drawing made with students at HKBU, Hong Kong, 2019.
- 27) Pg. 18: Studio materials
- 28) Pg. 19: Aya's birthday bunting, 2020.
- 29) Pg. 19: Page footer from Dayang.
- 30) Pg. 20: *Doomsday Rug*, 1.5m x 2m, wool and acrylic, backing cloth, carpet grippers, 2017
- 31) Pg. 21: Detail of backside of *RaspberryJail*.
- 32) Pg. 21: Drawing of *Doomsday Rug* (backside view)
- 33) Pg. 22: LRU Banner and flower.
- 34) Pg. 23: *SomePigHarlequinBlanket* and *NovemberTunicCalendar*, wool and acrylic, backing cloth, 2017
- 35) Pg. 26: Studio materials.
- 36) Pg. 27: Studio materials.
- 37) Pg. 28: *Notes on Carpet* by We Are Publication, tufted carpet, 2018.
- 38) Pg. 29: Background image: Drawing of Rachel reading on WAP carpet at 5 Years.
- 39) Pg. 30-31: *Argyle*, 3m x 2m, wool and acrylic, backing cloth, carpet gripper, 2018.
- 40) Pg. 32: Drawing of studio (Bermondsey)
- 41) Pg. 33: Repeat vector pattern.
- 42) Pg. 33: Studio materials.
- 43) Pg. 33: Brick vector pattern.
- 44) Pg. 34: *Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note*, 2m x 1.9m, wool, backing cloth, carpet gripper, 2019
- 45) Pg. 35: Studio materials.
- 46) Pg. 36: Drawing of customised Gauloise cigarette packet.
- 47) Pg. 37: Studio materials.
- 48) Pg. 38-39: Background image: *Hamburg Süd Trellis* drawing.
- 49) Pg. 38-39: *Clubs & Flowers*, 2.2m x 2.3m, wool and acrylic, backing cloth, aluminium frame, 2019.
- 50) Pg. 40: Detail of *Clubs & Flowers* (back side).
- 51) Pg. 41: Detail of *Clubs & Flowers* (back side).
- 52) Pg. 41: Detail of *Clubs & Flowers* (back side).
- 53) Pg. 41: Detail of *Clubs & Flowers* (back side).
- 54) Pg. 42: Illustration of *The Envelope*.
- 55) Pg. 43: *VB*, wool on jute, 75cm x 120cm, 2018.
- 56) Pg. 43: *Virginia*.
- 57) Pg. 44: *Grey Literature for Intermodal Textile Scenarios*
- 58) Pg. 44: Tufters.
- 59) Pg. 44: Detail of *Grey Literature for Intermodal Textile Scenarios*.
- 60) Pg. 44: Detail of *Grey Literature for Intermodal Textile Scenarios*.
- 61) Pg. 45: Rugs for Aleks and Josh.
- 62) Pg. 45: *y-h*, wool and bailing twine on backing cloth, carpet gripper, 2019.
- 63) Pg. 45: *Peacock-Feather-Scales*, wool and bailing twine on backing cloth, carpet gripper, 2019.
- 64) Pg. 46: Detail of *Hamburg Süd Trellis*, 2m x 3m, wool on backing cloth, carpet gripper, 2019.
- 65) Pg. 46: *Hamburg Süd Trellis*, 2m x 3m, wool on backing cloth, carpet gripper, 2019.
- 66) Pg. 47: *Hamburg Süd Trellis* drawing.
- 67) Pg. 48: Smoke.
- 68) Pg. 48: Argyle drawing.
- 69) Pg. 48: flower drawing.
- 70) Pg. 48: "Beware".
- 71) Pg. 49: "Artisan Workshop" drawing.
- 72) Pg. 49: Covered basketball court drawing.
- 73) Pg. 49: Smoke.
- 74) Pg. 50: Tweety Bird.
- 75) Pg. 50: Fake book cover: Carnaud Métalbox's *A Towel is a Tiger Cage*
- 76) Pg. 51: Night Flower colour sample.
- 77) Pg. 51: Burning tufting frame.
- 78) Pg. 52: Studio materials.
- 79) Pg. 53: Studio materials.
- 80) Pg. 54-55: Exhibition view, *Brick-Wall-Spider-Web-Post-It-Note* at Beers London, 2019
- 81) Pg. 56: *Hong Kong 2019-2021* by Hotam Press.
- 82) Pg. 56: Studio materials.
- 83) Pg. 57: Studio materials.
- 84) Pg. 60-61: *hsbc*, 3 x 2m, wool, acrylic, bailing twine on backing cloth, 2019
- 85) Pg. 60: Studio materials.
- 86) Pg. 61: Detail of *hsbc*.
- 87) Pg. 62-63: *Maersksealand*, 3 x 2m, wool, acrylic, bailing twine on backing cloth, 2019
- 88) Pg. 64: Spare parts.
- 89) Pg. 65: Studio materials.
- 90) Pg. 65: Studio materials.
- 91) Pg. 66-67: *RaspberryJail*, 2mx3m, wool and acrylic, bailing twine on backing cloth, 2020
- 92) Pg. 68: Studio materials.
- 93) Pg. 69: *RaspberryJail* drawing.
- 94) Pg. 69: Paper cut-out of the god Pan.
- 95) Pg. 70-71: "The Field" drawing.
- 96) Pg. 72: Studio view of *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net*, 2020.
- 97) Pg. 72: Studio view of *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net*, 2020.
- 98) Pg. 73: *Ornaments & Crimes*, 2020.
- 99) Pg. 74-75: *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net* mock-ups.
- 100) Pg. 76: Reference drawing for *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net*.
- 101) Pg. 77: *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net* (back side), wool, acrylic, bailing twine on backing cloth, 2021.
- 102) Pg. 78-79: *Flower-Necklace-Cargo-Net*, wool, acrylic, and bailing twine on backing cloth, 2021.
- 103) Pg. 80: Studio materials.
- 104) Pg. 81: Studio materials.
- 105) Pg. 82: Raffia and AK-1 (in pink) drawing with flower.
- 106) Pg. 82: Page footer from Dayang.
- 107) Pg. 83: Dayang logo and cloth.
- 108) Back cover: ZQ-II.
- 109) Back cover: backing cloth and stitches.



WORLD OF TEXTILES

CHRISTIAN NEWBY



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FABRICATED REFERENCES FOR ORNAMENTS & CRIMES

Violet Newstead's Whoops!: How to Poison Your Boss
Carnaud Métalbox's A Towel is a Tiger Cage
Robert Penn's The Furniture Sits On You
The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts
The Libertarian Handbook to Textile Ecologies

OUTPUTS

RESEARCH OUTPUTS

Capacity does not explain but cultivates a September garden (with We Are Publication), Whitstable Biennale, 2022

BOREDOM>MISCHIEF>FANTASY>RADICALISM>FANTASY, solo exhibition, Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, April 2021

ORNAMENTS & CRIMES, publication made for
BOREDOM>MISCHIEF>FANTASY>RADICALISM>FANTASY, Collective Gallery, Edinburgh, 2021

THE DRUM, THE CHIME, THE SCRAPE, THE SPLASH, THE JERK, solo exhibition, Patricia Fleming Gallery, Glasgow, 2021

THE SEPTEMBER GARDEN: PLOTS (with We Are Publication, KOKO, <https://koko.zhdk.ch/2021/05/11/september-garden-plots/>)
DRAWING RESEARCH FORUM at THE DRAWING ROOM (online), London, 2020

Public Knowledge: Placement Does Not Explain, But Cultivates A September garden | We Are Publication, Camden Art Centre, 2020.

WE.ARE.CUT.UP, (with WE ARE PUBLICATION), Dekalb Gallery, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY, 2019

EZ-2-MASTER, solo resident exhibition at Academy of Visual Art, HKBU, Hong Kong, 2019

BRICK-WALL-SPIDER-WEB-POST-IT-NOTE, solo exhibitio, Beers Gallery, London, 2019

t h e—H—O L D (with WE ARE PUBLICATION), Stanley Picker Gallery, London, 2019

100 SCULPTORS OF TOMORROW, ed. by Kurt Beers, pub. by Thames & Hudson, 2019

MATERIAL: TEXTILES, group exhibition, Messums Wiltshire, 2019

LONDON ART BOOK FAIR (with WE ARE PUBLICATION), Whitechapel Gallery, London, 2018

WE ARE PUBLICATION at TWENTY ONE, Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea, 2018.

TETRACONTAMERON, Space In Between Gallery, London, 2016

KEY EXHIBITIONS

- 1) 3 & 4 Will. IV c.73, Cameron Rowland, Institute for Contemporary Art, 2020
- 2) A Cookbook (artwork/book), Dorothy Iannone, 196
- 3) An Autumn Lexicon, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Serpentine Gallery, London, 2016
- 4) Art textiles: a major survey of British art textiles, Bury St. Edmunds art gallery, 1996
- 5) As She Laughs Chapter 2, Anna Perach AND Anousha Payne, Cook Latham Gallery, London, 2022
- 6) Carpets of Distinction at Dovecot Studio, Edinburgh, 2013
- 7) Corita Kent and the Language of Pop, Harvard Art Museums, 2016
- 8) Five Decades, El Anatsui, Jack Shainman Gallery, 2015
- 9) Hannah Ryggen at Modern Art Oxford
- 10) Human By Design: Probing Social And Methodological Innovation In Design, Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, 2020
- 11) Hysterical Men II (print), Henrik Olesen, 2013 <https://artmuseum.pl/en/kolekcja/praca/hysterical-men-i>
- 12) I,I,I,I,I,I,I, Kathy Acker, Institute for Contemporary Art, 2019
- 13) In the Making, Design Museum, 2014
- 14) Love is Enough: William Morris and Andy Warhol, Modern Art Oxford, 2014
- 15) Lucy McKenzie, Tate Liverpool, 2022
- 16) Metatextile, Edel Assanti Gallery, London, 2016
- 17) Migrazione del reale (Exodus of the Real), Franco Vaccari, P420, Bologna, 2020
- 18) On Location, Larry Johnson, Raven Row, London, 2015
- 19) Soft Pictures, FONDAZIONE SANDRETTO RE REBAUDENGO, 2014
- 20) Soft? Tactile Dialogues, MoMu, Antwerp, 2018
- 21) Stitched, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, 2022
- 22) Taking a Thread for a Walk, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2021
- 23) The New Ambidextrous Universe, Tauba Auerbach, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 2014
- 24) The New Bend, Hauser & Wirth, NY, 2022
- 25) The Outside is Inside Everything We Make, Laura Aldridge, Leanne Ross, Judith Scott. <https://glasgowinternational.org/events/laura-aldridge-leanne-ross-judith-scott-2/>
- 26) The Pondkeepers, Diedrick Brackens, Various Small Fires, Los Angeles, 2020
- 27) The Speed of Thought, DNA, Salon 94 Gallery, <https://dnadnadna.design/The-Speed-of-Thought>
- 28) The Stuff That Matters. Textiles collected by Seth Siegelau for the CSROT, Raven Row, London, 2012
- 29) Tufting Gun Tapestries, Assemble, Logan Center, Chicago, 2021
- 30) Venus, Anna Betbeze, Atlanta Contemporary, 2017
- 31) Vue Liquide, Caroline Achaintre, Fondation Thalie
- 32) We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965–85, Brooklyn Museum, 2017
- 33) wow! Woven? Entering the (sub)Textiles, Halle für Kunst, Graz, 2015

RESEARCH GROUPS

CONTEMPORARY ART RESEARCH CENTRE (CARC)
Practice-based research cohort at Kingston and meeting monthly to discuss and give presentations on our progress.

WE ARE PUBLICATION (WAP)

A speculative publishing collective that originally came out of CARC but that is now operating as a smaller group of artists and writers, consisting of Volker Eichelmann, Rachel Cattle, Jenna Collins, Andrea Stokes, Jonathan Allen, John Hughes and myself.

PARTNER MEDIA GROUP (PMG)

A band with Rachel Cattle and Jenna Collins made up of percussion and voice. PMG is an extension of WAP

RESIDENCIES

Academy of Visual Arts, HKBU, Artist-in-Residence, Hong Kong, 2019
Matadero El Ranchito, Madrid, 2017
Arthouse Foundation, Lagos, Nigeria, 2017
URRA/Gasworks Residency, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2015

WITH THANKS TO:

VOLKER EICHELHANN AND MARK HARRIS FOR THEIR MUCH NEEDED SUPERVISION. TO KATY MACLEOD FOR HER CONTINUED GUIDANCE. TO EVERYONE AT THE CONTEMPORARY ART RESEARCH CENTRE.

DEDICATED TO MY FAMILY