

Re-make, Reimagine

Critical Journal

Undergraduate Fine Art Critical Studies

Summative Submission

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Synopsis

My objective by selecting Critical Journal as my final mode of submission and my overarching research goal, is to explore the vibrancy of material-based artworks and their potential to engage in debates surrounding environmentalism, animacy and agency. I do so by placing value on both material inquiry and sculptural process, as I repurpose industrial waste into visual art. Throughout this journal, I unveil my collaboration with two Scottish manufacturer's, Midton Acrylic's, and The Scottish Leather Group, upcycling their byproducts into sculptural objects.

In doing so, I recognise my own immersion as the artist within an active environment of 'things', intertwining an analysis of New Materialist literature to identify salient points regarding the artistic usage, and treatment of materials. Key terms within my writing include Anthropocene, material circularity, agency, New Materialism, and vibrancy. Key scholars include Jane Bennett, Rosi Braidotti and Tim Ingold.

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Introduction

My initial attraction to the field of visual culture stems from a desire to explore the liveliness of the physical world which surrounds me. I am interested in sculptures affordance to bring found materials into dialogue with visual art affinities and methodologies. My research situates itself under the handle of 'New Materialism', Exploring a variety of sub terms such as the Anthropocene, recycled plastics, material circularity, agency and 'thingness'.

My initial interest in New Materialist Philosophy stems from material observations in the artist's studio at the Glasgow School of Art and that of the surrounding environment of my hometown in South Lanarkshire, Scotland. In my third year of Undergraduate study, when working with agricultural artefacts found in rural landscape, such as sheet roofing panels salvaged from farm buildings, I became acutely aware of the segregation of materials into distinct binary categories. Such as human/ non-human and natural/ artificial. This dichromatic classification of materials raised concerns within my emerging practice regarding how I ascribe value to or interact with the materials which I encounter.

As a final year Sculpture and Environmental Art student, the artwork that I make is very discipline specific, exploring the condition of sculpture and its relation to body. My work engages with concerns surrounding landscape/nature and finds form through a growing range of materials and processes. By promoting visual art process over the end "product" I am able to effectively respond to the qualities of the materials I engage with, deeming the physicality of my sculptures to be of equal importance to the inherent values we ascribe to it.

My methodology for this Critical Journal submission, is to undertake critical and contextual analysis of my own sculptural art practice by reflecting on two exciting studio projects. Within this piece of writing, I will explore my artistic collaboration with Scottish manufacturing firms, Midton Acrylics and the Scottish Leather Group, as I produce visual artwork by recycling their surplus waste material.

When working with Midton's recycled acrylic, I was able to produce a variety of sculptural artworks, using the process of cast encapsulation. Freezing an abundance of found objects and materials from both landscape and the artists studio into self-contained, autonomous entities. In doing so, I am able to consider the relationality and agency of such objects, as their properties and qualities entangle with my own artistic intentions. Similarly, by bringing Scottish Leather Group (SLG) rejected leather into the artist's studio, I began to challenge the undercurrents of the material, synonymous with heated environmental debate, leading into notions of Posthumanism.

My objective by selecting Critical Journal as my final mode of submission and my overarching research goal, is to explore the vibrancy of material-based artworks and their potential to engage in debates surrounding environmentalism, animacy and agency. By placing value on material inquiry and process, I seek to accentuate the liveliness of the material world which surrounds me.

In doing so, I recognise my own immersion as the artist within an active environment of 'things', intertwining an analysis of New Materialist literature to identify salient points regarding contemporary artistic usage, and treatment of materials.

Chapter 1:

Artist as voyager amidst an active landscape of things

My art practice over the past two academic sessions has grown to develop a specific material focus. Most recently, I have been using salvaged industrial waste to explore the viability of sustainable making, questioning what it means to engage with highly politicized materials such as plastic and leather. My work explores the potential of sculpture to engage audiences in debates surrounding environmentalism, animacy, agency and 'thingness'.

This is achieved through a heavy focus on materiality, enabling the research and learning undertaken throughout both studio projects, to become as influential as any given artwork produced. My initial aim was to work with materials in a way which would challenge their qualities as sculpture, as well as their properties. Specifically, I am intrigued by the accessibility and circularity of surplus industrial waste, under the handle of a Circular Economy. A 'circular economy' (CE) is an approach that would transform the function of resources in the economy. Waste from factories would become a valuable input to another process- and products could be repaired, reused, or upgraded instead of being thrown away." ¹

The key term informing my research is 'New Materialism'. New Materialism (NM) is a term coined in the late 1990's by theorist's Manuel Delanda and Rosi Braidotti, challenging the distinction between mind and material. "NM opposes and challenge's transcendental and humanist (dualist) traditions that continue to haunt cultural theory amidst the Postmodern Era."² New Materialism and NM theorists such as Jane Bennett (2010), ³ ask us to reconsider our relation to and current modes of categorizing matter. NM voyager, Karen Barad voices that "Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers." ⁴ Exploring NM through the entanglement of both human and non-human agencies is vital as I reflect upon my artistic relation to leather and recycled plastic. Undoubtedly, the discipline of Sculpture makes probable a new and exciting exploratory space, prompting the physical materialization of the vibrancy of such materials as 'things'.

Chris Jordan is an American contemporary artist who values art's potential to challenge and explore such entangled relationships between humans and social-ecological systems. He emulates NM's return to matter by grounding his photography practice in the sheer materiality of his surrounding landscape.

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- 1- Preston, Felix. "A global redesign, Shaping the Circular Economy" P1 (2012) Chatham House, [A global redesign - shaping the circular economy-with-cover-page-v2.pdf \(d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net\)](#) Accessed 30/10.2022.
 - 2- Interview with Karen Barad, Dolphijn, Rick. "New Materialism: Interview's and cartographies." P48
 - 3- Bennett, Jane. "Vibrant Matter, a political ecology of things" *Force of Things* P1-7.
 - 4- Barad, Karen. "Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning" P1.



Figure 1. Artwork; *Cell Phone Chargers* (2004) By Chris Jordan. [Chris Jordan - Intolerable Beauty](#) [Accessed, 12/11/2022]

Fig 1. is an artwork by Jordan titled *Cell Phone Chargers, Atlanta* (2004). It is a photographic artwork, belonging to a larger series of works under the name *Intolerable beauty: Portraits of American mass consumption*. To produce these images, Jordan made visits to multiple recycling centres across the US, in a bid to curate and snap large quantities of discarded electrical goods. The artist is a voyager amidst an active environment of ‘things’ as he is selecting from a repertoire of materials, made available to him by processes of mass production and consumption. We are observing an image of plastic mobile chargers, yet they appear natural. My own artwork, *Remade Redirection*, (further discussed in Chapter two) concerns itself with similar notions of artificiality in nature.

Jordan issues a warning to us, that in isolation, individual purchases of electronics, single-serving foods, and plastic amenities do not trigger visions of an environmental emergency. But as the human population approaches eight billion, the amplification of every small act of consumption translates into the rapid and pervasive degradation of the natural world. ⁵ This series of artworks reveal the animacy of plastic by documenting objects we deem as familiar and distorting them via the fluxes of visual art. Jordan accentuates the animacy of the material and its ability to foreground environmental discourse, such animacy of plastic is latterly discussed as I collaborate with acrylic firm, Midton.

5- [Chris Jordan – Art Works for Change](#)

In an interview with the Post Carbon Institute titled *From Art to Action* (2022), Jordan, alongside fellow art activist Jenny Price, discuss avoiding the promotion of a dystopian environmental discourse through making. Jordan proclaims his interest in materials challenge our current understanding of self and environment, exploring the potential of photography to connect an audience to social ecological discourse. 6 I too am intrigued by the condition of sculpture to remark upon the vibrancy or ‘thingness’ of both self and environment. My own artwork, *Remade Redirection* (Fig 11) similarly brings together a variety of curated objects from landscape. Albeit, Jordan’s, does so in a more symbolic, literal sense. Tim Ingold in his article discussion *Materials against Materiality* (2007) affirms Jordan’s comments by acknowledging that- “Things are active not because they are imbued with agency but because of the ways in which they are caught up in these currents of the lifeworld.” 7

It is by acknowledging the entanglement of such agencies introduced by Ingold, that I, alike Jordan, am able to make visual art which allows for an open interpretation of the work on behalf of the viewer, without being heavily prescriptive. I too produce art, which is pictorially and materially abstract, teasing the viewer with visual material queues, without dictating their perception of it. This open-ended approach to making sculpture grounds my art practice amongst the likes of Claire Barclay, Margret Blondal, Karla Black and Phyllida Barlow.



Figure 2. Artwork; *Atlanta*, (2005) By Chris Jordan. [Chris Jordan - Intolerable Beauty](#) [Accessed, 12/11/2022]

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- 6- Jordan, Chris. “From Art to Action” Post Carbon Institute, (2022) YouTube. [\(1358\) From Art to Action with Chris Jordan and Jenny Price - YouTube](#) [Accessed November 2022]
 - 7- Ingold, Tim. “Materials against materiality” Discussion article, anthropological dialogues. Cambridge Press, P1.

The NM notion of mutually entangled agencies is extremely evident within the sculpture of Jessica Stockholder and Helen Marten. Both women’s artworks ascribe the materials used a new identity through processes of reconfiguration and restoration. Fig’s. 3 & 4 document a piece by each artist, acknowledging the vibrancy and materiality of the artificial as it comes into contact with the makers body. Similar accentuation of materials theatricality is evident in my *Remade*, Redirection sculpture, where the “reconfiguration” of household objects is tested within the realms of permanency. As my objects are encapsulated within acrylic, a material unaffected by decay, they shall remain unchanged. However, Stockholders sculptural curiosities, where she actively obliterates her found objects by painting over them, instead create a new visual dialogue within the work. This contrast in found object fetting is in fitting with *Art in the Anthropocene* by challenging the permanence of sculpture, prompting me to reconsider my own material usage or sensitivity amidst the environmental crisis.



Figure 3. _Artwork; *Brood, and Bitter Pass* (2016) By Helen Marten. [Helen Marten born 1985 | Tate](#) [Accessed 13/11/2022]

'Brood and bitter pass' (Above) and *'And Server'* (Below) objectively succeed in de-stabing current dichromatic modes of categorization and instead present the viewer with a hybrid, depiction of the natural and artificial. Both artworks employ the common material of wood, traditionally associated to nature, yet place it alongside digital technology and plastic. I too am intrigued by the relationality of materials- To other materials in the assemblage, the body and surrounding space. Jane Bennett, places humans on an equal pedestal to materials, in a bid to challenge our preconceptions of them, saying that-“Each human is a heterogeneous compound of vibrant matter. If matter itself is lively, then not only is the difference between subjects and objects minimized, but the status of the shared materiality of all things is elevated.”⁸

Emulating the words of Bennett and by adopting a New Materialist standpoint, I too am invertedly questioning what language does to these works of visual art, through the mержence of Philosophical and Anthropological discourse, the condition of sculpture is invited to take a new material turn.



Figure 4. Artwork; *And Server*, (2016) By Jessica Stockholder. [Find | Jessica Stockholder](#) [Accessed 13/11/2022]

8- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter, The force of things* P7. (2010)

Chapter 2:
Industry Surplus

For the purpose of this chapter, I will discuss my own making and developments to date over the past year, as I work with two Scottish manufacturers, salvaging their in-house industrial waste and recycling it into visual art. I have been collaborating with Midton Acrylics and the Scottish Leather Group, as I transform their waste material into sculpture.

Both leather and plastic have become synonymous with heated environmental debate in recent years, with almost 300 million tonnes of plastic waste being generated and vastly dumped to landfill.⁹ The devaluing of plastic however does not come from the physical qualities of the material but from years of widespread exploitation and profiteering. The Western world is now omni dependant on plastic, from food packaging and technology to clothing.

I am curious to integrate new recycling practices into my emerging art practice, following from NM scholars such as Ingold who suggest we need to pay more attention to the materials which make up the things we study.¹⁰ Which, unfortunately, as earlier epitomized by Jordan's *Cell Phone Chargers* (2004), to live in 2022, means incidentally to be entangled within processes of wasteful consumerism and excess.

My first collaboration was with Midton Acrylic's, who are a bespoke acrylic manufacturing firm based in Lochgilphead, Scotland. I began working with their new material "Remade", a new recycled plastic which takes scrap acrylic and enlivens it with a new binder. Remade is 100% recyclable, 100% PMMA and now from 75% industrial waste.¹¹ Remade pioneers a form of plastic recycling, the uptake of such processes into visual art remains extremely low due to the industrial processes required.

Nevertheless, Saskia Abrahms-Kavunenko in her article *Towards an Anthropology of Plastics* (2021) affirms that- "Anthropological methods and theories are crucial to understanding plastics at a vital moment in their (and our) history. To study plastics challenges what it means to exist: whether or not human beings are bound or permeable entities."¹² At the beginning of the Midton collaboration, I had been collecting a lot of materials, ranging from old screen-prints to found metal objects, such as tractor trailer pins. The commonality of the objects were that I viewed them as underappreciated at present, deeming plastic as a mode of accentuating their vibrancy or 'thingness' within sculpture.

9- UN environmental report 2018, P5. [UN Environment 2018 Annual Report | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#) [Accessed November 2022]

10- Ingold, Tim. "Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials" (2010) University of Aberdeen.

11- Midton company website, Remade. www.Midton.com [Accessed November 2022]

12- Abrahms-Kavunenko, Saskia. "Towards an Anthropology of Plastics" *Journal of Material Culture*, SAGE publishing. (2021) P1.



Figure 5. (Left) Image taken by April Lannigan; documenting a wet Remade pour into cardboard cast, Midton(2022)



Figure 6. (Right) Image by Garrett Ure; documenting Midton machinery. Grinding up virgin acrylic to make "Remade" (2022)

Making artwork at Midton was extremely processual, Remade required copious amounts of PPE to work with, emphasizing both its bodily and environmental harm. It is a cold pour, which is latterly fired in a kiln, then polished using C&C machinery. The industrious process was an extremely A-Typical way of creating sculpture, it echoed processes of mass production- which my collected materials were actively rejecting. It was a bizarre conundrum, in order for these materials to gain form or stability as sculpture, they were to be cased in arguably the most hated and disposable material of all- Plastic.

Figure 7. Image by Jen Marten; documenting the pouring of Remade by fellow GSA student Alissa Monova. (2022)



Craig Cameron, managing director at Midton, when speaking of the collaboration, explains that –“At Midton, we are passionate about supporting creatives, and encouraging new possibilities for artists. As an underappreciated, and underused material within the arts, we hoped for an opportunity to educate and engage a new generation of artists to see the benefits of using cast acrylic through their art. The creation and development of Remade presented the perfect opportunity to do this.”¹³

E. Hodson in her essay contribution to the Midton project publication agrees, writing - “To work with the material Remade is a challenging one that asks artists to take on board the cultural history of plastic but also in some sense to move beyond it and see what possibilities plastic offers as a material in and of itself.”¹⁴ By working with Midton’s acrylic, I was aware of plastics synonymous environmental harm, yet not exhaustively bound by it. *Remade, Redirection* (2022) is an example of an artwork that I made at Midton, using the process of encapsulation, arguably the acrylic’s most commonly commissioned usage. I worked to curate mini environments using my found materials (as seen in Fig. 8) considering layering and assemblage within the acrylic medium. Encapsulation as a process of accentuation was my angle, ruminating on sculptural artworks which do similar, such as Hirst’s formaldehyde shark. Figure’s 9 & 10 document the stages of acrylic pour when staging the sculptures. The slow setting acrylic meant that the movement of placed materials in the pour were inevitable, thus, destabiling my ability to gain full control over the resolve. This in itself was exciting, the agency of the Remade material determined the aesthetics of the work, arguably as much as I did.



Figure 8. Image by Jen Martin; material’s on worktop at Midton, prior to acrylic casting. Documenting early stages of April Lannigan’s *Remade, Redirection* sculptures. (2022)

13- Cameron, Craig, Midton x Glasgow School of Art. *Materials Matter- Remade* publication, Goodpress. (2022) P9

14- E. Hodson. “Material Matters: Reforming Plastics” (2021) P1.

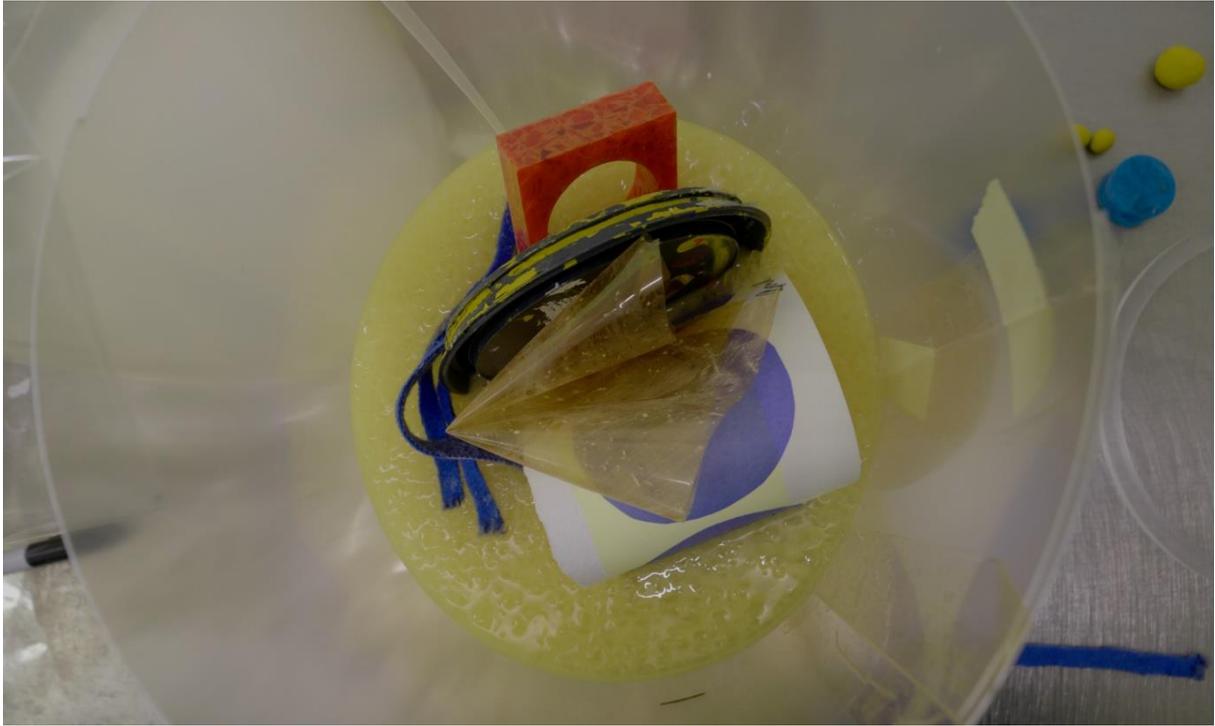


Figure 9. Processual Image by Jen Martin; *Remade, Redirection* by April Lannigan. mid pour into cylindrical containers, submerging found materials. (2022)



Figure 10- Processual image by Jen Martin; *Remade, Redirection* by April Lannigan. Mid way pour, allowing time for the acrylic to harden before adding new layers on top. (2022)



Figure 11. Artwork; *Remade, Redirection*. (2022) By April Lannigan. Image taken by Jen Martin at Midton 40th Anniversary Open Day.

The artwork culminated in three domed cylindrical forms, which reflect outwards into the space. Time based processes such as decay are called into question as the Remade acrylic grants the encapsulated ephemeral materials a greater exteriority in the world. The artwork emulates Bennett's idea of a 'Thing Power', affirming that the materials hold an *Energetic Vitality*.¹⁵ They do so by presenting the viewer with three autonomous entities, which as sculptures, accentuate the agency and theatricality of the materials involved. Karen Barad's notion of *material conversion* operates directly on a physical level here, through the encapsulated interrelations. Alike Helen Marten's artwork *Brood and Pass* (2016), the materials speak to one another and to the viewer, drawing us in for further observation.

Remade, Redirection enlivens environmental debate by capturing remnants of contemporary society whilst simultaneously proposing alternate future solutions to plastics reuse. The artwork emulates challenges put forth in the first chapter by Jordan, regarding the baggage which accompanies plastic, irrespective of its usage. The sculptures set stage for the gritty materiality of itself to be deemed of equal importance to its component properties. Of course, I am an artist and remain extremely drawn to more formal attributes of visual art production, yet alike NM theory, I too pose a questioning of matter and meaning.

15- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter, The force of things* (2010) P7.

In the months that followed on from my collaboration with Midton, instilled with a newfound sense of professional confidence, I initiated a connection with the Scottish Leather Group, alongside fellow student Garrett Ure. With the same primary objective, to use the manufacturer's surplus waste for visual art exploration.

The Scottish Leather Group (SLG) arguably produce less overall waste than Midton. They acquire raw cow hides as a biproduct of the meat industry, they tan and cure them before use in automotive interiors. All non-dyed offcuts are then transformed back into energy using renewables and thermal power. SLG are the world's lowest carbon leather, promoting responsible sourcing, 100% traceability and material transparency, as the leather remains in circularity. 16



Figure 12. Image by Garrett Ure; April Lannigan on the Scottish Leather Group Tour, Bridge of Weir, Paisley (November 2022)

Figure 13. Image by Garrett Ure, Cleaning drums for disinfecting the leather cow hides, SLG, Bridge of Weir. (November 2022)

Alike Midton, SLG were very welcoming at the prospect of collaboration, having previously worked with Glasgow School of Art students on a similar research project in 2017 titled *Re-Mantle and Make*. Textile students from the Mackintosh School of Design piloted a circular fashion system on a local scale, which similarly was contextualised by SLG's circular manufacturing process. 17

16- Scottish Leather Group company website, [Scottish Leather Group - The finest, lowest carbon leather](#) [Accessed Nov 2022]

17- Smith, Paul. "Sustainable Design Futures: An open design vision for the circular economy in fashion and textiles" (2017).

Fig's. 12 & 13 document our tour of the SLG Bridge of Weir site in November of 2022. The tour was highly informative in terms of the lifespan of the leather, from field to high valued good. SLG partner with well-known brands such as McLaren and Aston Martin. However, partnering with such figureheads often comes at a cost, both environmentally and financially. Imperfection's in the cow hides often result in the automotive retailers rejecting the leather, Figure 14 document's the material undergoing rigorous checks pre dispatch. Unfortunately, once tanned, the SLG cannot recycle their leather using their thermal energy plant so need to find alternate uses for it.

By partnering with the SLG we have been able to set up a direct supply an interesting material, which is both ethically sourced and aesthetically exciting. Imperfection's in the material are so minute that they are unnoticeable within a sculptural context, if anything, these flaws are both aesthetically and contextually favourable. Linking my leatherwork voyaging to Marten's *Brood and Bitter Pass* (2016) and Stockholder's *And Server* (2016), as they both accentuate impurities in the materials they adopt.

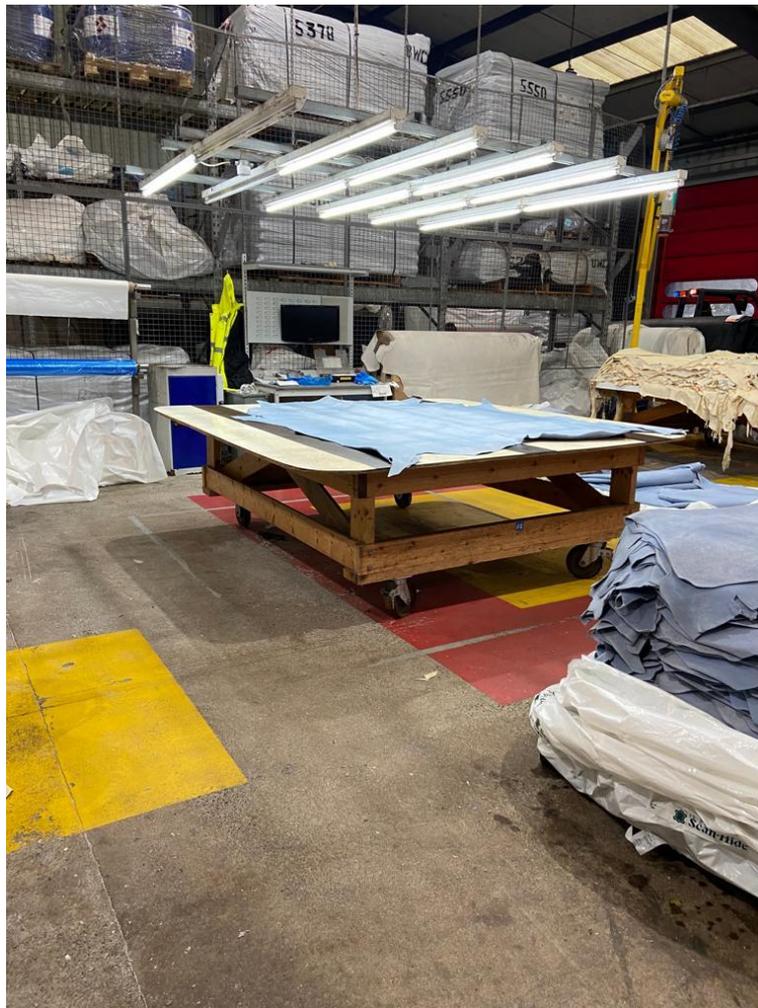


Figure 14. Image by April Lannigan; Rigorous checks underway of the leather for imperfections pre shipping. SLG Tour, Paisley. (Nov 2022)



Figure 15. Image by April Lannigan; rejected tanned hide's with minor imperfections, Scottish Leather Group Tour, Bridge of Weir, Paisley. (November 2022)



Figure 16. Image by April Lannigan; Experimenting with SLG surplus leather in the Glasgow School of Art Studio's. (November 2022).



Figure 17. Image by April Lannigan; Vintage Leatherworking tools purchased on eBay, Glasgow School of Art studios. (November 2022)



Figure 18. Artwork by April Lannigan; red leather purse fabricated using SLG surplus (November 2022).

In the studio, I began challenging the possibility of leather as a “Waste to worth” material, exploring notions of functionality vs aesthetics in sculptural practice by fabricating a red leather purse. I produced the garment entirely by hand, using vintage leatherworking tools acquired on eBay. (Fig’s 17 & 18) The leather is tough to work with, requiring real physical grit to sew.

Such distinction between art and life are posed by Ingold, when writing within his novel *Being Alive*, he points at the dynamic entanglement of agencies-“There is no division, in practice, between work and life. [An intellectual craft] is a practice that involves a whole person, continually drawing on past experience as it is projected into the future.”¹⁸ Such treatment of life as indistinguishable from craft/ art/ material experience is evident within my leather purse. To work with leather is to acknowledge t’s continual rebirth in the world, both physically and metaphorically. The vast majority of the surplus I acquired was marked by the SLG, identifying the scars in the material. This marking of the leather bared similarity to drawing and sculptural process, thus fuelling my curiosity to involve it in such a context. Moving on from fabricating my purse, I began pursuing the leather in a sculptural sense, by proposing, obscuring, and exaggerating notions of functionality.

18- Ingold, Tim. “Being Alive: Essay’s on movement knowledge and description.”



Figure's 19 & 20. Artwork by Claire Barclay; *Trappings* (2014) Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh. www.clairebarclay.net [Accessed December 2022]



Claire Barclay tackles notions of material vibrancy and suggestive functionality in her artwork *Trappings*, (2014) at the Scottish National Gallery in Edinburgh. The Glasgow based sculptor evidences a tacit understanding of materiality, emulating NM by rejecting the anthropomorphising of materials. Barclay's creation provoked my inquisitive sculptural reaction, promoting abstract usage of the surplus leather by involving recycled Pine wood from the GSA 2022-degree show.



Figure 21. Artwork by April Lannigan; *Living landscape* (2022), 6ft x 3ft, Recycled Pine, SLG leather.



Figure 22. Artwork by April Lannigan, *Living Landscape* (2022), 6ft x 3ft, Recycled Pine, SLG Leather.

My sculpture, *Living Landscape*, (As seen in Fig's 20&21) retains traces of its industrial fabrication by accentuating rejected SLG hides. The chalk marks on the material come from the SLG through their rigorous quality control examinations, rejecting and circling marks of more than 1cm in width. Without my artistic intervention, these offcuts would have either been converted into biofuel or sold at a reduced rate due to the minor imperfections. Instead, I embraced the markings, making for a curious linguistic depiction of the leather body.

Influenced by Barclay's installation, wooden pine acts as a frame for the leather components of my artwork, emulating natural processes of decay and regeneration by appearing in a transitory state. *Living Landscape*, provokes Rosi Braidotti's Posthumanism Theory, as she writes –“Humanism's restricted notion of what counts as the human is one of the keys to understand how we got to the Posthuman turn at all.”¹⁹ Braidotti brings into question the universality of human reasoning, and the ways we categorize ourselves as different from others- people, animals, materials, and technology.

Posthumanism, much like my artwork *Living Landscape* and NM literature, attempts to disrupt channels of dichromatic categorization, using notions of agency to blur the distinction between humans and other. By using leather as a sculptural medium, I too begin to tell the story of its properties- acknowledging its entanglement with other histories outwith my own. Leather is an exciting, lively material, in a constant state of flux. I am equally as interested in the qualities of the material and its place as sculpture, as I am in its properties. Ingold discusses such “slippage” from materials to materiality, challenging the artificiality of nature and how the unfolding of landscape is determined by the agency within it. ²⁰

Actions made by the animal in the field, such as scratching its back against a barbed wire fence and marking its skin, predetermine the flow of the material onwards in time, as it is rejected for automotive interior design. Agency is paramount here, both studio projects acknowledge the theatricality of the materials in which they employ. As an artist, much like my predecessors in Chapter 1, I too have become a voyager amidst an active landscape of things.

19- Braidotti, Rosi. “The Posthuman” P16.

20- Ingold, Tim. “Materials against materiality” discussion article. (2007) https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/018549D1821007A427BA0324E1FF03C5/S1380203807002127a.pdf/materials_against_materiality.pdf

Chapter 3:

Future direction, future intervention

One of the key issues having emerged from the two projects, still at bay within my blossoming art practice, regards the morality of engaging with such highly politicized and environmentally catastrophic materials. My artwork's from both studio projects definitively adopt a sense of positive environmentalism, earlier exemplified by *Cell Phone Charger's* (2004), avoiding the promotion of doomsday discourses. I felt a sense of purpose working with Remade as it brought about feelings of environmental purification to the creation of visual art, without my artistic usage of virgin acrylic scraps, they would have been sent to landfill.

On the other hand, moving forwards, I am equally as aware of the harm of Midton's primary plastic recycling- In producing Remade, a new virgin binder is added into the chips, arguably, creating further waste in the process. Vanessa Goodship in *Plastic Recycling* (2007) recognizes Midton's Remade as a form of Mechanical Recycling (the most environmentally friendly of such processes), however, concludes that minimization of waste remains best practice. ²¹ The uptake of recycled plastic such as Remade by artist's, remain extremely low.

One outstanding concern is the indistinguishability of Remade from virgin plastic. As an artist there is no way of viscerally presenting the new material as different. Ultimately, Plastic carries its own symbolic history and environmental tropes, which are proving difficult to shake off- Arguably impossible. Alike Saskia Kavunenko, E. Hodson recognizes this concern and reiterates that-“ We ascribe value and meaning to different materials that radically marks them as distinct from each other. Utility is paramount here, but as is the shadow of their history and moving out from there to the values and affordances we ascribe to them.” ²²

Such entanglement with environmental discourse is inevitable when working with Remade acrylic, perhaps a future solution could be to embrace this “slippage” as Ingold regard's it, in its entirety. Remade is a lively, vibrant material which provides a constellation of sculptural possibility. In the future, I could use Remade encapsulation to accentuate and theatricalise found objects on a grander scale, expanding upon processes of observation, and gathering evidenced in *Remade Redirection*. Perhaps gathering different objects and collating them dependant on functionality or aesthetics could be exciting, reflecting upon my red leather purse in Chapter 2 and how I could bring about hand crafted objects into dialogue with other art objects.

21-Goodship, Vanessa, *Plastic Recycling*, Science Progress journal, (2007). <http://www.istor.org/stable/43423211> [Accessed Sep 2022]

22- E. Hodson. “Material Matters: Reforming Plastics” (2021) P2

Arguably, this would lead to the exemplification of Karen Barad's notion of *Interaction Theory*. Which she describes as the mutual constitution of entangled agencies ²³- providing a new way of thinking about different material relations.

Another key issue still circling the waters of my visual arts dialogue, regards profiteering from new recycling practices and my involvement in such. Prolonging the disposal of waste is a key concern within my practice, I remain aware of the lifespan of surplus materials and how they inhabit the world after sculptural production. One solution could be to produce sculpture which is transitory, allowing materials to be reworked again- a byproduct of a byproduct. In a sense, I have begun such practice, evidenced in *Living landscape*, using impermanent modes of fixing the frames such as simple dowels which remain unglued, allowing for the dismantling of the work. This zero-waste approach to sculpture is something that I wish to continue moving forth. Waste, albeit from surplus is inevitable. How I use my own waste from surplus experiments, remains under scrutiny.

I endeavoured to be hyper cautious of industrial greenwashing or hidden monetary intention behind both project's. Both Midton and the SLG have begun profiteering off of their waste material in recent years, selling on under the green ethos.

Hawkins writes in *Culture and Waste*- "The huge tertiary sector is devoted to getting rid of things, is central to the maintenance of Capitalism; it just doesn't allow economies to function by removing excess and waste- it is an economy, realising commercial value in what is discarded." ²⁴ The profiteering off of recycling initiatives, particularly aimed at artists/ designers would be an exciting future research path and is something I need to bear in mind amidst future interventions. I am cautious that by engaging with these new recycled materials I too am involving myself within the firm's latest business model.

23- Barad, Karen. "Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning" P1.

24- Hawkins, Gay. "Culture and Waste: The Creation and Destruction of Value".

http://www.composingdigitalmedia.org/f15_mca/mca_reads/Yaegar_Trash_Archive.pdf [Accessed 13/11/2022]

Conclusion

As far as my making goes, I certainly did not set out to summate or specifically challenge the Anthropocene, this was incidental and came through a heavy visual art focus on materiality. By exploring the qualities of surplus waste, irrespective of the visual outcome or my own self-awareness, I too am contributing to environmental debate. “The Anthropocene is so built into our senses that it determines our perceptions, hence it is aesthetic.”²⁵ To engage with such highly politicized materials, means to inadvertently question the systems in which they accrue value or meaning.

Recycled acrylic and repurposed leather have been fantastic vessels materials to unpick New Materialist Theory. They foreground the entanglement of both human and material agencies, concluding that as a maker, I am part of much larger processes, perhaps outwith my given awareness as I move through an active environment of things.

Remade offered a new opportunity to rethink our current usage and consumption of plastic, as well as our classification of it. Surplus SLG leather brought about notions of Posthumanism, backing Bennett by destabiling the populous Anthropocentric viewpoint.

To work with these recycled materials in an arts context, means to reveal and accentuate their animacy and “thingness”. Materials are not solely governed by my behaviour yet can be mobilized by it. My own agency has been called into question regarding my artistic correspondence with matter, arguably in doing so, emphasizing Bennett’s observations that-“ Once again, human intentionality is positioned as the most important of all agential factors, the bearer of an exceptional kind of power.”

²⁶

In knowing such, I question whether it is I still possible to make visual art in the Anthropocene by witnessing it as correspondence with the material world or as Ingold asks, is it “an attempt to re-animate a world of things already deadened or rendered inert by arresting the flows of substance that give them life.”²⁷

25- Turpin, “Art in the Anthropocene: Lives between the fifth assessment and sixth extinction” P3

26- Bennett, Jane, “Vibrant Matter” (2010) P34

27- Ingold, Tim, “Bringing things to life: Creative entanglements in a world of materials” (2010) P5

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