Extra-ordinary (Be)Comings and goings: transformative encounters in contemporary assemblage

by

Merryn Hull

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Sydney College of the Arts
University of Sydney

September 2019
STATEMENT OF ORIGINALLITY

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the contents of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Merryn Hull

September 2019
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have helped me achieve the completion of this dissertation. I particularly thank teachers both current and former, advisers, mentors and colleagues who have been an ongoing source of support. I am grateful for the many and varied moments and conversations that I have had the privilege to share throughout this research. My particular thanks to Kaio Faustino.

I thank my auxiliary supervisor, Dr Julie Rrap, for her involvement in the latter stages of my research and for shared conversations about many of the ideas that I pursue in this dissertation. I also express my thanks to Ms Anne Ferran, for editorial assistance in the finalisation of this thesis.

I particularly thank my supervisor, Dr John Di Stefano, whose help and support have enabled this research to come to fruition. His rigorous approach has equipped me with the tenacity and courage to pursue my belief in this project. I thank him most sincerely for all his efforts on my behalf and for introducing me to many ideas which have become integral to my research and practice. I gratefully acknowledge that his continuing guidance has been the inspiration which has led me to complete this dissertation.

I sincerely thank my family and friends who have shown great interest in my progress and have helped me stay focused throughout the four years of this project.

Finally, I wish to thank my husband, Dr Daryll Hull, for his extra-ordinary support – at all time and in all ways. Without him, this thesis would not be possible. I dedicate this thesis to our life together.
ABSTRACT

The question that led me to embark on this thesis was this: why it is that four artists in particular exert such an influence on my work? A physical encounter with Robert Irwin’s *Excursus: Homage to the Square*³ was the key that, by demonstrating that the experience of this work is primarily a temporal and not a spatial one, allowed me to reframe my research. My thesis focuses on a specific temporality that I designate the Moment of ‘Imminence’: the moment in the viewer-artwork encounter that the viewer experiences as a heightened awareness of something that has *not-yet* but is *about-to-happen*. The significance of this moment rests in its potential to insinuate social and ‘political’ consequences in three-dimensional artworks. To explore this moment, I draw on an eclectic range of aesthetic and philosophical concepts from a diversity of multi-disciplinary thinkers. Through a synthesis of these concepts, I construct a Theory of ‘Imminence’, comprised of eight principles, explicated in the thesis. A key focus is that of ‘assemblage’. In certain artworks, contemporary ‘assemblage’ – the bringing together of diverse ideas, philosophies and materials to productively co-function – becomes the catalyst for the viewer’s transformative encounter, a dynamic moment of connection that brings meaning and reinforces that the artwork exists only in potential until experienced through its encounter with the viewer.

The thesis explores the work of the four artists, my exemplars: the German artists Isa Genzken and Wolfgang Tillmans, the American artist Robert Irwin and the Sydney based Irish/Australian artist Stephen Little. It concludes that their idiosyncratic practices utilise diverse notions of transformation to explore issues of social significance. The notion of time as ‘becoming’, expressed by French post-structuralist Gilles Deleuze, provides a conception of time that resonates with this conclusion. His writings on cinema, art and the concept of the ‘time-image’, together with his theorisation of ‘assemblage’, reinforce multi-temporal conceptions of reality. Henri Lefebvre’s work supports my research focus on the moment in terms of its unique potential for possibility through the everyday. Robin Clark’s use of the term ‘temporal object-event’ further substantiates the element of time and the experience of the encounter, while Michael Fried’s criticism of minimalism supports my conceptual position that the minimalist aesthetic is fundamental to the transformative encounter.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF ORGINALITY .......................................................... 2  
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................ 3  
ABSTRACT ......................................................................................... 4  
TABLE OF CONTENTS ....................................................................... 5  
TABLE OF FIGURES ........................................................................... 6  
INTRODUCTION ................................................................................... 9  
CHAPTER 1 ENCOUNTERS IN MINIMALISM .......................................... 22  
CHAPTER 2 BECOMING-ASSEMBLAGE .............................................. 52  
CHAPTER 3 CONCEPTIONS OF REALITY ............................................. 80  
CHAPTER 4 THE MOMENT OF IMMINENCE ......................................... 96  
CONCLUSION ..................................................................................... 116  
APPENDICES .................................................................................... 123  
   APPENDIX 1 – *Light Research* (LR: Series 2017).............................. 124  
   APPENDIX 3 – *Isa Essay* (ISA GENZKEN April 2016) ....................... 128  
   APPENDIX 4 – M. Hull and B. Hester Transcript of Interview (29th April 2016)141  
   APPENDIX 5 – Transcript Interview Dr Stephen Little – Merryn Hull........... 145  
   APPENDIX 7 – Making of *Lines of Flight* – Contact Sheets .................. 153  
   APPENDIX 8 – Framework Analysis Theory of “Imminence” .................... 156  
   APPENDIX 9 – *(Be)Comings and goings* (2019) – Indicative Plan of Proposed Exhibition for Examination ......................................................... 161  
   APPENDIX 10 – *(Be) Comings and goings* (2019) – Documentation of PhD Exhibition for Examination .................................................. 162  
BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................. 174
TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1  Merryn Hull, Untitled, 2012. Aluminium frame with painted panels, coloured acrylic sheets and neon lights. 200 x 160 x 40 cm. National Art School, Sydney. Photo: Nina Cholerton.................................................................10
Figure 2  Merryn Hull, BVM, 2015. Aluminium frame with painted panels, coloured acrylic sheets and fluorescent lights. 210 x 200 x 200 cm. Installation view. National Art School, Sydney. Photo: Merryn Hull.................................................................11
Figure 3  El Lissitzky, Abstract Cabinet (Kabinett der Abstrakten), 1927-1928. Installation view. Hannover Provincial Museum. Sprengel Museum Hannover has produced a new reconstruction of El Lissitzky’s Abstract Cabinet with catalogue. Original photo: ©2007 Sprengel Museum Hannover.................................................................12
Figure 4  Robert Irwin, Excursus: Homage to the square³, 2015. Dia:Beacon. https://www.flickr.com/photos/garrettrock/24642965149 ©2015 Photo: Garrett Rock .................................................................17
Figure 5  Still in Love in Paris, 2010. Oil paint, acrylic sheets, mirror, plastic ventilator and aluminium on panel ironing board with LED, dimensions variable. Photo: Merryn Hull .................................................................26
Figure 6  Looking to Springtime, 2010. Acrylic paint on canvas with clear acrylic overlay and spray enamel, 150 cm x 150 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull.................................................................26
Figure 7  Architectural Research, 2011. Acrylic paint, clear acrylic sheets, dimensions variable. Photo: Merryn Hull........................................................................................................................................26
Figure 8  Paris Iron, 2011. Oil paint, acrylic sheets, mirror, plastic ventilator and aluminium on panel ironing board with LED, dimensions variable. Photo: Merryn Hull .................................................................26
Figure 9  Detail Gold Carat II, 2012. Foil-backed acrylic, fluorescent acrylic and blue neon light, 120 cm x 80 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull .................................................................27
Figure 10  Studio, 2013. Digitised image printed onto clear acrylic panel, 45 cm x 45 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull .................................................................27
Figure 11  Architectonic Research, 2015. Photographic images, resin sheets, mesh panels, fluorescent tube, clear acrylic, dimensions variable. Photo: Merryn Hull ......................................................................................................................27
Figure 12  Untitled, 2015. Multiple sheets of coloured acrylic, 25 cm x 25 cm x 2.5 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull .................................................................27
Figure 13  Merryn Hull, Stair #3, 2018. Two-way mirror acrylic, aluminium frame, fluorescent tubes. 60 x 60 x 12 cm. Installation view, Verge Gallery, Sydney .................................................................33
Figure 14  Merryn Hull, Lines of Flight, 2018. Aluminium framed sculptures on solid bases, some with coloured resin. Dimensions variable. Installation view. SCA Graduate Gallery. Photo: Merryn Hull.................................................................37
Figure 16  Merryn Hull, Me, Isa and Isa & Me #2, 2016. Aluminium frames with coloured acrylic sheets, fluorescent lights, mirror acrylic, resin, gridded aluminium panel. Dimensions variable. Installation view. Articulate Gallery, Leichhardt. Photo: Chloe Rayfield .......................................................................................................................42
Figure 17  Merryn Hull, Me, Isa and Isa & Me #1, 2016. Aluminium frame with timber, foil and clear acrylic, fluorescent lights. 150 x 60 x 60 cm. Installation view. SCA Graduate Gallery, Rozelle. Photo: Merryn Hull .......................................................................................................................43
Figure 18  Merryn Hull, Lines of Flight, 2018. Aluminium framed sculptures on solid bases, some with coloured resin. Dimensions variable. Installation view. SCA Graduate Gallery. Photo: Merryn Hull .......................................................................................................................48
Figure 19  Merryn Hull, Stair #1, Stair #2, 2018. Photographic images mounted on clear acrylic panels over light boxes, electrical cable. Each light box is 70 x 70 cm, four light boxes shown. Photo: Merryn Hull .......................................................................................................................49
Figure 20  Merryn Hull, I’m OK, You’re OK #1, 2015, 2016. Aluminium frame with clear acrylic sheets. 210 x 200 x 200 cm. Occluding Mirror, 240 x 360 cm. Installation view shows distorted reflections of sculpture in mirror which is placed against gallery wall. AirSpace Gallery, Marrickville. Photo: Nina Cholerton .......................................................................................................................52
Figure 21  Merryn Hull, I’m OK, You’re OK #1, 2016. Detail view. AirSpace Gallery, Marrickville. Photo: Merryn Hull .......................................................................................................................53
Figure 22  Merryn Hull, I’m OK, You’re OK #1, 2016. Detail view. AirSpace Gallery, Marrickville. Photo: Merryn Hull .......................................................................................................................55
Figure 23  Robert Irwin, Excursus: Homage to the square³, 2015. Dia:Beacon. https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/robert-irwin-dia-beacon ©Photo: Philipp Scholz Rittermann .......................................................................................................................57
Figure 24  Merryn Hull, I’m OK, You’re OK #2, 2016. Aluminium frame with silver painted acrylic sheets bolted to perimeter. 210 x 200 x 200 cm. Occluding Mirror, 240 x 260 cm on side. Installation view. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield .......................................................................................................................64
Figure 25 Merryn Hull, I’m OK, You’re OK #2, 2016. Aluminium frame with internal coloured sheets, electrical cables reflected onto floor mirror. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield. ......................................................... 65
Figure 26 Merryn Hull, I’m OK, You’re OK #2, 2016. Aluminium frame with internal coloured sheets, electrical cables reflected onto floor mirror. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield. ......................................................... 65
Figure 27 Merryn Hull, I’m OK, You’re OK #2, 2016. Aluminium frame with internal coloured sheets reflected onto floor mirror. 210 x 200 x 200 cm. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield. ......................................................... 66
Figure 28 Merryn Hull, I’m OK, You’re OK #2, 2016. Internal coloured sheets, electrical cables and adjacent artworks reflected onto floor mirror. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield. ......................................................... 66
Figure 29 Merryn Hull, I’m OK, You’re OK #2, 2016. Installation view from mezzanine level above. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield. ......................................................... 67
Figure 30 Le Corbusier, Unité d’Habitation (1947-1952) in Marseilles. ©Photo: Chris Hellier. Alamy Stock Photo. https://www.alamy.com ......................................................................................... 68
Figure 31 Merryn Hull, Me, Isa and Isa & Me #1, 2016. Aluminium framed columns with painted acrylic sheets, fluorescent lights, tape, electrical cables and clear panels. Occluding mirror wall panels. SCA Gallery, Rozelle. Photo: Marta Feracin. .................................................................................................................. 69
Figure 32 Merryn Hull, I’m, You’re OK #3, 2016. Digitised photographic image printed onto clear acrylic sheet suspended on projecting aluminium frame. 120 x 120 cm. Articulate Gallery, Leichhardt. Photo: Merryn Hull. .................................................................................................................. 73
Figure 33 Merryn Hull, I only ever wanted to be a painter, 2018. Aluminium wall frame, switch-glass panel, sensors, aluminium shelf, aluminium box, fluorescent light tube and electrical cables. Dimensions variable. Glass panel is 90 x 60 cm. (Under-construction) Photo: Merryn Hull. .................................................................................................................. 74
Figure 34 Merryn Hull, Minoritarian, 2017. Timber framed three-dimensional forms with fine steel mesh, clear acrylic panels with fluorescent lights, cables and coloured floor lights. Dimensions variable. Installation view. SCA studio. Photo: Merryn Hull. .................................................................................................................. 78
Figure 35 Merryn Hull, Stair #3, 2018. Photographic image. Stairwell in Painting Department, Sydney College of the Arts, Rozelle. Photo: Merryn Hull. .................................................................................................................. 83
Figure 36 Merryn Hull, Meccano, 2018. Aluminium framed mobile sculpture with attached two-way mirror surfaces. Approximately 250 x 100 x 50 cm. Installation view with Stair #3 wall-mounted behind. Verge Gallery, Sydney. Photo: Merryn Hull. .................................................................................................................. 85
Figure 37 Wolfgang Tillmans, Wake, 2001. Inkjet print as part of an installation with Isa Genzken, Science Fiction/hier und jetzt zufrieden sein (Being Satisfied Now). Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, SMB, Schenkung der Friedrich Christian Flick Collection. ©2017. Photo: Thomas Bruns. .................................................................................................................. 86
Figure 40 Merryn Hull, Stair #1, Stair #2, 2018. Photographic image printed onto clear acrylic sheet. 70 x 70 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull. .................................................................................................................. 91
Figure 41 Merryn Hull, Stair #1, Stair #2, 2018. Photographic image printed onto clear acrylic sheet. 70 x 70 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull. .................................................................................................................. 91
Figure 42 Stephen Little, Equinox 2016. Two wall mounted photographic images. Installation view. Photo: Robin Hearfield and Anthony Hodgkinson. .................................................................................................................. 94
Figure 44 Merryn Hull, Waiting (2018). Aluminium, open-framed structure with metallic mesh and fluorescent light on steel base. 4.0 m x 40 cm x 40 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull (Under construction). .................................................................................................................. 100
Figure 45 Theory of ‘Imminence’ – Indicative Flow Diagram. .................................................................................................................. 110
Figure 46 Merryn Hull, Becoming of Unbecoming, 2018. 23K Gold on aluminium panel. Detail. ........................................................................ 121
Figure 47 Merryn Hull, Stair #3, 2018. Two-way mirror acrylic, aluminium frame, fluorescent tubes, electric cable. 60 x 60 x 12 cm. Installation view, Sydney College of the Arts, Rozelle. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.32) .................................................................................................................. 163
Figure 48 Merryn Hull, Stair #3, 2018. Two-way mirror acrylic, aluminium frame, fluorescent tubes, electric cable. 60 x 60 x 12 cm. Installation view, SCA Main Entry Lobby, Rozelle. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.32)

Figure 49 Merryn Hull, Stair #3, 2018. Two-way mirror acrylic, aluminium frame, fluorescent tubes, electric cable. 60 x 60 x 12 cm. Installation view, SCA Main Entry Lobby, Rozelle. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.32)

Figure 50 Merryn Hull, Lines of flight, 2018. Polished aluminium welded sculptures on solid bases. 240 cm high with variable dimensions. Installation view. SCA Main Gallery. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.36) .......... 164

Figure 51 Merryn Hull, Lines of flight, 2018. Polished aluminium welded sculptures on solid bases. 240 cm high with variable dimensions. Installation view. SCA Main Gallery. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.36) .......... 165

Figure 52 Merryn Hull, Stair #1, Stair #2, 2018. Digitised images mounted on clear acrylic panels over light boxes, electrical cable. 280 x 140 x 12 cm. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.48) ........................................... 166

Figure 53 Merryn Hull, Stair #1, Stair #2, 2018. Digitised images mounted on clear acrylic panels over light boxes, electrical cable. 280 x 140 x 12 cm. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.48) ........................................... 166

Figure 54 Merryn Hull, I only ever wanted to be a painter, 2018. Aluminium wall frame, switch-glass panel, sensors, aluminium shelf, aluminium box, fluorescent light tube and electrical cables. Dimensions variable. View of glass switched off. Glass panel is 60 x 90 cm. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.73) .............................. 167

Figure 55 Merryn Hull, I only ever wanted to be a painter, 2018. Aluminium wall frame, switch-glass panel, sensors, aluminium shelf, aluminium box, fluorescent light tube and electrical cables. Dimensions variable. View of glass switched on. Glass panel is 60 x 90 cm. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.73) .............................. 167

Figure 56 Merryn Hull, Installation view of Still going, 2018 composed of two parts: Meccano, 2019, with Stair #4, 2018, behind. Meccano comprises three aluminium-framed mobile structures with attached two-way mirror surfaces, approximately 250 x 100 x 50 cm; Stair #4 is a digitised photographic print over two-way mirror on aluminium frame placed in front of gallery window, 240 cm 120 cm. Photo: Isobel-Markus Dunworth. (P.84) ................................. 168

Figure 57 Merryn Hull, Installation view of Still going, 2018 showing two parts: Meccano, 2019, with Stair #4, 2018, behind. Photo: Isobel-Markus Dunworth. (P.84) ................................. 169

Figure 58 Merryn Hull, Detail view of Still going, 2018 showing two parts: Meccano, 2019, with Stair #4, 2018, behind. Photo: Isobel-Markus Dunworth. (P.84) ................................. 169

Figure 59 Merryn Hull, Installation view of Still going, 2018 showing two parts: Meccano, 2019, with Stair #4, 2018, behind. Photo: Alex Golding. (P.84) ................................. 170

Figure 60 Merryn Hull, Waiting, 2019. Aluminium, open framed aluminium structure with metallic mesh and ultra-violet LED spotlights, electrical cables. Installation view. Photo: Nina Cholerton. (P.99) ............................. 171

Figure 61 Merryn Hull, Becoming of Unbecoming, 2019. 23K gold, aluminium panel, black paint. 240 x 120 cm. Photo: Nina Cholerton. (P.120) ........................................................................ 172

Figure 62 Merryn Hull, (Be)Comings and goings, 2019. Installation view. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth..... 173

Figure 63 Merryn Hull, (Be)Comings and goings, 2019. Installation view. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth..... 173
INTRODUCTION

The more our daily life appears standardised, stereotyped and subject to an accelerated reproduction of objects of consumption, the more art must be injected into it in order to extract from it that little difference …¹

Ross Gibson’s essay, the Known World, was the genesis for my doctoral research through its exposition of seemingly unrelated ideas.² Gibson’s essay describes a brief memoir entitled Letter to D, written by Andre Gorz to his beloved and ailing wife Doreen. It touched not only my romantic heart but also connected with me personally in two significant ways.³ The first reinforces the difference between myself and my partner: his is an intellect based on learned and examined facts; mine, like Doreen’s, is founded on intuition and subjective conviction. As Gibson states, a Letter to D examines “… two distinct but complementary ways of knowing”.⁴ The second influence is that Letter to D was written by the Austrian social philosopher Andre Gorz who has had a strong influence on my partner’s academic life. These two ideas combined to give me the confidence to build a PhD based on something that seemed little more than a hunch. As a result, my PhD has emerged as a series of quite distinct moments and, as if in some form of giant puzzle, I started collecting clues – some major and some just tiny pieces of a much larger idea.

The emergence of my research around these issues started in a BFA Honours Year with the work Untitled (2012), where a group of paintings that I had spent one year making suddenly seemed irrelevant.

⁴ Gibson, ”The Known World,” 2.
Figure 1 Merryn Hull, *Untitled*, 2012. Aluminium frame with painted panels, coloured acrylic sheets and neon lights. 200 x 160 x 40 cm. National Art School, Sydney. Photo: Nina Cholerton.

They were no better (or worse) than so many other paintings that I had produced. Yet the idea of being a painter at that time was very important to me and not something that I was prepared to forgo. The paintings were all similar, positioned as either bold bands of strong colour or simplified monochromes. I also placed clear and coloured fluorescent panels over and next to the paintings, and I recognised that individual paintings were enhanced by the added dimensions of reflection and transparency. I made a significant transition when I took the elements of colour, shape and surface off the singular plane of the canvas and migrated them to a three-dimensional aluminium trolley. This felt like a breakthrough. The idea offered a win-win, enabling me to continue as a painter while at the same time exploring other more conceptual ideas. The narrow depth of the trolley reinforced the pictorial reading of the work and positioned it as a large three-dimensional collage. In other words, individual paintings effectively became props for the larger installation.
The more recent MFA project documented under the exegesis title, *Not Quite Art ... Not Quite Architecture: The development of spatiality within contemporary painting as an expanded practice* explored a similar notion of spatiality within the context of painting. There were significant differences, however. The MFA painting-sculpture was larger, making it possible to physically enter the artwork itself, as opposed to emphasising the pictorial in the earlier collaged Honours work. This project referenced A Lazar Markovich Lissitzky’s (known as El Lissitzky) *Abstract Cabinet* (1927-1928)\(^5\) in several ways, particularly in terms of enabling the viewer to find views of the artwork that were not immediately available.

\[\text{Figure 2} \text{ Merryn Hull, } BVM, \text{ 2015. Aluminium frame with painted panels, coloured acrylic sheets and fluoro lights. 210 x 200 x 200 cm. Installation view. National Art School, Sydney. Photo: Merryn Hull.}\]

The BVM aimed to identify new opportunities for viewer engagement using similar concepts to those PREVIOUSLY explored by El Lissitzky, who had experimented with a variety of hands-on displays, opportunities for rearrangement, optical transformations of colour and viewing panels that the viewer could manipulate. A significant juncture in my research exploration was when I took photographs of various views of my artwork for documentation purposes. These photographic documentations offered views that were not immediately accessible within the trolley and consequently provided a means of critically reflecting on the work I had created in the studio, in a way that I had not anticipated. This expanded El Lissitzky’s ideas so that, even though the viewer was not physically able to rearrange the work, the photographs provided views that were not otherwise available. In other words, the photographs were directly connected to the artwork in that they were not only documentation but they also provided access for the work’s audience to views (ideas) that may not have been immediately apparent.
As I now reflect critically on the MFA trolley, my initial criticism of it as being a simple extension of the Honours trolley takes on a new significance. The MFA work represented much more than an opportunity to assemble paintings on a mobile structure and to identify the value of the photographic in my work. Of key significance, it reinforced, in several important ways, the influence of a group of artists who I call my exemplars. The first was through the title of the sculptural work *BVM* (2015), which stands for *Becoming V. Mendiburo*. When I started the MFA at the National Art School in 2013, I was shown into my new studio. On the wall, written in felt pen on a piece of torn masking tape, was the name ‘V. Mendiburo’ who was obviously the intended occupant for that studio. Valentina Mendiburo didn’t appear, and I never discovered who she is. But something happened to me in that studio with her name on my wall. I started to feel, in the way an actor does who takes on a different persona, that I could be her and, in so doing, be whoever I wanted. This idea recalled El Lissitzky who had chosen not to show his own work in the *Abstract Cabinet* but instead exhibited other artist colleagues’ work. He had done this, I propose, to reinforce the opportunity to “emancipate the viewer” by giving them the freedom to view a variety of other artworks in diverse ways. In other words, to enable a different type of encounter for the artwork’s viewer.

These ideas enabled me to embark on a program of intensive research. This is how the influence of my exemplars evolved, particularly the first and most influential, the German contemporary sculptor Isa Genzken. As well as Genzken, the other artists and art-related ideas I designate as my exemplars are: secondly, the light and space movement, and the work of the American installation artist Robert Irwin; the third is the notion of expanded or meta-painting as articulated by the Sydney artist and academic Stephen Little; and finally the photographic as a general idea but more specifically expressed as abstracted or conceptual images in works by photographers such as the German artist, Wolfgang Tillmans. The exemplars are fundamental to my PhD, and their influence was ignited within the *BVM*. The PhD research question has become a search to understand why these four artists/ideas remain so important and, most crucially, what it is that links such a diverse group of artists/ideas and designates them as the catalyst for my doctoral creative work.

---

6 Sarah Beth Hinderliter, "The Space of Painting: Kurt Schwitters and El Lissitzky" (Columbia University, 2008), 98.
Amongst the four exemplars Genzken’s influence is the most significant on all aspects of my practice. The basis of this is that her work is constantly evolving and can be understood as a process of continual transformation. She achieves this either physically, through various forms of material change; conceptually, through an awareness of a transition in focus in works where her intention appears different from first viewing; and intellectually, by enabling the viewer to understand the significance of a larger issue through the viewing of what often appears banal. These ideas triggered much of what was at stake for me within the BVM. Genzken works with collected objects that she assembles in various ways to form a column, a pedestal, a mannequin or her own body. What is crucial to my studio research is that her work, in terms of its materiality and subject matter, hovers in a space of transformative encounter that is in constant flux and evokes a state of anticipation in its viewer. Through its material fluidity, it asks open-ended questions about viewership. It constantly surprises, sometimes shocks and often, in its overt banality, appals the viewer. Genzken’s work encompasses aspects of each of the other three exemplars.

These are the fundamental ideas that I explored in the BVM. I began the BVM by including fluorescent lights in my work and found myself particularly attracted to the reflections and activated surfaces that fluorescents create on coloured and clear acrylic sheet. Previously I had experimented with neon light but discovered I preferred the less finely-honed and more everyday quality of the thin fluorescent tubes. At the time of making the BVM I did not think in terms of the West Coast ‘light and space’ movement of the ‘60s. Progressively I came to understand the perceptual capacity of light in this form of artwork, which identified my second exemplar as the installation and light artist, Robert Irwin.

Fundamentally, the BVM was framed as a type of expanded painting, and this constitutes my third exemplar. I have been influenced by Sydney-based artist and academic Stephen Little whose work transfers properties that traditionally characterize painting to re-present them in non-painting forms, i.e. through the use of everyday objects. The basis of Little’s influence on my work relates to his expansion of the object status of painting by reworking pictorial traditions and painterly convention through the use of other media, particularly the photographic and the moving image. Little’s hypothesis validated my initial intention to

7 Stephen Little, "Painting in Transit: Inter-Domain Transfer and Material Reformation" (Goldsmith College, University of London, 2010).
retain the notion of painting within the BVM, while also justifying its expansion into an interdisciplinary environment.

The use of several fluorescent acrylic boxes identified a new area of investigation for me. I had not planned to use these boxes in the BVM but when I did, I discovered views highlighted by reflected fluorescent light and different surface treatment. The notion of incorporating the photographic in the form of discovered images emerged in my work at this time too. I took extensive photos of the BVM and interrogated them digitally. I would go through image after image until I found one that captured a particular quality of lighting, reflectivity or unexpected juxtaposition of transparent images. Many of these photos were coloured pink because one of the boxes was constructed from fluoro pink acrylic. Consequently, this colour with its pink-to-orange-to-purple-to-magenta fluorescent hues has featured strongly in this set of documentation. Initially I thought about German artist Thomas Demand who, as a sculptor, started photographing his scaled models and then realised that the photographic work was more interesting to him than the original model. As I photographed the BVM I felt the same, and therefore the photographic emerged as the fourth exemplar, though my own photographs capture a conceptual abstraction seen in photographer Wolfgang Tillmans’ work.

One of the unifying ideas linking the four exemplars is a desire to move beyond the purely aesthetic to establish a connection of social significance in some way. Whilst their work would not be categorised as political activism, their work insinuates a further dimension for reflection. Fundamental to all of these artists is a consistent idea that nothing is fixed: the work is evolving, almost unfinished, and there is still more to come, either in the physical completion of the work or in terms of a growing understanding of what the work evokes for the viewer. This indeterminacy, this not-yet or the about-to-happen-ness, identifies the opportunity for stronger theoretical and philosophical critique of their work, particularly in terms of its influence on my own.

When I started the PhD at Sydney College of the Arts in 2015 my plan was to build on the experience of the BVM, make installations from the trolley works and then document views inside them. These images would be positioned as expanded painting, as I overtly referenced in the title of my PhD proposal – ‘Extraordinary views: Locating expanded painting through installation and digital technologies’. As a former practising architect, my interest in spatiality had been concealed during the early years of my art studies, as if in some obscure,
guilt-ridden way it needed to remain a secret. The Masters years and the opportunity provided by the BVM had given me the license to come out. My work exploded in architectonic concepts, and I revelled in the translation of architectural ideas into artwork, freed from the burden of client requirements. In the first year of my PhD research I was involved in a number of exhibitions that provided the opportunity for me to explore a range of ideas prompted by this early research.

At the end of the PhD first year I visited Dia:Beacon in upstate New York. As this was my second visit to Dia, I expected the general gallery layout to be more or less the same as on my first visit. I was surprised, however, to find myself quite literally inside Robert Irwin’s *Excursus: Homage to a Square³* (2015), which was unexpectedly placed at the entry to one of the galleries. Immersed in this installation “lit up with emptiness”, I was instantly aware that I was participating in the answer to a question that I had at that stage barely begun to formulate: a question concerning endless spatiality, but a spatiality which went beyond the spatial to engage with something-more.

---

8 Robert Irwin, *Excursus: Homage to a Square³*, 2015. Robert Irwin’s *Excursus: Homage to a Square [cubed]* was first shown in Dia Art Foundation’s former Center for the Arts on 22nd Street in New York in Spring 1998, as *Prologue: X 18 [cubed]***.

I understood that the experience of this artwork was very different to the perceptual experiments of some of Irwin’s colleagues such as James Turrell or Douglas Wheeler, or to contemporary artists working in similar areas such as Olafur Eliasson or Ann Veronica Janssens. The precise difference was difficult to articulate. I felt no anxiety, no self-consciousness, no sense of fear or loss of clarity, or any of the perceptions sometimes encountered in light and space installations. Instead the exhilaration I felt was measured: it embodied me in a lived experience; it felt familiar. As it was the middle of summer, the sun occasionally shone into the gallery and, when it did, I was imbued with an open experience of pure white light. This was coupled with a reassuring awareness of peripheral activity and shimmering colour emerging within this perfect whiteness. The experience was one of lightness imbued with wonder and a sense of delight. It shimmered with time. I have since come to recognise this as an articulation of what I refer to as the temporality of ‘imminence’ – a moment in time where there is a heightened awareness that something has not-yet but is about-to-happen.
Another milestone moment for the PhD came when I read Robin Clark’s catalogue titled *Phenomenal: Californian Light, Space and Surface – September 2011 - January 2012* in which she asks the question which has become pivotal to this research: “How then do we lift the temporal object-event from the flow of unexamined activity so that it might come under introspective scrutiny?” This seemingly straightforward question captures everything I had aimed to achieve in the *BVM*. Firstly, the phrase “temporal object-event” seemed to perfectly describe what it was I was trying to define. Without any real understanding of what this phrase meant, I behaved like Doreen and again followed the hunch. Secondly, the idea of asking how we get the viewer to stop, see the work and think about it (really think about it), expressed the sort of relationship that I had explored in the *BVM* under El Lissitzky’s influence. The notion of “the temporal” appeared at first to be disconnected from me and my exemplars’ object-based, spatial practices, but the Dia:Beacon experience had made me receptive to additional possibilities. I now recognise that what shimmered within Irwin’s installation on that sunny day in Beacon was my awareness of an enhanced relationship with time.

I have come to understand that the specific idea that links my exemplars is how different forms of temporality inscribe the viewer in a range of time-related experiences that engender a particular form of encounter. One of the thesis’ aims is to look at temporality, specifically within the context of the exemplars whom I now designate as my unlikely exemplars; unlikely not because of any lack of artistic skill or critical recognition, but because their work does not initially appear to embody temporality. In fact, I propose that their idiosyncratic and very different practices are infused with the idea of temporality. My aim is to identify how temporality manifests in their practices, how this is relevant for my own practice and how these ideas can be used to define a contemporary aesthetic of temporality. In order to do this my research specifically focuses on the particular temporal idea of ‘imminence’, which I define to mean something that is *about-to-happen*. I claim that it is what I develop and designate the Theory of ‘Imminence’ and how it can be portrayed that identifies a sense of contemporary possibilities for my research.

---

By saying that art can be situated in ‘imminence’, I am proposing a series of sensory, perceptual and intellectual relationships between the art work and the viewer that reflect on philosophical discourse relating to the *about-to-happen*, to the notion of the ‘virtual’ and particularly to the understanding of the capacity for change and transformation. I argue that some of the work of the four exemplars possesses a sense of contemporary temporality that expresses ‘imminence’, and it is this quality which I tried to capture in the *BVM*. These artworks possess a temporality that is so implicit as to be mostly overlooked in their critical review. By reflecting on the processes and ideas explored within the *BVM*, particularly in terms of reviewing its successes and failures and by identifying temporality within the exemplars’ artworks, I have been able to cross a threshold of understanding to identify the critical starting point for my PhD research as outlined below.

Chapter One, Encounters in minimalism, establishes that the term ‘minimalism’ is used throughout my thesis to suggest the multiple, often contradictory, multi-faceted and transforming notions of minimalism. This chapter is not an historical account of the avant-garde period of Minimalism. Instead, my research into various ideas of minimalism reveals the minimalist aesthetic as fundamental to the transformative encounter. This chapter establishes the scope of my research by introducing the term contemporary ‘assemblage’. I show that ‘assemblage’ provides the framework for the co-existence of diverse aspects of ‘minimalism’ that I draw on through both its art-historical and philosophical interpretation to explore how these ideas manifest within my studio research.

Chapter Two, Becoming-Assemblage, explores two of the key elements, the sensorial and the multi-temporal, which I claim constitute contemporary ‘assemblage’. This chapter represents the *modus operandi* of the thesis in that it establishes the aesthetic and theoretical ideas that underpin the ‘assemblage’ by specifically illustrating how these ideas manifest in my research. I interrogate two different iterations of one artwork titled *I’m OK, You’re OK #1* and #2. The first iteration explores how affect is established through the sensorial; the second, explores the multi-temporal to establish a diverse variety of temporal moments as the “temporal object-event”.

Chapter Three, Conceptions of Reality, extends and clarifies the second chapter by discussing a third element, which is the capacity to think beyond what we initially see. I claim that this occurs through the photographic image. It is its ability to convey multi-temporal conceptions
of reality to activate the ‘actual-virtual’ element of the ‘assemblage’ that reinforces the potential of transition from one state to an alternative one. As a result, I claim that the fully co-functioning ‘assemblage’ identifies how social and ‘political’ outcomes can manifest within contemporary ‘assemblage’. I use my own work and photographic images by Tillmans and Little to support my argument.

Chapter Four, The Moment of Imminence, synthesises the first three chapters. I use examples of mine and Genzken’s to clarify the role of ‘imminence’ within the functioning of a potent ‘assemblage’ through the sensorial and affective, the historical, the personal, the ‘political’. This chapter explores how the Moment of ‘Imminence’ brings these diverse ideas together to construct a framework titled the Theory of ‘Imminence’, that comprises eight principles explicated throughout the thesis. In this, it brings together studio and theoretical research to validate ideas that had initially been subjective. The Theory of ‘Imminence’ can be thought of as being composed of a series of aesthetic strategies underpinned by philosophical concepts. Whilst the theory incorporates eight distinct principles it is also fully idiosyncratic, so that on one hand it may appear rigid, on the other it can be seen to be constantly evolving to identify new possibilities. The Theory of ‘Imminence’ derives from the promise and poignancy of the Moment of ‘Imminence’ as something that is about-to-happen that encourages the viewer to stay with the artwork for long enough to discover more about the work. It identifies the potential for something to change, and for an existing state being open to challenge and therefore to the possibility of transformation. The Theory of ‘Imminence’ validates the key notion established throughout the thesis that contemporary ‘assemblage’ becomes the catalyst for the transformative encounter.

Much of my early research focused on the French post-structuralist Gilles Deleuze. As many of his ideas synthesise the views of other philosophers such as David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson and Baruch Spinoza, his work can be thought of as a model of thinking, encompassing multiple and pluralist philosophies.\textsuperscript{11} My research deliberately draws on many multi-disciplinary thinkers, including other philosophers, artists, art and social theorists, architects, anthropologists and archaeologists, to capture a range of diverse points of view. Whilst my discussions often turn to Deleuze, I position his ideas, particularly those on aesthetic issues such as cinema and painting during the third phase of his work 1981–

1991, as the catalyst for other new ideas.¹² Deleuze’s concepts, which are rarely explained and never resolved, provide a useful springboard for the contemporary interpretation of views through my own aesthetic understandings.

It has none the less been the Deleuze-Félix Guattari articulation of the ‘actual-virtual’ coalescence, and its implications for social and ‘political’ interpretation and transformation, which is of significance for my research.¹³ Many ideas such as ‘lines of flight’ and ‘assemblage’ provide the embryo from which I formulate my own aesthetic theories, filtered through other multi-disciplinary perspectives. One example is the prominence I give to the term ‘imminence’, initially introduced by the anthropologist Nestor Canclini¹⁴ in his text Art Beyond Itself: Anthropology for a Society without a Story Line.¹⁵ My discussion of ‘imminence’ emerges through theories introduced by Deleuze even though the term does not form part of Deleuze’s philosophical project.¹⁶ This is a useful example of how a concept expands through research to develop its own idiosyncratic interpretation.

¹² Ibid.
¹⁵ Whilst advocating the use of the term, Canclini does not rigorously interrogate its efficacy. By using “imminence” throughout my dissertation in a similar way to Canclini, I have been able to extend its meaning, culminating in its prominence within my research.
¹⁶ His writing focuses on the similar though philosophically different term “immanence”, which means “existing or remaining within”, a term I deliberately avoid despite its potential relevance for my research.
CHAPTER 1  ENCOUNTERS IN MINIMALISM

In this first chapter I show that my early research into aspects and forms of minimalism reveals the minimalist aesthetic as fundamental to the transformative encounter. This occurs through what I term contemporary ‘assemblage’. It is the co-functioning capacity of the ‘assemblage’, together with the transformative potential of minimalism, which enables the artwork to engage with its viewer on multiple levels and through multiple temporalities. These ideas, evidenced in Robert Irwin’s installation at Dia:Beacon, highlight that Excursus provides a site of multi-temporal engagement and with it the potential to establish a particular form of encounter between viewer and artwork. Irwin’s extra-ordinary installation, which I theorise as contemporary ‘assemblage’, not only introduced the notion of the temporal but also reveals the contradiction that is at the heart of minimalism and evident in much of my research. This is minimalism’s capacity to function between two seemingly disparate ideas: the phenomenological notion of embodied perception on one hand and the simplified and reduced reality of the everyday on the other. My research establishes that it is when these elements coalesce that the viewer’s anticipation of the about-to-happen is activated and the artwork’s full potential revealed. What follows briefly outlines how this occurs, establishes the minimalist aesthetic as fundamental to the moment of encounter and identifies the roles of both art-historical and philosophical ‘assemblage’ within the contemporary trajectory of my research.

The term ‘minimalism’ is used throughout my thesis to suggest diverse concepts of minimalism that encompass a variety of stylistic approaches and very different artworks. I suggest that what connects these works, through their varied expressions of minimalism and historical trajectories, is their concern with what academic Marc Botha calls “a type of

realism” comported towards the minimum. My use of the term ‘minimalism’ also includes the precursors and successors of historical Minimalism, particularly the early Constructivists and the later post-Minimal artists. James Meyer, in his seminal text, provides a comprehensive history of minimalism. He discusses the notion of many minimalisms, and I expand this idea liberally, within the context of the vast scholarship surrounding the term, to identify the many areas of influence on my research particularly those related to its unexpected capacity to reflect on complex issues through diverse conceptions of the real. I specifically limit the term ‘Minimalism’ (or ‘Minimal’ art) to define the avant-garde tradition that emerged from early to late 1960s in America and Europe.

Botha reinforces my argument by clarifying and theorising minimalism through its diversity in terms of medium, purpose and style. His interrogation of the potential activated through the encounter with the minimalist object supports my claim by discussing how the encounter establishes what he calls “events of connection” which he considers derive from the transparency and emphasis on process of the minimalist aesthetic. Seminal texts by the key writers on Minimalism, particularly Robert Morris, Michael Fried and Clement Greenberg, are of particular interest in their focus on the establishment of a new paradigm for abstracted sculpture positioned in relation to formally reduced, abstract painting. I also utilise the extensive writings of Rosalind Krauss and Hal Foster for their keen insights and, particularly with Krauss, her more recent views on the evolution of minimalism in its capacity to turn (return) towards radical aesthetic possibilities. Morris captures many of these ideas through his early writings on the Minimalist capacity to activate and establish the encounter, but more significantly in his art practice through transforming manifestations of minimalism. His trajectory towards the minimal blurs the distinction between formal

---

19 Ibid.xiv  
reduction and the Dadaist challenge to the definition of art.\textsuperscript{27} Morris’s sculptures require the viewer’s active participation in what he describes as a perceptual system that reinforces the temporal nature of the encounter between the body, the work and the gallery.\textsuperscript{28} This chapter does not intend an historical account of Minimalism. My interest relates to interrogating minimalism as fundamental to the transformative encounter in order to identify how these ideas manifest in contemporary three-dimensional artworks. Viewed within the context of twentieth century art-movements, ‘assemblage’ emerges as a logical term to describe my research, which resides within multiple, overlapping notions of minimalism and particularly ones that \textit{assemble} material, emotional, perceptual and philosophical elements.

Tendencies evident within my early art practice align with the minimalist pursuit of transparency and engagement between artwork and viewer, particularly through the transformation from \textit{painting-to-sculpture}.\textsuperscript{29} Prior to studying art, I had practiced architecture for some years so that the minimal aesthetic evident in my art practice was well-founded through the architectural. I had trained in a period of architectural education in Sydney (1969-1975) that was enriched by European émigrés and academics who had moved from Europe in periods after World War II. Many of these distinguished teachers, including László Peter Kollar\textsuperscript{30} and George Molnar,\textsuperscript{31} devotees of Bauhausian-influenced Modernist principles, ignited my belief in the simplicity of a socially aware, reduced aesthetic founded on values of the human condition. Kollar’s acclaimed lectures and writing on what he referred to as the architect’s [artist’s] responsibility to engender “delight” unrelated to colour, shape or form, resonated with me as a young student to influence all aspects of my professional life.\textsuperscript{32}

The foundations for my doctoral research, established through my early art practice, reference specific ideas of minimalism during the twentieth century. Rather than providing historical examples I refer to some of my early artworks as useful illustrations of different forms of encounter with the minimalist artwork. These artworks clearly establish that the encounter is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} \textit{Minimalism}, 26.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 30.
\item \textsuperscript{29} I am thinking here of the most recognised Minimalists such as Donald Judd and André Flavin.
\item \textsuperscript{30} László Peter Kollar (1926–2000) was born in Budapest and migrated to Australia in 1950. He was an architect and professor at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, highly regarded for his ‘Design Principles’, summarised within his \textit{Patterns of Delightful Architecture}, 1985.
\item \textsuperscript{31} George Molnar (1910-1998) was born in Hungary. He was a recognised artist, architect and cartoonist and lectured at the University of Sydney and the University of NSW.
\item \textsuperscript{32} László Peter Kollar, \textit{Patterns of Delightful Architecture} (Kensington, NSW: University of NSW, Faculty of Architecture, 1985).
\end{itemize}
at the heart of the minimalist aesthetic. Botha confirms this view when he states that, “the singularity of the [minimalist] artwork resides … in the manner in which it opens itself to the possibility of the encounter”.33 What this reveals is that “the particularity of any artwork resides in an encounter by the viewer”,34 manifested in the minimalist artwork’s pursuit of clarity through reduction and simplification. The focus on establishing an enhanced encounter between viewer and artwork underpins the history of the minimalist sculpture.

My early research [Figures 5–12] exemplifies what initially manifested as diverse contradictions in style, medium, scale, materiality and process. I now recognise that what these early artworks sought were disparate conceptions of reality, motivated by their attempt to actively engage their viewer. Whilst their historical lineage is evident, what follows is a brief overview of the significant encounters in minimalism that these artworks capture. I include these examples to highlight the specific ways that the minimalist aesthetic manifests and I reference a range of Minimalist artists and scholars in order to build a summary of their different positions. This then leads to a contextual overview of art-historical ‘assemblage’, discussed in terms of its early Minimalist aspirations, which evokes many of these ideas. I then broaden the discussion through reference to my recent artworks titled Stair #3 (2018) and Lines of Flight (2018) that embody minimalist ideas contemporised through the broader context of contemporary ‘assemblage’. What is of key significance in their review is that these ideas introduce what I refer to as the Moment of ‘Imminence’, the pivotal idea in this dissertation. I conclude the chapter by showing that it is through its anticipation of the about-to-happen that the Moment of ‘Imminence’ manifests in these sculptures through contemporary ‘assemblage’.

---

33 Botha, A Theory of Minimalism, 42.
34 Ibid., 40.
Figure 5 *Still in Love in Paris*, 2010. Acrylic paint on canvas, 150 cm x 150 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull.

Figure 6 *Looking to Springtime*, 2010. Acrylic paint on canvas with clear acrylic overlay and spray enamel, 150 cm x 150 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull.

Figure 7 *Architectural Research*, 2011. Acrylic paint, clear acrylic sheets, dimensions variable. Photo: Merryn Hull.

Figure 8 *Paris Iron*, 2011. Oil paint, acrylic sheets, mirror, plastic ventilator and aluminium on panel ironing board with LED, dimensions variable. Photo: Merryn Hull.
While my early artworks reveal various ways that the Minimalist artists engaged their viewer, my intention at the time had not been an appropriation of Minimalism. Though I cannot deny being familiar with their work and influenced by it, I theorised my early research through
painting as an expanded practice, particularly in terms of finding ways to make abstraction engage with meaning. My trajectory, similar to the early Minimalists, was to investigate ways of establishing a more open, inclusive and reflective type of encounter that takes the artwork beyond subjectivity and ‘good design’. In other words, to find ways to balance the simplified aesthetic encounter with ideological or social meaning. A starting point can be recognised through Donald Judd’s ‘Specific Objects’, the seminal text that best captures the turn from Minimal painting to the three-dimensional object. Though the object’s materiality had been explored by the early Constructivists, it was Judd’s writing that captured this transition. The approach and motivation for the Constructivist and early Minimalist transitions was similar: the use of materials to focus on their intrinsic and literalist properties; the de-personalised procedures of industrial production; the elimination of the artist’s hand and any form of representation and affectivity to avoid the narrative and the emotive. Their shared aim was an engaged and motivated viewer, emancipated from traditional modes of spectatorship, democratically enabled and respected through the creation of a dynamic and activated viewing experience.

The reductive, abstracted aesthetic of colour-field painting [Figure 5] is progressively abandoned for what Judd acknowledges as “real space”, exemplifying the transition from two to three-dimensional space. The shift in the early Minimalist works is not only into “real” space but also in the use of industrial materials, including Plexiglas, plywood and metal – materials that I intuitively favour derived from my architectural background. This is evident in the use of flat, simple design as my minimalist paintings progressively incorporate elements of pre-determined seriality through repetitive bands of colour [Figure 6]. My artworks’ progressive purging of subject matter and emotion none-the-less retains residues of their expressionist lineage, despite the use of semi-industrial materials and techniques of production [Figure 9].

The importance of the encounter in defining what was essential to minimalism is evident in this brief synopsis. Morris implies this when he wrote, “The better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light and the viewer’s field

---

Here, he not only establishes that the “literalist” object in its simple and reduced, non-expressive form is fundamental to Minimalism but, perhaps more crucially, that spectatorship takes place in real time and space. [See Figures 7 and 8 specifically, also subsequent figures, particularly Figures 9, 10, 11 and 12]. In this, Morris encourages the viewer into a particular form of encounter that shifts the focus from the object to its perception and its context. This epitomises Fried’s claim that the Minimal artwork sets up a theatrical relationship with its viewer, demanding his or her focus in the same way that an actor does. By highlighting the temporal nature of the encounter, Fried unintentionally identifies the crucial role that time plays in the experience of these minimal artworks.

Irwin’s *Excursus* demonstrates his “new state of the real” through phenomenological perception, influenced by Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s seminal texts, and focuses his work on sensorial perception through what he calls the “site-determined” environment.

The idea of a realism as radical as this, and with it the potential for endorsing a particular social or ‘political’ message, is introduced through the use of photographic images, such as in Robert Rauschenberg’s early screen-prints. The threshold between art and non-art becomes visible as the established views of aesthetic judgement are queried [Figure 10]. As Foster suggests, this pushes the perception of art toward the quotidian, the utilitarian and the non-artistic.

This is fundamental, Foster proposes, to the return of the ready-made paradigm and the avant-garde attack on the institution of art. “What is at stake in Minimalism is the nature of meaning and the status of the subject … produced in a physical interface with the actual world.” My artwork, composed of multiple sheets of readily available coloured acrylic, is a contemporary interpretation of a colour-field painting, manifested in three-dimensional form [Figure 12]. The *mise-en-scène* tableau evokes the everyday in a similar way, through its focus on narrative and the use of familiar materials, as seen in Robert Rauschenberg’s ‘combines’ [Figure 11]. These examples identify the progressive elimination of what Krauss

---

38 *Minimalism*, 272.
39 Ibid., 33.
42 Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," 271.
43 Ibid.
refers to as a single viewing position, which Bishop equates with an “emancipatory liberal politics” in terms of its opposition to seeing things from a predetermined point of view.\footnote{Bishop, \textit{Installation Art a Critical History}, 54.}

What this early research reveals is not only the diverse forms of the minimalist aesthetic but the contradictory shift between the understanding of minimalist sculpture through its phenomenological perception and the realist conception of the minimalist object as reduced, serial and of the everyday. This internal contradiction within minimalism is not only relevant to Minimalism suggests Krauss, but also to how we continue to engage with diverse ideas of minimalism.\footnote{Rosalind Krauss, "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," \textit{October} 54, no. Fall (1990).} Botha cites Giorgio Agamben here, suggesting that “it is precisely because the [minimalist] encounter instantiates a threshold – ‘an experience of the limit itself’, to recall Agamben’s formulation – that we are not compelled to decide between the realist and the perceptualist paradigms of the object, but able to recognise in the minimalist work a field of continuity between the two.”\footnote{Botha, \textit{A Theory of Minimalism}, 42. Cited from Giorgio Agamben, The Comming Community (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).} Their views further reinforce the validity of what initially had been a subjective decision within my research to concurrently pursue two seemingly contradictory ideas.

My conception of the term contemporary ‘assemblage’ and my use of it here provide a “field of continuity” for the co-existence of these diverse aspects of minimalism. The co-functioning capacity of elements within my studio research draws on ideas relating to the introduction of art-historical ‘assemblage’ which occurred during the early years of Minimalism. The philosophical interpretation of ‘assemblage’, which I discuss later in this chapter and expand in chapters two and three, provides a platform through which these ideas manifest within my studio research. The evolution towards the use of the term contemporary ‘assemblage’ is a logical outcome for my research. French art academic, Anna Dezeuze, posits that critical debate on ‘assemblage’ centres the viewer’s connection with ideas of recognisability, transformation and socio-political implications in mid twentieth century in Europe and America.\footnote{Anna Dezeuze, "Assemblage, Bricolage, and the Practice of Daily Life," \textit{Art Journal} Spring, no. 2008:67,1 (2008): 32.} In this, the emphasis on process enables a rethinking “through
suggestions of transformation, loss, or reinvention, assemblages effected a temporalisation of the object.\textsuperscript{48}

The historical background of art ‘assemblage’, whilst informative, is less relevant for my research than the motivation behind its introduction. In 1961 William Seitz’s “The Art of Assemblage” exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York\textsuperscript{49} formally established the term, giving the idea a name and official sanction.\textsuperscript{50} Of particular relevance is the symposium that accompanied the exhibition and the artists who were invited to take part in it. These included, amongst others, Marcel Duchamp, Richard Huelsenbeck, Robert Rauschenberg and Roger Shattuck.\textsuperscript{51} By inviting two of Dada’s founding fathers, Duchamp and Huelsenbeck, to participate in the symposium, Shattuck\textsuperscript{52} suggests that Seitz sought to highlight the cultural and philosophical underpinnings of ‘assemblage’ through Dada.\textsuperscript{53} These ideas reflect materials and procedures from the early 1950s that identify a trajectory of process-based practice focused on the “fitting together of parts and pieces”,\textsuperscript{54} while also conceiving of ‘assemblage’ as a “model of engagement with the world, rather than as a formal category of art”.\textsuperscript{55} The reading of ‘assemblage’ through both art and philosophical discourse confirms its relevance for my research. The term, which derives from the English translation of the French \textit{agencement} (meaning arrangement), suggests the process of arranging, organising and fitting together.\textsuperscript{56} This definition focuses my research on the philosophical and sociological interpretation of the philosophy of ‘assemblage’, while also identifying what has evolved through ‘assemblage’ theory.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} William C. Seitz, "The Art of Assemblage," ed. (MoMA) New York The Museum of Modern Art (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 120. To accompany the 252 heterogenous works, a few as early as the fifteenth century and the catalogue of 176 pages, Seitz provides his first definition of works that "incorporate reality ... without imitating it".
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 118.
\textsuperscript{54} Seitz, "The Art of Assemblage," 25.
Let me now briefly pause to discuss my two artworks, *Stair #3* (2018) and *Lines of Flight* (2018). I discuss them through their minimalist capacity to establish an enhanced encounter with their viewer, theorised as contemporary ‘assemblage’. *Stair #3* is composed of semi-transparent mirrored acrylic that sets up multiple, perceptual contradictions of reflection. The highly reflective surface captures shadows and passing reflections that are reminiscent of the “gorgeous surfaces” of Larry Bell and the contradictions implicit in his works in relation to the avowed avoidance of illusion in Minimalism.\(^57\) *Lines of Flight* incorporates common aluminium flat bars, some painted with transparent tinted resins, while continuing to ensure that the literal materiality of the aluminium is retained. In *Lines of Flight*, serial distribution of parts, as in Judd’s “one thing after another”,\(^58\) identifies that the pre-planned fabrication of the work prior to its making co-exists with informal opportunities for chance occurrences.

These artworks capture a slippage from a historical into a contemporary minimalism. *Stair #3* and *Lines of Flight* express an intuitive confidence in the capacity to empower minimalism with social meaning, and clearly refute criticism that minimalist artworks have no capacity for connection to political or social conditions. *Stair #3*, with its changing and expressive surface, negates the criticised “blank face of Minimalism …”, or any assertion of inaccessibility due to elitism as an expression of control, or its “…violent and patriarchal normativity”.\(^59\) The temporal and sensorial functions of the ‘assemblage’ contradict Anna C. Chave’s assertions of gender binaries that equate maleness with hard edge, hard shape and factory production.\(^60\) What we see in these two artworks is that their hard edge, hard shape and partial factory production act to enhance their capacity for connection through their co-existence with other elements (such as the sensoriality of the mirror surface, the temporality of the photographic image) within the ‘assemblage’. Viewed in this way, the minimalist form functions as the framework on which not only finish, colour and shape, but also philosophies, ideas and meaning are applied.

---

\(^{57}\) *Minimalism*, 28.


Stair #3 is a 60 cm x 60 cm square, wall-mounted artwork incorporating a single sheet of two-way mirror mounted directly onto an informally constructed 12 cm deep aluminium surround. The mirror has a photographic image of the interior of a stairwell at Sydney College of the Arts, Rozelle (SCA) printed onto its rear surface. Inside the frame sit two narrow fluorescent tubes that are visible in part through the mirror, together with their multi-

61 Stair #3 is part of a larger series of artworks that, with Meccano (2018), form an installation titled Still Going (2019). Stair #3 in an early iteration was shown at Verge Gallery, Sydney in October 2018.
coloured electrical cables connected to the fluorescent tubes’ ballast. The illuminated tubes enable the viewer to simultaneously see through part of the mirror, view the stair-image printed on the reverse side, see their own reflection and also see the gallery in which the artwork is located. Whilst Stair #3 can be theorised as an expanded painting, which acknowledges the influence of Krauss’s expanded field theory, for the purposes of this dissertation I position it as a co-functioning contemporary ‘assemblage’.62

What is evident in Stair #3 is its sense of immediacy or its belonging to the present (its reflective surface), despite evoking historical references and personal memories (its embodied photograph). The artwork exemplifies the minimalist encounter as being at once the most banal and also the most profound occurrence.63 On one hand, Stair #3 is a utilitarian small mirror projecting slightly beyond the wall, yet it embodies an extra-ordinary viewing experience: one that simultaneously captures both a heightened perceptual experience and an immediate and confronting encounter with reality. The viewer recognises that they are in control of their own viewing experience as they view the object from “various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial context”.64 The shape of Stair #3 constantly changes as the viewer alters their position relative to the work.65 As Hal Foster would suggest, “One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial context”.66

Stair #3, despite its relatively small size, attracts attention as one surveys the gallery. It is the slight sense of movement on the changing screen surface that identifies anticipation of the about-to-happen. The artwork’s potential for meaning is ignited by the opportunity to connect ideas (particularly the SCA stair-image with the viewer’s self and surrounding reflections) that have meaning, if – as viewers – we understand that we “must collaborate with the artist for the meaning to emerge.”67 The encounter between artwork and viewer, so actively sought by the early Minimalist artists, results from a heightened state of consciousness emanating from a cluster of self-rewarding activities, suggests Mihaly

65 Ibid.
66 Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism."
Csikszentmihalyi.\textsuperscript{68} In my example this equates to anticipation brought about by the deliberately chosen, though disparate, elements co-functioning within the ‘assemblage’ to pre-empt the Moment of ‘Imminence’. Multiple activities occur within the moment of viewing \textit{Stair #3}, as the viewer optically and perceptively assembles elements into a coherent whole. Several viewing themes are explored and enacted by the viewer.\textsuperscript{69} These result in an aesthetic encounter based on the disparate qualities of the photographic image of the old stair, together with the capacity for evoking ‘virtual’ and future possibilities through the two-way mirror. These examples identify the co-functioning potentialities of an individual’s past experience, in terms of their memories and familiarity with the artwork’s subject, with their progressive discovery of the work’s potential for meaning.\textsuperscript{70}

It is clear that the main quality contributing to this form of encounter is the temporal. Csikszentmihalyi, by proposing that time is experienced in terms of “seeing new things” and “reaching new understandings”, identifies that ultimately it is the viewer who transforms through these encounters.\textsuperscript{71} Henri Lefebvre offers a further explanation to support the form of encounter that I posit is experienced in \textit{Stair #3}, by suggesting that the multi-temporal capacity occurs “as a function of a history, the history of the individual.”\textsuperscript{72} I interpret Lefebvre here as suggesting that this form of encounter is possible when the individual is able to recognise them self and their own history in, and as, an element of the artwork. \textit{Stair#3} offers multiple opportunities for this, either through familiarity with the SCA stair itself, or personal memories associated with the architectural experience of similar stairs, or even through one’s reflection on empty and deserted places.

What we witness in \textit{Stair #3} is the emergence of anticipation, of the about-to-happen, and what I refer to in this research as the Moment of ‘Imminence’. Lefebvre, in his \textit{Critique of Everyday Life}, discusses ‘moments’ in their relation with everyday life and suggests that the

\textsuperscript{68} Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Rick E. Robinson Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, \textit{The Art of Seeing an Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter} (Malibu, California: The J. Paul Getty Trust Office of Production, 1990), viii.


\textsuperscript{70} Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, \textit{The Art of Seeing an Interpretation of the Aesthetic Encounter}, 127.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 131-33.

use of the term ‘moment’ in a particular way enables it to possess a range of specific characteristics.

*The moment is an impossible possibility, aimed at, desired and chosen as such.*

*Then what is impossible in the everyday becomes what is possible …*  

*The moment is born of the everyday and within the everyday … It is in the everyday that a possibility becomes apparent.*

Essentially, Lefebvre theorises the unique moment of possibility that I refer to as the Moment of ‘Imminence’. What is of interest is how this moment of possibility can be materialised in some form through the capacity of the ‘assemblage’ to enable the possibility of “the impossible” (or the ‘virtual’) through what is understood as the everyday. Or, as Lefebvre suggests,

*… we see that the ‘subject’ wishes something which is impossible in terms of the everyday; but the fact of making a decision changes what was a distant impossibility into an imminent possibility.*

It is clear that the Moment of ‘Imminence’ can occur when the viewer forges a connection to their environment through recognition of the familiar in terms of the everyday. The Minimalists in their various ways understood this and focused on eliminating distractions from the viewer’s field of vision so that they could better focus on the artwork. Through a focus on objects from the everyday, they enabled the viewer to better understand his or her connection to the artwork. *Lines of flight* (2018) reflects issues discussed in relation to *Stair#3* and connects my research to the early Minimalists through its focus on everyday materials and process. It also reflects the transforming role of sculpture as posed by many of the post-Minimalist sculptors and can be seen to explore many aspects of Meyer’s notion of multiple minimalisms. The aluminium bars and casually assembled welds are recognisable as being part of the everyday. Their process of making, overtly emphasised in the small video *Kaio 13/02/18* (2018), shows their capacity to coalesce Minimalist pre-planned industrial production with the post-Minimalist focus on chance and random encounters, through intuitive decision-making by the artist. The title of the artwork depicts the nature of the

---

73 Ibid., 347.
74 Ibid., 351.
75 Ibid., 356.
artwork. Deleuze and Guattari’s term, *Lines of Flight*, though clichéd through populist usage, captures my focus on the *about-to-happen*. Its intention to connect with its viewer by offering the possibility of ‘imminent’ escape, or alternatively to prevent the blocking of escape of any form of creativity, establishes the ultimate purpose of this installation.

![Figure 14](image)


*Lines of Flight* offers multiple viewing positions and alternative readings. The viewer recognises that, by physically moving their position, they are in control of the shape and
views that they can perceive. The quasi-columnar forms of *Lines of flight*, together with its seriality, transform the geometries of Minimalism into contemporary ‘assemblage’. The work is principally divested of colour to focus attention on the sculptural form, though, as Morris would suggest, the sculptures have not left behind their pictorial origins. The grouping cannot deny its figurative and anthropomorphic connotations. The ‘assemblage’ in its final iteration of approximately twelve forms is prominently placed in the gallery. This was the basis of Fried’s criticism of Minimalism, which he viewed as a theatrical relationship set up by the artwork placed in the middle of the gallery to demand the viewer’s attention in the same way as an actor. By considering this as an obtrusive demand for recognition, Fried identifies the temporal nature of the viewer’s encounter with Minimal art.

![Image](https://example.com/image.jpg)

**Figure 15** Isa Genzken. Installation view, 'Isa Genzken', Hauser & Wirth London, England, 2012. © Isa Genzken. Courtesy the artist, Hauser & Wirth and Galerie Buchholz, Cologne. Photo: Alex Delfanne

I contend that Minimalist or post-Minimalist theatricality is evident in contemporary practices such as Genzken’s, which embodies what Laura Hoptman describes as a found object-based language evolving from constructed objects to assembled ones. In a conceptually similar though aesthetically different approach to my research, Genzken’s “assemblage aesthetic” and minimalist lineage depict the translation of the readymade through contemporary objects of consumption, as either photographic images or everyday objects. Dezeuze reinforces that these forms of *assembling* practices focus on one of two themes: either “assemblage as a studio practice”, which relates to the expression of utopian

---

76 Morris, "Notes on Sculpture: Part 2."
78 Ibid., 134.
views by past avant-garde movements, or “assemblage as an everyday model of activism”, which captures a sense of survival, often in developing economies. These models, which are evident in my research, further build on the two strands of Minimalism suggested by Krauss, particularly a first strand leading directly from Minimalism to certain post-Minimal activities, and the second, as a clear rupture and break from Minimalism. In this, we see that contemporary practices which adopt an ‘assemblage’ model “set up open systems in which new relations between art and the everyday could be articulated”. Or, as Mieke Bal suggests, they activate the viewer in a variety of ways, “confronting him so strongly that he or she cannot remain passive and must engage with the works at the levels of intellectual thought, sensual experience and poetic participation …” It is this focus on the critique of the everyday through installations of social-significance that is recognisable in much contemporary art.

My research identifies a hybrid-model that manifests aspects of both the models identified by Dezeuze, to expand Agamben’s “field of continuity” between disparate ideas, with varying levels of emphasis placed on each model. The notion of the transformative, implicit in my research, suggests a transition from one state to an alternative one, which, as an aesthetic derived from transforming minimalisms, clearly proposes characteristics of both models. Whilst my research is not overtly focused on political activism, its focus on the philosophy of ‘becoming-other’ identifies the importance of what I consider to be the potential to engage with issues of social-significance.

These models reinforce the artwork’s capacity to establish a transformative encounter with its viewer through its focus on the everyday. Similarly, to the “new” works discussed by Judd in

---

83 In order to research contemporary sculpture, I reviewed some contemporary Australian art prizes such as the John Fries Award 2018. The stated objectives of the Award are “to establish a platform for some of the most engaging and experimental artworks” in 2018. Finalists listed their “themes that concern contemporary artists today”: they include … physical and social isolation; shaping of identity in a contemporary context; legacies of insurgency and emancipation; individual identity within consumer culture; assertion of indigenous voices; decolonising practices; climate sciences; power-relations that inform decision-making; gesture, ritual transculturation; cosmic-oriented philosophies; silenced histories and physical dynamics of energy etc. See http://www.johnfriesaward.com/
84 Giorgio Agamben, The Coming Community (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
his seminal *Specific Objects* as ‘neither painting nor sculpture’,\(^8^5\) the early Minimalist works used everyday materials derived from Constructivism, such as Plexiglas, aluminium and plastic, to forge a connection with their viewer. Greenberg, insightful in his critique of Minimalism, reinforces that these industrial materials encourage the quotidian and the utilitarian.\(^8^6\) Fundamental to Minimalism’s use of everyday materials is the “return of the readymade paradigm”\(^8^7\) to produce what Krauss refers to as the “physical interface with the actual world”.\(^8^8\) Viewed in this way, Seitz’s 1961 *Art of Assemblage* exhibition can be seen, through its Dada aspirations, as a moment within Minimalism in which the encounter with the everyday becomes fundamental to the artwork. The photographic image for example, reminiscent of Rauschenberg’s screen prints in his assemblage ‘combines’, is used in a similar way in *Stair #3* as a connector to the everyday. The photographic image used in this way is a kind of evidence of the everyday.\(^8^9\)

Lefebvre captures something of what this connection offers the viewer when he describes “an illusion not entirely illusory, but constituting a ‘world’ both apparent and real … quite different to the everyday world yet as open-ended and as closely dovetailed into the everyday as possible.”\(^9^0\) Genzken’s sculptures manifest views of everyday life through her use of objects that concurrently embody and critique contemporary society. It is the capacity for transition from one everyday into an alternative one, “… in so far as they are other than everyday life, and yet they are in everyday life”,\(^9^1\) which fosters critique through the everyday. This takes us back to the potential offered by the philosophical understanding of ‘assemblage’ as connecting a range of elements through the notion of the actual and ‘virtual’. I argue that it is through the notion of contemporary ‘assemblage’ that the everyday is able to co-exist with that which can only be imagined – as ideas and elements that connect with the viewer in ways that “are other than everyday life, and yet they are in everyday life.”\(^9^2\)

---

\(^8^5\) Judd, "Specific Objects."


\(^8^7\) "Sense and Sensibility: Reflection on Post 60s Sculpture."

\(^8^8\) "Sense and Sensibility: Reflection on Post 60s Sculpture."


\(^9^1\) Ibid.

\(^9^2\) Ibid.
One example of exploring the everyday in my studio research is through my interrogation of the minimalist column-form. My series titled *Me, Isa and Isa & Me #1* and #2 (2016) acts as homage to Genzken’s exploration of the column, while indirectly referencing Robert Morris’s first sculptural work *Column* (1960), a hollow plywood box in which the artist could stand as performer. Like Morris’s *Column*, Genzken’s columns are closed wooden boxes with varying surface treatments, perceived as skyscrapers or more usually as portraits depicting her friends. Eschewing their rectilinear forms, my columns progressively transform both physically and conceptually, initially as transformed reflections in the occluded mirror panels (Figure 16) then as the distorted and transforming sculptures of *Lines of flight* (Figure 18), and ultimately as projected shadow lines on *Stair #1, Stair #2* within the installation, *Lines of flight*. The columns that form part of *Me, Isa and Isa & Me #1* (2016) are placed in front of mirrored walls. As a result, the viewer is able to see themselves (in an occluded form) in the mirrors. As both viewer and column are distorted by the mirror panels, the viewers’ expectation of seeing themselves reflected in the mirrors is quickly followed by their sense of disorientation. This encounter between occluding mirror, viewer and artwork becomes the work’s primary focus. The second iteration, *I’m Ok, You’re OK #2* (2016), deliberately positions the mirror closer to the artwork so that the viewer sees themselves reflected within the columns and therefore integral to the installation. As a result, the viewer becomes aware that they are critical to the work’s inherent performative dimension.

My columns are open in form and constructed from modular aluminium sections, so that they enable inter-connecting bars to be positioned as required. They show the influence of the Bauhaus’ utilitarian ideal of ease of manufacture and kit of parts, as these columns provide the potential for diverse arrangements in form and cladding. Panels, attached by bolts, can be placed over any horizontal piece thus enabling multiple configurations. This capacity for change is an important part of the work, evidenced in the column’s final physical iteration as Meccano (2018).

---

94 I situate these columns as an extension of the MFA work, BVM (2015).
These minimalist columns are constructed as open frames awaiting surface completion. They encourage the viewer to look through, in, around, over and beyond. This is achieved by visually juxtaposing views of materials or objects, or reflections with others, to create multiple viewing possibilities that are only perceived momentarily by the viewer. I use the interior of the columns as an available surface for a variety of surface treatments, such as transparent photographs, reflective finishes, strong colours and fluorescent lights, which encourage the viewer to look beyond the columns in order to discover extra-ordinary views and visual perspectives. In this respect, they function as open portals or entryways, encouraging the viewer to take part in a performative and transformative encounter with the artwork.
... the force of temporality is the movement of complication, dispersion or difference that makes any becoming possible and the world a site of endless and unchartable becomings ... the world of material objects ... must be capable of becoming more and other than what it is (at any one time) ...

To conclude this chapter, I reinforce that it is the conception of time as ‘becoming’ (as transformation) that enables change to occur. The capacity to ‘become-other’ results from the potential for different ideas and things to co-exist in their many forms within the contemporary ‘assemblage’. ‘Assemblage’, in the way I define and use it here, brings about the conditions in which the Moment of ‘Imminence’ can emerge. It is therefore the foundation on which the Theory of ‘Imminence’ is based. I discuss here four key elements that I claim constitute the philosophical ‘assemblage’; I will expand on these in the following chapters. By way of example, I continue the discussion of my artwork *Lines of flight* (2018) to illustrate the co-functioning capacity of the ‘assemblage’ and utilise the idiosyncratic interpretations of ‘assemblage’ theory by the archaeologist and academic, Yannis Hamilakis to further substantiate my argument.

The original concept, as conceived by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, specifically differentiates the idea from the more clichéd notions of ‘network’ or ‘rhizome’, terms popularised in contemporary aesthetics. Manuel DaLanda’s use of the concept in his *A New Philosophy of Society* filters the theory and places it within a social framework. Deleuze and Guattari instigate ideas of ‘assemblage’ as “a multiplicity, made up of many heterogeneous terms, and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. The assemblage’s only unity is that of co-functioning …”

Significantly for this dissertation, I interpret the ‘assemblage’ as being composed of specific types of elements which have the clear purpose of identifying not only new ways of functioning but also having the capacity to insinuate ‘political’ consequences. The term ‘political’ implies that the putting together or *assembling* of the elements within the ‘assemblage’ is deliberate, though not necessarily intentional. The implication is that the

---

deliberate act, by the artist, of bringing certain heterogeneous elements together, can result in ‘political’ and social consequences.\textsuperscript{99}

I posit that the fundamental role of the ‘assemblage’ is one of co-functioning but I claim that this is a very specific form of co-functioning. Whilst there is no clear definition of the philosophical concept, parameters can be interpreted for how the co-functioning exists between elements to ensure the potential for unexpected outcomes. As John-David Dewsbury suggests, the ‘assemblage’ concept is not a “final theory of everything”, but should be understood as an expansion of possibilities that can identify new methods and new perspectives.\textsuperscript{100} ‘Assemblage’ goes beyond the clichés often associated with the ubiquitous idea of ‘networks’. It is much more than a random placement of undifferentiated elements in what may suggest a “becoming everything, amounting to nothing”.\textsuperscript{101} Rather, the key idea here is that ‘assemblage’ is not so much about what it is, but what it can do in terms of identifying what it can affect and how this comes about.

This identifies a significant characteristic of what I define as ‘assemblage’: it does not bring elements together in a random manner. It can be viewed as a “deliberate arrangement, not an accidental co-presence”.\textsuperscript{102} Its capacity for transformation relates to its being open to change and lacking any ultimate purpose in terms of controlling the overall outcome of the transformation. As I discuss, there are four elements that co-exist within the ‘assemblage’ to ensure that it functions in this way. Firstly, there are the elements that embody the sensorial and affective. Whilst this builds on the philosophical notion of sensory ‘becoming’, I extend the idea beyond material components (such as reflective surfaces) to include the immaterial notion of affect, which requires material form (such as the screen-membranes), to be enacted.\textsuperscript{103} Affect here suggests “the incredible, wondrous, tragic, painful and destructive changes that occur when things come into contact with something else”.\textsuperscript{104} Affect can

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Hamilakis, "Sensorial Assemblages: Affect, Memory and Temporality in Assemblage Thinking," 175.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 172.
therefore be understood as akin to the notion of the *about-to-happen*, suggesting a fleeting thought or thing that happens prior to an awareness of a new perception or idea.

Second are the elements that pertain to the multi-temporal and that are addressed through all aspects of my research. The co-mingling of diverse bodies and ideas involves the coming together of different notions of the temporal. In *The Past Is the Present: It’s the Future Too, The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art*, Christine Ross discusses different moments within the present, but also in the past and the future, as notions of time passing, or as ideas in the past including memories and recollections, as diverse forms of temporal relationships. Of particular relevance for my research in the Deleuze-Guattarian original conception of ‘assemblage’, is its focus on the distinguishing characteristic that multiple ideas of time co-exist, so that the past co-exists within the present moment but in ‘virtual’ form. ‘Virtual’ suggests something that is real but may not be actual, or that can only be imagined. Peter Lenco suggests that, used in this way, the philosophical notion of ‘assemblage’ can be one of the best tools for identifying a concept that can integrate both the real and the ideational. It is the notion of the ‘virtual’ that substantiates the transformative characteristic within my research and also differentiates the use of the term from Paul-Michel Foucault’s seemingly similar work on *dispositifs*. It is the addition of the ‘actual-virtual’ axis within the ‘assemblage’ that supports the notion of transformation and the capacity to be open to ongoing evolution. In other words, it is through the notion of the ‘actual-virtual’ co-existence that my research establishes the capacity for these sculptures to transition from one state to another.

The more diverse the temporal possibilities that can function within the ‘assemblage’, the more open the ‘assemblage’ becomes to a range of evolving new ideas, situations and arrangements. This identifies the third idea as the social and ‘political’, which results from deliberate arrangements to bring about some form of enhanced understanding of social or ‘political’ consequence. Memories may be activated, or new possibilities imagined, identifying that transformation is possible from one state to another. The ‘political’ comes about through the co-functioning of the sensorial and temporal elements but also requires the

---

108 Ibid., 135-36.
condition of the fourth part of the ‘assemblage’, which I refer to as the enablers. Enablers bring about the capacity for co-existence and co-functioning: they set the scene so to speak to enable other elements to function within the ‘assemblage’. They include a range of social and material elements, such as the physical architecture of the gallery, the particular placement of works of art within the gallery or the nature of the viewer, including his or her skill or interest level in viewing the particular form of art on display. The enablers ensure the productive co-functioning of heterogeneous elements through their capacity for inter-connection. This is the difficult part – to make the diverse elements within the ‘assemblage’ function together.

*Lines of Flight* (2018) and its co-functioning work *Stair #1, Stair #2* (2018) form part of an installation that, through its theorisation as contemporary ‘assemblage’, captures these ideas. The following image depicts an early iteration of the artwork shown in the SCA gallery in 2018 as part of a group exhibition. Though it was located adjacent to one early part of its co-functioning work *Stair #1, Stair #2*, they were positioned as two independent artworks. The obvious lack of connection between the two pieces reinforces that it is their co-functioning capacity within an ‘assemblage’ that provides meaning to the installation. Standing apart and viewed as isolated minimalist artworks in this example, negates their understanding beyond the purely aesthetic.
Lines of Flight (2018) is a series of approximately twelve aluminium-framed sculptural forms arranged in a variety of ways, with some on solid bases and others free-standing. They extend my column research depicted in the earlier artworks *Me, Isa and Isa & Me* #1 and #2 (2016) to investigate the notion of the sculpture transforming beyond the fixed, rectilinear grid. Each sculpture presents as a series of activated, seemingly precarious lines that appear to be
randomly positioned in various configurations. Some of the columns have an applied semi-transparent colour that is derived from paint colours used in the SCA stairwells.

Adjacent and integrated with *Lines of Flight* is *Stair#1, Stair#2* (2018),\(^\text{109}\) which comprises eight white-painted, floor-mounted boxes, the majority of which contain fluorescent tubes. Each box incorporates a digitised photographic image printed onto the reverse side of the clear acrylic sheets. The boxes are placed on the floor in a linear arrangement. The two works are placed adjacent to each other in such a way that an external light source projects through *Lines of Flight*, creating shadow lines which fall on the reflective surfaces of *Stair#1, Stair#2*.

![Figure 19](Merryn Hull, *Stair #1, Stair #2*, 2018. Photographic images mounted on clear acrylic panels over light boxes, electrical cable. Each light box is 70 x 70 cm, four light boxes shown. Photo: Merryn Hull.)

\(^{109}\) Whilst the same title for the two works may appear confusing, I have deliberately retained this title, as the piece was originally intended to be one, fully integrated work. It was only later that I came to realise that by not attaching the columns to the floor work I was better able to achieve the projected shadows onto the floor-based light boxes.
Like the Ozu time-image that I discuss in Chapter Three, the photographic images that appear as minimalist abstractions depict parts of the SCA stairwells; the banal spaces that they capture evoke the everyday of life in an art education institution. Through their depiction of empty and under-utilised spaces that metaphorically lead nowhere, they reveal tired finishes, peeling paint, uncleaned glass windows and obscure patterns of shadow and light. The installation highlights the sharply contrasting shadow lines that are projected from the adjacent structures of *Lines of Flight*. These lines, projected onto the surfaces of the floor-mounted images, create a plethora of dynamic patterns and, in so doing, destabilise the viewer’s understanding of the installation. The dynamic patterns reveal pathways for escape through the figurative portals created by the shadow projections. The photographic images have been blown up or miniaturised to form abstractions of an original image. They are no longer recognisable as interior images or locations within SCA and instead focus on abstracted forms, texture, opacity and colour. They provide hints of the metallicized colour that has evolved in the making of *Lines of Flight* and is used on some column-forms.

The title of this work, *Lines of Flight*, identifies ways of understanding the work. The term designates infinitesimal possibilities of escape “… from the constraints that seek to define and enclose creativity …”. The terminology of flight is used to dramatize the features of escape within each notion of ‘becoming’. The two integrated works function within an ‘assemblage’ that enables the “lines of flight to pass through the territory only in order to open it onto the universe”. What I depict in this work is not movement per se, but the effect of movement on the sculptural forms. In the process of transformation, interior forces within the structures are activated so that the abstracted “line” evokes the aesthetic nature of becoming. The two artworks are placed adjacent to each other and theorised as an ‘assemblage’. They function in several ways: through the sensorial and affective; through the co-presence of multi-temporalities; and through the deliberate act of bringing these components together so that social and ‘political’ implications are engendered. There are many ways to interpret and understand this installation. The shadow lines, created by the projection of strong light through the sculptures onto the gallery floor and the reflective

---

111 Samantha E. Bankston, “Becoming and Time in the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze” (Purdue University, 2011), 146.
113 Samantha E. Bankston, “Becoming and Time in the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze,” 120.
114 Hamilakis, “Sensorial Assemblages: Affect, Memory and Temporality in Assemblage Thinking,” 175.
surfaces of Stair #1, Stair #2, invite the viewer to walk through them. With the two parts of the installation separated by sufficient space for the viewer to pass through, the possibility of disrupting the geometric shadow patterns is presented in the work as an invitation. By breaking the lines, the viewer, in control of their own viewing experience, metaphorically breaks the established, institutionalised patterns of the SCA and imagines a new future. The stairs that depict the tiredness and decay of the under-utilised SCA buildings evoke a compelling social and ‘political’ dimension.

The location of this artwork within the SCA main gallery reinforces its potency through the architectural. The history of Callan Park Hospital for the Insane, built in 1878, with its sandstone walls, steel columns and timber and stone floors, high clerestory windows, ceiling trusses and corrugated ceilings, evokes the uncomfortable history of tragedy and despair for the inmates of an institution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The terminology of flight in the installation’s title suggests flight from this past world and provides a disturbing, though powerful, ‘political’ efficacy to the proposed SCA move to the University of Sydney main campus. With this in mind, I also recognise that the internal forces within the sculptures, created through their gravitational process of making, would have evoked the notion of flight without the overt reference in its title. However, the alternative allusion to the gallery’s location directly under the main flight path into Sydney airport proved impossible to resist.

This minimalist artwork makes the encounter with its viewer immediately available. The viewer is confronted by the artwork’s conception of reality in terms of its construction from standard shop-bought, aluminium flat-bars and casually welded joins. The activity of perceiving the ‘assemblage’ reveals it is in a state of constant flux. Its co-functioning role as an ‘assemblage’ reinforces its capacity for ‘political’ reference. While the work’s political meaning may be less apparent on first viewing, what initially appear to be arbitrary aesthetics is progressively understood to ‘become-more’. These ideas establish the potency of ‘assemblage’ for contemporary art and particularly how the social and ‘political’ outcomes contribute to the relevance of the concept. These elements are expanded in the following chapter, Becoming-Assemblage, together with examples of how these ideas manifest in my research.
CHAPTER 2   BECOMING-ASSEMBLAGE

... affect operates as a dynamic of desire within any assemblage to manipulate meaning and relations, inform and fabricate desire, and generate intensity. Affects are becomings.115

In February 2016 I held an exhibition at AirSpace Gallery in Sydney and showed the first iteration of my work *I’m OK, You’re OK #1* (2016).

![Image of sculpture](image)

**Figure 20** Merryn Hull, *I'm OK, You're OK #1*, 2015, 2016. Aluminium frame with clear acrylic sheets. 210 x 200 x 200 cm. *Occluding Mirror*, 240 x 360 cm. Installation view shows distorted reflections of sculpture in mirror which is placed against gallery wall. AirSpace Gallery, Marrickville. Photo: Nina Cholerton.

*I’m OK, You’re OK (2016)¹¹⁶* is an aluminium-framed free-standing sculpture. It is composed of two open cubic frames which sit one inside the other, which are both demountable and

---

¹¹⁶ Thomas Anthony Harris, *I’m Ok, You’re Ok* (US: Harper and Row, 1967). The title references Eric Berne’s psychotherapy model derived from the transactional analysis concept of four levels of OK-
mobile. In the first iteration of this work, *I’m OK, You’re OK #1*, the larger structure is almost fully enclosed with a semi-transparent fabric that is casually bolted to its rigid frame. Placed within the structure are a variety of everyday objects including digitised photographs, fluorescent lights, painted panels, acrylic and metal sheets, electrical cables and mirrors. On first encountering the artwork, the viewer is encouraged to look towards the inside of the sculpture through the semi-transparent reflective fabric that encompasses it. Or, to look through the narrow openings that occur in some corners of the sculpture’s frame.

Figure 21 Merryn Hull, *I’m OK, You’re OK #1*, 2016. Detail view. AirSpace Gallery, Marrickville. Photo: Merryn Hull.

The strength of the ‘assemblage’ concept is, I claim, in its capacity to bring heterogeneous elements together. This chapter discusses two of these elements, the sensorial and the multi-temporal, which co-exist through varying degrees and levels of intensity in order to bring about the productive co-functioning of the ‘assemblage’. John-David Dewsbury reinforces
the focus on outcome for the ‘assemblage’ in terms of its capacity for action, particularly in relation to what it can affect and bring about.¹¹⁷ My research establishes that the ultimate purpose of the ‘assemblage’ is to bring about awareness of the possibility of new ideas, new realisations, new behaviours or new realities. Or, in other words, to bring about transformation, but particularly to let in the possibility for change which, in the sense I use it here, is “not change for change’s sake; rather it is attentiveness to the transformative potential in the world.”¹¹⁸

In this chapter I discuss the two elements – the sensorial and the multi-temporal – through the interrogation of two iterations of I’m OK, You’re OK. The first, I’m OK, You’re Ok #1, is discussed through the sensorial and affective, and the second, I’m OK, You’re OK #2, through the co-presence of multi-temporal moments. In the first iteration, the semi-transparent enclosing fabric functions as what Giuliana Bruno terms a screen-membrane.¹¹⁹ The screen-fabric results from a deliberate choice, which, as a material element within the ‘assemblage’, engenders the immaterial as affect.¹²⁰ Bruno reinforces that when a surface condition is activated in this way, new dynamics are generated, so that a particular type of fabric can be thought of as a permeable screen. What is of relevance for my research is that the screen-membrane evokes ‘becoming’ and therefore signals a state of transformation.¹²¹

Prior to the selection of the screen-fabric for I’m OK, You’re OK #1, I experimented with a variety of materials to achieve the philosophical idea I wished to evoke, which in this example is the opportunity to better understand the value of something by being able to view it from the outside. I recognised that, to achieve this, I needed a fabric that would simultaneously generate qualities of translucency, transparency and reflectivity. I discovered that this could be obtained by using two clear, very thin acrylic sheets with their protective film retained on one sheet, to further enhance the opacity of their combined surfaces. The two sheets hang side by side to create a veiled screen that is both semi-transparent and reflective, enabling the viewer to simultaneously see through while also being aware of reflections on its surface. Fluorescent lights placed inside and outside the installation reflect through and onto

¹¹⁹ Bruno, Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media, 5.
¹²⁰ Hamilakis, "Sensorial Assemblages: Affect, Memory and Temporality in Assemblage Thinking," 173.
¹²¹ Bruno, Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media, 5.
its surface, so that the surface acquires its own theatricality and performativity. The viewer has a sensation of dematerializing in that he or she can look not only at the screen-fabric but also through it, while at the same time being aware of a myriad of reflections moving on its surface. Views through this screen-fabric also activate colours and lights placed inside the artwork, resulting in abstracted shapes of colour being projected onto its surface.

Figure 22 Merryn Hull, I'm OK, You're OK #1, 2016. Detail view. AirSpace Gallery, Marrickville. Photo: Merryn Hull.

I'm OK, You're OK #1 functions as a sensorial and affective ‘assemblage’. Whilst Robert Irwin’s Excursus alerted me to the notion of the temporal, I recognise through the making of I'm OK, You're OK #1 that my initial understanding of Excursus occurred through sensory
awareness. Irwin’s scrim walls function in a similar way to those in *I’m OK, You’re OK #1* as an emerging screen-membrane activated over time. The process of surface transformation, of something passing from one to the other, can “be specified only as sensation”.122 It is “a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility as if things, beasts, persons … endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation. … This is what is called an affect.”123 This idea goes to the heart of ‘assemblage’ thinking because it identifies that a fundamental part of the ‘assemblage’ is its intrinsic sensoriality and affectivity. In this way we see that affect occurs prior to an idea or perception.124 This suggests that affect can be understood as akin to the Moment of ‘Imminence’. We see that a series of moments identify a unique point or place of perpetual starting again and ongoing transformation.125 In other words, affect is composed of a series of moments in constant flux that unfold and change to form the perceptual encounter. Suspense and expectation, evoked through the sensoriality of the screen-membrane in *I’m OK, You’re OK #1*, encourage the viewer to physically move forward in order to look inside the installation. In a similar way to *Excursus*, the viewer’s heightened sensory awareness, together with their physical encounter, establish that perception involves the whole body and affirms the claim of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s “embodied perception”.126

We also see in *I’m OK, You’re OK #1* and *Excursus* that, because their materials and ideas are taken from the everyday, these artworks capture Mieke Bal’s view that, “If any description of what ‘art’ is and does has validity, these experiments … in passing from one reality to another constitute the conditions of possibility for political effectiveness.”127 Bal reinforces my argument in proposing that the artwork, through its capacity for transformation from one state to another, establishes its potential to evoke the ‘political’. Claire Bishop affirms a similar idea when she discusses that the viewer’s sensory encounter enables the artwork to express what Irwin describes as its democratic availability.128 Essentially, Irwin is claiming an “ethical position” when he states,

123 Ibid.
125 Samantha E. Bankston, “Becoming and Time in the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze,” 43.
... by your individual participation in these situations, you may ... structure for yourself a 'new state of the real', but it is you that does it, not me, and the individual responsibility to reason your own world is the root implication.¹²⁹

Is Irwin implying a deeper ‘political’ implication for Excursus or, more straightforwardly, identifying the capacity to better understand the everyday through the aesthetic potential offered by the installation? Irrespectively, what this reinforces is that it becomes the viewer’s choice to piece together an understanding of the ‘assemblage’ by discerning meaning through its elements.


Both I’m OK, You’re OK #1 and Excursus identify that chance occurrences often result from being open to the unexpected within the ‘assemblage’. When I first visited Excursus, I was

¹²⁹ Ibid.
immediately aware of its emphasis on light and colour. When commissioned to create the second iteration of this installation at Dia:Beacon, Irwin spent hours on site looking at the column-filled but otherwise empty warehouse. He then added additional column-supports and proceeded to wrap them in his favoured scrim fabric. With this completed, he recognised the problem that, whilst the natural light from windows and skylights enabled the scrim to radiate with its dual capacity of translucency and opacity, as one walked into the interior of the space it became increasingly dark. At some points there was essentially no light penetration, and it was then that Irwin conceived of installing fluorescent lights. As he did, he noticed that they enhanced the radiant quality of the scrim to such an extent that he commenced adding coloured gels to the fluorescent tubes. Through repeated experimentation, the shimmering colours progressively evolved to become the work, as acknowledged in Irwin’s new title referencing Josef Albers’ squares of colour, *Excursus: Homage to the square³ (cubed)* in Irwin’s square scrim rooms. What this example shows is the powerful role that being open to chance plays in the ‘assemblage’ and the way that affect modifies experience through the encounter between artwork and viewer.¹³⁰

My doctoral exhibition titled *Be)Comings and goings* (2019) captures the sensorial encounter in ways that reflect many of these ideas, either through surface transformations of individual artworks, through chance encounters, or as embodied perception which occurs through placement of the sculptures within the gallery. *Be)Comings and goings* aims to activate the viewer’s perceptual capacity and encourage prolonged attention on individual artworks, to sustain the viewer’s interest for long enough to reveal something of themselves. At the same time it recognises, as Mark Lewis points out, that “you have to walk the line between revelation and boredom”.¹³¹ The proposed location of my exhibition *Be)Comings and goings* (2019) within the large main gallery at SCA initially appears unexpected, as the work seems more suited to an enclosed, self-contained gallery. This disorienting effect is further compounded by a lack of an obvious, single entry point into the group of sculptures. Having no defined starting point and no obvious pathway through the artworks results in a non-hierarchical process of endlessly varied experiences.¹³² As a result, disorientation occurs, in what Francisco J. Varela discusses as a phenomenological reduction that acts to suspend

¹³⁰ Colman, “Affect,” 12.
the viewer’s habitual attitudes of viewing. In this, the encounter brackets what we feel we know in order to provide the opportunity for looking at the work in a different way. When the viewer moves forward, chooses a location for entry into (Be)Comings and goings and traverses the peripheral sculptures, he or she begins to consciously observe the artworks. This trajectory, “supports a type of observation that performs and seeks duration”. Likewise, as the group of sculptures has no single focus and also comprises several small installations within the overall installation, it captures the viewer’s attention by encouraging a vacillating viewpoint between the whole of the installation and smaller details within individual sculptures. Our perceptions respond to a set of temporalizing aesthetic strategies that work together to hold and abandon our attention, distract us, enable us to closely read details and then discard them, reassure our perception with predictability and then destabilise it through unpredictability.

What this identifies is that every act of being aware of time extending beyond the present moment, or of what Edmund Husserl refers to as time consciousness, enables the viewer to experience temporality as a three-part process. In other words, every experienced moment is made up of: primal impression in terms of what is happening now; retention as the perceptual actions of the past; and protention directed towards future actions. This is relevant because it substantiates my argument that temporal experience is not a succession of discrete moments. Instead, it occurs as a succession of inter-connected moments that reflect previous moments while anticipating future ones. The theorization of time-consciousness in this way enables my research to understand the perception of temporality in artworks such as Irwin’s Excursus. Most importantly, it highlights the importance of the third phase, protention as the what is still-to-come phase, as being essential to the first two parts of the process. Within the context of my research, protention, as the anticipation of the still-to-come, is the Moment of ‘Imminence’, “where we catch sight of things that are just at the

---

136 Ibid., 140.
137 Tim van Gelder, "Wooden Iron?," in Naturalizing Phenomenology (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 247.
138 Ibid.
point of occurring”. In this sense (Be)Comings and goings identifies the artwork’s capacity to reveal itself in different ways at different times. In its ability for the new “to appear again as for the first time”, (Be)Comings and goings can be seen as a series of portals that the viewer metaphorically and physically chooses to walk through, not knowing but anticipating the about-to-happen.

---

142 Ibid. Expressed in a catalogue essay by Homi Bhabha.
How then do we lift the temporal object-event from the flow of unexamined activity so that it might come under introspective scrutiny?  

My investigations now focus on the second iteration of *I’m OK, You’re OK #2*, in which I explore the multi-temporal dimension of the ‘assemblage’ through what I refer to as the “temporal object-event”. This term, informally used by Robin Clark, identifies a group of temporal possibilities that form part of my interpretation of the functioning ‘assemblage’. When I first read Clark’s words, the evocative idea of a “temporal object” resonated with me, and I chose to position this concept as a key part of my research. The term affirms the value of the “contingently held experience” over the autonomy of the individual art-object in the type of art under discussion. Further, the term alludes to the potential of ‘becoming’ within the framework of Deleuze’s concept of the ‘event’, thus reinforcing the primacy of the notion of transformation within my research. The phrase has no definitive meaning, but Varela uses the term in the phenomenological sense to suggest an “enduring event” within a framework of integrated ideas. Tim van Gelder discusses the “temporal object” as anything that exists in time and endures. Elsewhere, the notion of “object-event” is characterised as something that is identifiable, resulting from a variety of ways that enable us to make sense out of an “entire event”.

For me, Clark’s use of the term asks what it is that encourages a viewer to spend time with an artwork, to examine it (to engage with it). Her question is fundamental to my research in terms of addressing how the artwork produces a transformative encounter with the viewer. *I’m OK, You’re OK #2* in its second iteration explores a similar philosophy to its predecessor in that they both present as enclosed sculptures that invite the viewer to look into their interior. The first iteration sought the viewer’s attention through the sensorial as a screen-

---

145 Clark, “Phenomenal: Californian Light, Space, Surface - September 25, 2011 - January 22, 2012,” 110. In this context, Dawna Schuld compares the object of phenomenal art to the object of minimalism.
membrane that, through its capacity for dynamic surface transformations and its placement, encourages the viewer to move towards the sculpture to examine it in greater detail. The second iteration aims for a similar encounter with its viewer but embraces a different aesthetic strategy. In this, *I’m OK, You’re OK #2* provides a series of ‘events’ (ideas) that exist only in potential until activated through the encounter with their viewer.¹⁵⁰ This occurs in several interlinked ways, through 1) the architectural, in terms of the capacity of the sculpture’s physical and material form to co-function within the spatial context in which the artwork is placed. In this, architecture also becomes an enabler of the ‘assemblage’; 2) the sculpture’s process of viewing, which is progressively revealed over time to establish a moment which identifies the possibility for something more to occur. The something more is the *about-to-happen* moment, which is pre-empted by a shock or surprise that my research establishes as fundamental to the ‘assemblage’; 3) the intangible idea of ‘difference’ that manifests through the repetition of new iterations of similar objects or ‘events’.

Yannis Hamilakis ‘assemblage’ theory supports my argument when he elegantly describes the co-functioning capacity of these multi-temporal elements and moments by writing,

> The assembling/arrangement of diverse bodies, things, affects, sense and moments involve by implication the comingling and the contingent co-presence of diverse temporal moments; this is a multiplicity of times, of various pasts and presents, but also a multiplicity of temporal modalities: historical times, human experiential time.¹⁵¹

What follows is a brief outline of temporal moments involved in the viewer’s process of encounter of *I’m OK, You’re OK #2* in its second iteration [Figures 24-29].

---

As you arrive at the gallery, you see a large silver box placed towards the back of the double-height space. It is positioned in the centre of the narrow gallery, blocking your approach, so as you walk towards it you are forced to decide to walk either left or right of the box [Figure 24].

As you do, you become aware of a horizontal plane of changing green light that you realise is a mirror placed beneath the box, reflecting its interior. The mirror extends beyond the box on two sides but does not block your pathway. As you approach, you see panels of green acrylic, fluorescent lights and draped electrical cables that you recognise as part of the box’s interior, reflected in the mirror below [Figure 25].

Your sense of anticipation increases. You are curious to see inside the box but, apart from pencil-line gaps on each edge, the only view into the box’s interior is from the floor mirror [Figure 26].

As the interior of the box remains partially concealed, you abandon the artwork to climb the stair to the mezzanine gallery above, which you see reflected in the floor mirror [Figure 27].

If you look down onto the silver box as you climb, you begin to see into its interior. From above, the inside of the box becomes increasingly visible. Panels of green-coloured, reflective surfaces intermingle with vertical fluorescent lights, power connectors, electrical cords and hints of adjacent artworks [Figure 28].

In one position on the mezzanine gallery floor, you look directly down onto the silver box. Its kaleidoscopic symmetry is fully revealed [Figure 29].
Figure 24 Merryn Hull, *I'm OK, You're OK #2*, 2016. Aluminium frame with silver painted acrylic sheets bolted to perimeter. 210 x 200 x 200 cm. *Occluding Mirror*, 240 x 260 cm on side. Installation view. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield.
Figure 25 Merryn Hull, *I'm OK, You're OK #2*, 2016. Aluminium frame with internal coloured sheets, electrical cables reflected onto floor mirror. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield.

Figure 26 Merryn Hull, *I'm OK, You're OK #2*, 2016. Aluminium frame with internal coloured sheets, electrical cables reflected onto floor mirror. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield.
Figure 27 Merryn Hull, *I'm OK, You're OK #2*, 2016. Aluminium frame with internal coloured sheets reflected onto floor mirror. 210 x 200 x 200 cm. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield.

Figure 28 Merryn Hull, *I'm OK, You're OK #2*, 2016. Internal coloured sheets, electrical cables and adjacent artworks reflected onto floor mirror. Articulate Gallery. Photo: Chloe Rayfield
It is the placement of *I'm OK, You're OK #2* within the gallery that initially invites the encounter. Diverse ‘events’ are enacted as the viewer physically and perceptually navigates the space: the gallery architecture provides the physical placement for the work and with it the initial opportunity for the encounter; the reduced minimalist aesthetic, through the banal sense of the everyday (it is after all just a painted silver box), forces the viewer to confront established ideas of aesthetic judgement (is this an acceptable form of art?); the anticipation of the *about-to-happen* and, with it, the heightened sense of awareness of future possibility in terms of what may be discovered within the silver box; ultimately, also, the realisation that
the encounter may in fact not take place at all or may be missed altogether. These artworks can be seen to provide a series of ‘events’ that exist only in potential until they are activated through the encounter with their viewer.\textsuperscript{152} What follows is a brief overview of how this occurs through the “temporal object-event” to enable these ideas to manifest in sculptural form and establish the transformative encounter.

Architecture, expressed in my studio practice through the physical and material form of the artwork as a utilitarian, gridded framework, overtly facilitates the temporal as part of an architectural continuum through references to the aesthetics of Constructivist and avant-garde architecture. \textit{Me, Isa and Isa & Me #1, #2} (2016) pay homage to an architectural lineage related to the utopian aspirations of mid-twentieth century affordable, light-filled, mass-housing exemplified by Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, (known as Le Corbusier) in his \textit{Unité d’Habitation} (1947-1952) in Marseilles.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure30.jpg}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{152} Barden, \textit{The Future of the Philosophy of Time}, 4.
At the same time they reference their art historical context, evoking works such as Vladimir Tatlin’s *Monument to the Third International* (1919), as well as acknowledging my earlier *BVM* (2015) and its lineage through El Lissitzky’s *Abstract Cabinet* (1927). These works are conceived at approximately one-to-one, scaled to the human body. Each element exists as part of an ensemble of elements within an architecture-installation-sculpture context. As discussed in Chapter One, they relate to the canon of artists who utilise architectural form and intervention to embrace non-art and the contemporary world as a mode of reflection on everyday life.

![Image of sculpture](image.jpg)

**Figure 31** Merryn Hull, *Me, Isa & Isa & Me #1*, 2016. Aluminium framed columns with painted acrylic sheets, fluorescent lights, tape, electrical cables and clear panels. Occluding mirror wall panels. SCA Gallery, Rozelle. Photo: Marta Feracin.

The materials employed in these sculptures are those of architecture and design, such as aluminium frames, fluorescent lights and panels of mirror and acrylic that turn the familiar into new forms. Light is used to enhance the intensity of reflection and to reinforce the
verticality and horizontality of the underlying grid. Fluorescent lights are placed adjacent to clear and coloured surfaces that reflect light. John Rajchman discusses reflected light in a way that is similar to my use of it here, by referring to new sources of light constantly arising and complicating what we see through its multiple points of view.\(^{153}\) The work’s time signature, in terms of its construction and longevity, appears to be very short. It feels provisional and impermanent and evokes a sense of being in flux. Power cords are randomly positioned, and lights feel as though they have just been plugged in. Pencil markings are casually left on assembled surfaces, together with silicone, adhesives and partially painted panels, which are intentionally left unfinished. The work gives the impression of waiting for change or waiting for its next iteration. It evokes a sense of an eternal present with an ongoing waiting for the *about-to-happen*.

Whilst these artworks actively relate to their architectural context in terms of being site-responsive, they are not site-specific. Their inherent flexibility and ease of reconfiguration facilitate ready placement within their architectural context. Their particular position within a location is, however, quite specific. Despite the intensity of light which the work generates, it requires a well-lit, architecturally empty, environment. The form and siting of *I’m OK, You’re OK #2*, for example, requires a double-height gallery in order for the work to be viewed from above. It is also necessary to place the work in a constricted part of the gallery where the viewer must walk around it. It is only then that the viewer can look beneath the work onto its floor mirror to discover reflections of not only him or herself, but also parts of the interior of the sculpture and adjacent architectural elements. As identified, the form of ‘becoming’ that the “temporal object-event” evokes is “… the coming into existence of events that exist only in potential until they are experienced, at which point they become, and remain real.”\(^{154}\) In other words, the experience of the present suggests a form of ontological gateway through which ‘events’ have to be experienced for them to be able to be understood as reality.\(^{155}\) The notion of reality is then unleashed through a type of active viewership which functions in tandem with the material makeup of the work itself.

The second issue I consider as fundamental to this research relates to the moment that signifies something is *about-to-happen*. As I discuss in Chapter Four, this can be theorised in

155 Ibid.
various ways, but within the context of the “temporal object-event” I position it initially as a shock which identifies that something unexpected occurs. It is through this moment of shock or surprise that the artwork signals the potential for the next moment to allow changes to occur in its viewing. In my studio work this may be quite straightforward, such as the use of a fluorescent-coloured perspex box that creates a flash of strong reflected colour on an adjacent surface, perceived from only one viewing position. It may be the instantaneous discovery of the iridescent haze of gold reflections in Becoming of Unbecoming (2019). It may be the unexpected ghost-like image on the mirrored surface of Stair #3 (2018) or the multiple distortions in the faceted surface of Meccano (2018). It could be quite banal, such as a misaligned timber panel or an incongruous excess of silicone filling. These shocks sharpen reactions, making us more alert to new possibilities. It is when unexpected encounters such as these occur that we become more receptive to alternative forms of encounter. Henri Bergson clarifies that this form of shock only occurs when a gap is opened between stimulus and response such as a break in regular habit.

What occurs is a destabilising of convention through the breaking of expected routines. It is by “destabilising our thinking, disrupting our faculties and freeing our senses from established tendencies [that we might] uncover the differences in the lived world and realise the uniqueness of each moment and thing.” It is in this moment that the opportunity for ‘difference’ is allowed to enter the artwork. Within this series of moments that I consider as an encounter with the not-yet, the ‘event’ is dependent on the about-to-happen. This idea reinforces the anticipation which the Moment of ‘Imminence’ as the about-to-happen conjures to signify a further temporal dimension in the artwork.

This specific form of ‘difference’ manifests principally through repetition (this refers to reiterations of the essential characteristics or idea of the artwork that occur through experimentation, in order for variations to arise that derive from the original idea). This idea of ‘difference’ is fundamental to the many experimentations with forms of minimalism in my current and early research. In the way I use it here, ‘difference’ can be understood through the

---

idea of a curve that, when repeated, does so as the tangent (and therefore a new curve), but one that stems from the original curve. This can be thought of as an open system that continually produces new directions and connections, suggests Adrian Parr.\textsuperscript{159} Fundamental to the evolution of ‘becoming-different’ within my interpretation of the ‘assemblage’, is the notion of ongoing repetition that produces variation with every repetition.\textsuperscript{160} This enables new experiences to emerge through the “… power of beginning and beginning again”,\textsuperscript{161} and is evident in the three forms of my work I’m OK, You’re OK #1, #2, #3, where each iteration identifies the opportunity to begin again.

It is the process of remaking that establishes new dimensions of the original premise for the artwork. As a result, a fundamental aspect of my research is predicated upon this notion of experimentation and repetition. As we see in the three iterations of I’m OK, You’re OK, ‘difference’ is not conceived as a linear sequence with the end of one series or grouping of pieces marking the beginning of another.\textsuperscript{162} Parr reinforces this by stating that there is no end goal towards which everything is directed. Instead, as she suggests, “what repeats is the full force of difference in and of itself.”\textsuperscript{163} The work changes not only within series but also in individual pieces within series. The production of ‘difference’ involves the deployment of very specific, diverse temporalities within these artworks, with the intention of eliciting a varied range of encounters with their viewer. The three iterations of I’m OK, You’re OK #1, #2, #3 illustrate these diverse temporal modes. I’m OK, You’re OK #1 utilizes dramatic surface transformations to elicit anticipation and expectation and therefore a slowing-down by the viewer in order to better view the work. I’m OK, You’re OK #2 unfolds progressively in different ways enabled by its physical and material form, but particularly through its architectural placement, which generates the potential for anticipation and also frustration. I’m OK, You’re OK #3 is a photographic image of the view inside I’m OK, You’re OK #2. In the process of navigating the exhibition, the viewer sees I’m OK, You’re OK #3 before they understand that it is the hidden view within I’m OK, You’re OK #2. This further dislocates the continuity of the encounter. The form of this work also promotes confusion. Light, projected

\textsuperscript{159} Adrian Parr, "Difference + Politics," ibid., 78.
\textsuperscript{160} Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, 46. In \textit{Difference and Repetition}, Deleuze suggests that difference can be better understood through the use of the differential $dx$. A derivative, $dy/dx$, determines the structure of a curve while nonetheless existing just outside the curve itself: that is, by describing a virtual tangent.
\textsuperscript{161} Guattari, \textit{What Is Philosophy?}, 136.
\textsuperscript{162} Parr, "Repetition," 225.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.
through the work, results in a form of digital shadow theatre that projects the photographic image’s reflection onto an adjacent wall. In other words, the image further acts to confound the viewer because he or she is unaware that they are looking at the view and the reflection of the view that they are seeking in *I’m OK, You’re OK #2*.

**Figure 32** Merryn Hull, *I’m OK, You’re OK #3*, 2016. Digitised photographic image printed onto clear acrylic sheet suspended on projecting aluminium frame. 120 x 120 cm. Articulate Gallery, Leichhardt. Photo: Merryn Hull.

The ideas that underpin my research of ‘difference’ through repetition also identify research into the notion of repetition itself. One example is my recent artwork titled *I only ever wanted to be a painter* (2018), which synthesises concepts of ‘difference’ through engagement between artwork, architectural form, context, viewer and encounter. *I only ever wanted to be a painter* (2018) explores the idea that, through a repetitive act, the viewer becomes aware of
the temporal dimension of the encounter through the qualities of the “temporal object-event”. In this artwork, repetition is both subject and object.

Figure 33 Merryn Hull, *I only ever wanted to be a painter*, 2018. Aluminium wall frame, switch-glass panel, sensors, aluminium shelf, aluminium box, fluorescent light tube and electrical cables. Dimensions variable. Glass panel is 90 x 60 cm. (Under-construction) Photo: Merryn Hull

*I only ever wanted to be a painter* maps the trajectory of my career as architect, painter and artist and pays homage to the work of Stephen Little, through its enigmatic interpretation of everyday objects as painting.\(^{164}\) It materially evokes my architectural background by incorporating a piece of commercially available switch-glass placed in a wall-mounted frame. The glass possesses properties that make it able to transform from cloudy and opaque to

\(^{164}\) *I only ever wanted to be a painter* (2018) pays homage to Stephen Little and the *extra-ordinary* academic journey that his wise counsel and insightful interpretations into what it means to be a painter have introduced to my research.
becoming optically clear.\textsuperscript{165} The artwork sits in an aluminium frame positioned approximately 10 cm from the wall and utilises the changing levels of opacity of the glass to evoke the notion of transformation. To do this I have connected three motion sensors to the electrical circuit which activates the glass: as the viewer approaches the work, the sensors trigger the opacity levels of the glass. When the viewer is at a distance greater than 1.5 metres from the artwork, the glass is clear and the viewer is able to look through the glass. As the viewer comes closer, the sensors activate, and the glass becomes opaque. The switch on, switch off sensor mechanism is also connected to a fluorescent light, which also turns on and off as the viewer approaches or leaves the work.

The artwork is deliberately placed in the open gallery so that the viewer becomes aware of it from a distance by peripherally registering its capacity for change. This location is quite specific because, on one hand, it needs to be visible from a distance to elicit attention and encourage the viewer to walk closer for a more detailed viewing. On the other, the work needs to be discovered in some particular way. There are also operational requirements relating to the functioning of the sonic sensors. The switch on and switch off mechanism clarifies the notion of physically seeing and understanding. It builds on Clark’s idea of exploring the artwork and exemplifies Lewis’ comment to ensure that the viewer sustains interest for long enough to understand the work.\textsuperscript{166} Discovering that, as the viewer walks closer, the anticipated view of what is on the wall becomes hidden from view further adds to the indiscernible nature of the artwork.

Boris Groys’ discussion of a work by Francis Alýs resonates with \textit{I only ever wanted to be a painter}.\textsuperscript{167} Groys describes the repetition that occurs in Alýs’ work \textit{Song for Lupita} (1998) as “wasted time”, which I reflect on in terms of Deleuze’s notion of a rupture in the continuity of life.\textsuperscript{168} Groys discusses the activity of pouring water from one vessel to another depicted in Alýs’ work – one with no beginning, no end and no direct result – as a “pure and repetitive ritual of wasting time”.\textsuperscript{169} In a similar way, \textit{I only ever wanted to be a painter} creates a

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{165} The proprietary and readily available product consists of two glass sheets that have electrically conductive coatings applied to their surfaces, placed over a matrix of liquid crystals. The transparent conductive layers have electrical wiring within them which, when connected to a power supply, causes the crystal molecules to line up so that the glass becomes clear and light can pass through.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Ross, \textit{The Past Is the Present: Its the Future Too. The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art}, 136.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Groys, “Comrades of Time,” 5.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
repetition of an activity that appears to have no purpose. My work, which denies the viewer an image or any sense of something happening behind the veiled screen, leads to a similar response. This is an example of the shock that occurs to destabilise normal patterns of viewing. The temporal resonance of Alýs’ enigmatic work, discussed by Groys as “the point at which art can indeed become truly contemporary”,\textsuperscript{170} provides an inspirational reflection on the validity of ideas such as this that underpin my research.

The strategy of repetition, starting from one artwork to create a quasi-perpetual iteration, is evident in all aspects of my research. It allows repeat works to dissolve (and expand) the identity of previous work, enabling something unforeseen to emerge. In this way, repetition becomes a generative means of transformation of new work. As Marjorie Perloff attests, “our structures of meaning have to be repeated to work, and … this always entails a shift in context as well as in use …”\textsuperscript{171}

To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent. And perhaps this repetition … echoes … a more secret vibration which animates it, a more profound, internal repetition within the singular.\textsuperscript{172}

In talking of this “secret subject, the real subject of repetition”, Deleuze suggests that we must find the essence of that which repeats.\textsuperscript{173} The “secret vibration” can be understood as the found kaleidoscopic view in I’m OK, You’re OK #2 and the excess of time, the wasted and enigmatic repetitive time that leaves its promise unfulfilled, in I only ever wanted to be a painter. This enigmatic notion of internal ‘difference’ sits at the heart of the multi-temporal, conceiving ‘difference’ as that “which differs from itself and not simply what differs from something else”.\textsuperscript{174} It is through a capacity to remain open to new ideas and to be receptive to the power of ‘difference’ through change that this quality is imagined in artworks such as these.

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{172} Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, 1.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibid., 23.
What these ideas show is that new notions of ‘difference’ emerge in unexpected ways through iterations of existing artworks. This is evident when my earlier installation titled *Minoritarian* (2017) is understood as a precursor to *(Be)Comings and goings* (2019). *Minoritarian* is a repetition of previous column forms that utilise the gridded frame as the basis for exploration of surface treatments and ideas. In this work, the defined grid of *Me, Isa and Isa & Me, #1 and #2* partially disintegrates, similarly to the transforming column reflections in the occluded mirror panels [Figure 16], so that the column-like structures retain only a hint of their previous formality. The six column forms are constructed of open, lightweight, casually assembled timber frames. Each column is wrapped in fine, woven mesh, positioned adjacent to clear acrylic panels and fluorescent lights. The random geometry, together with the industrial materials and the visible signs of working process of production, suggest a construction site. The environment is dominated by the intensity of light and particularly by the reflected light on the clear acrylic panels. The labyrinth of column-like forms is randomly placed through the gallery space so that each column connects to each other in diverse ways. Whilst embodying ‘difference’ they are iterations of each other, embodying a variety of forms, surfaces and potentialities for activated viewership.

As an artwork *Minoritarian* is an ‘event’, as it enacts the notion of transformation in a variety of ways. As narrative or social meaning, it conjures the idea of a city with a diverse array of structures and activities. Through various forms of connection, the city comes to life, activated by the viewer. This occurs literally as well as metaphorically, with sensors and light fittings activated as the viewer moves adjacent to the sculptures. The city is depicted as a vast, overpowering society, but also with pockets of intimate space and moments of delight, set amongst the glass and metal forms. Alternatively, the artworks can be viewed as anthropomorphic in their diversity, coming together through a myriad of different forms and ideas. It is a collection of ‘difference’, celebrating the idea of variety and diversity and portraying the notion of open-ness and the new through change.
In summary, the intention of the “temporal object-event” is to assist in the facilitation of a transformative encounter between viewer and artwork. Fundamental to the encounter is a shock which activates the viewer to react in a particular way. It momentarily surprises the viewer. It is unexpected and pushes the viewer outside of, or beyond, otherwise dominant regimes of signification and expression. The shock confronts artistic sensibilities or other habitual expectations associated with viewership. This level of creative indeterminacy may be
unbalancing for the viewer, who is left uncertain as to how they should respond and may even question the integrity and therefore validity of this art form. Underpinning the element of shock, and the resultant hesitation between stimulus and response, is a pause between action and reaction. It is this pause that lets in the possibility of something more, as “an intense awareness or perception of something that turns into a becoming-other.”

The essence of the multi-temporal theorised through the “temporal object-event” is in its ‘becoming-different’. This means that each time the artwork or parts of the artwork transform in some way, the process commences with a specific moment which identifies that something is about-to-happen. The outcome is a transformative encounter for both the maker and the viewer which recognises that something in the process of the encounter is primed to change continually. The transformation may be quite small or it may be overwhelming, but there has to be some form of recognisable change. As an encounter with the not-yet in order for it to ‘become-other’, this moment sets up the about-to-happen.

---

CHAPTER 3  CONCEPTIONS OF REALITY

... the time-image is ... a point that the image reaches when, through its confrontation with time, change, memory and so on, it offers a glimpse of the time that movement cannot express.\(^\text{176}\)

The preceding chapter focuses on ways that the sensorial and multi-temporal co-function within the ‘assemblage’ by bringing specific elements together to ensure that three-dimensional sculptures are understood as temporal. This chapter extends this idea to show how other elements within the ‘assemblage’ establish what I posit as social and ‘political’\(^\text{177}\) consequences.\(^\text{178}\) I claim that the capacity to express ideas of significance results from the way that different conceptions of reality can be manifested, either through the deliberate choice of specific elements or as the possible outcome of actions. My studio research reveals that this process is enhanced by the use of the photographic image. Through its ability to convey multi-temporal conceptions of reality, the photographic image initiates the ‘actual-virtual’ element within the ‘assemblage’, thereby effectuating ideas of social and ‘political’ significance.

What is fundamental to my research is the capacity for the encounter between artwork and viewer to bring about transformation. I use the term transformation to imply the capacity for transition from one state to another. In this sense, transition relates as much to the physical state of change of the artwork as it does to the viewer’s awareness of their capacity for personal transformation. In other words, transformation is a ‘becoming-other’ that enables something to be seen and experienced in order to become something else. Gilles Deleuze supports the transformative dimension of the encounter in his *Difference and Repetition* when he says,

\textit{Something in the world forces us to think. This subject is an object not of recognition but of fundamental encounter ... It may be grasped in a range of}


\(^\text{177}\) I reiterate that my use of the term ‘political’ here refers to an enhanced understanding of issues of public significance.

\(^\text{178}\) Hamilakis, “Sensorial Assemblages: Affect, Memory and Temporality in Assemblage Thinking,” 175.
affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whatever tone, its primary
caracteristic is that it can be sensed.\textsuperscript{179}

Or when he alludes to,

... two kinds of things: those which do not disturb thought and ... those which
force us to think.\textsuperscript{180} ... that which can only be sensed ... moves the soul,
'perplexes' it, in other words, forces it to pose a problem: as though the object of
encounter, the sign, were the bearer of a problem ...\textsuperscript{181}

This captures a fundamental dimension of my research, which is our capacity to think beyond
what we see in order to identify our capacity to be transformed. In this chapter I introduce the
idea of the photograph as a key device in the transformative capacity of my work, which I
argue enables the viewer to think beyond what he or she may initially see depicted in the
photographic image. To do this I engage the notion of the cinematic model, which I interpret
through Bergson to discuss a range of temporal structures that suggest opportunities for the
photographic image.\textsuperscript{182} What this shows is that the photographic image, when viewed through
the lens of the cinematic, enables temporality to be interrogated. By considering the
cinematic-image (moving-image) as a photographic-image (non-moving image) and
exploring potential forms of linkage (and non-linkage) between images, I am able to identify
a variety of temporal processes that become available when using the photographic image
within the ‘assemblage’.

With this in mind, my investigation commences with an analysis of my installation \textit{Still going}
(2018), which forms part of \textit{(Be)Comings and goings} (2019). \textit{Still going} is composed of two
parts. One is a photographic image titled \textit{Stair #4} (2018). This is an iteration of \textit{Stair #3} that
utilises the same digitised photographic image printed onto a larger panel of two-way
mirrored acrylic mounted on an aluminium frame and positioned over the gallery window.
The other part, \textit{Meccano} (2016, 2018), consists of three mobile aluminium-framed structures,
each 2.5 m high, which have sheets of two-way acrylic mirror attached to their surfaces. The
three mobile structures are able to move independently of each other so that they can equally
be viewed as one inter-connected work or as three separate pieces. The viewer is able to look

\textsuperscript{179} Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, 139.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 138.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 140.
\textsuperscript{182} \textit{Cinema 2 - the Time Image} (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011).
simultaneously through the digitised image *Stair #4* and through the gallery’s external window that sits behind it. This means that, as the quality of natural light and internal illumination changes depending on the time of day, the levels of opacity of the mirror also change. In some instances, the ghost-like photographic image is quite clear. In others, the image is almost invisible, and the viewer can see only their own reflection in the mirrored surface. Alternatively, they can look through both the mirror and the window to the outside beyond or in other instances, see mirror overlaid with multiple reflections of adjacent surfaces.

The placement of *Stair #4* is not random, and its particular location facilitates the reading of *Still going*. By placing *Stair#4* in the centre of the perspectival view between the three parts of *Meccano*, the installation makes possible the emergence of a specific type of time-image that Deleuze refers to as a “crystal-image”. Time-images can be thought of as images that through their capacity for insinuating diverse ideas of time, enable us to think more comprehensively about issues. The “crystal-image” does this by instigating the notion of ‘actual-virtual’ coalescence, which I discuss throughout this thesis as pivotal to the notion of transformation within the ‘assemblage’. As a “crystal-image”, *Stair #4* comprises two parts: one, is its existing image (the stair-well); the other, is its capacity to become a possible image (as reflections of the viewer on its mirror-surface). In other words, the image “crystallizes” its actual image (as the present or what exists) with its ‘virtual’ image (as the future, or past, in terms of what may change) into one unified image. Its role, as we see in this example, is to facilitate our understanding that what we see as the present can co-exist as both present, past and future. Or, in other words, to show that in the present, the past can be preserved concurrently with the possibility of the future. This complex notion substantiates my argument for how transformation manifests within contemporary ‘assemblage’.

---

183 As we saw in the earlier iteration *Stair #3.*  
The concept of the “crystal-image” substantiates the importance of the photographic image in my argument. This becomes clear in the example of the photographic image of *Stair #3* and *Stair #4*, which depicts one of the ubiquitous stairwells located throughout the SCA campus. Through the coalescence of the actual stair image and the new image of the viewer and their environment reflected in the stair, it is no longer the arbitrary image of banal and disused spaces, that it first appears to be. Through its role as a “crystal-image”, it transforms into a place of unimagined activity, possibility and indiscernibility.\(^{185}\)

In some locations, where the original image is white, the digitised image prints clear, leaving fragmented and abstracted shapes of pure mirror exposed. In others, the muted and ghost-like parts of the printed image result in distorted and fractured non-reflections, which are no longer recognisable as viewer or architectural context. The viewer dissipates into the material of the mirror through a passage of transformation. In this, miniscule pockets of pure mirror

\(^{185}\) The mirror-surface acts in a very different way to my earlier work *I’m OK, You’re OK #1, #2* (2016), where its function as a reflecting surface is the mainstay of the work.
reflect the viewer’s actual image which, together with the photographic image printed on the mirror, becomes a portal to the viewer’s ‘virtual’ image, enabling moments of actual and ‘virtual’ to co-exist. In other words, through the coalescence of the actual and ‘virtual’ this complex image functions as a “crystal-image”.

The second component of Still going is Meccano (2016, 2018). This is composed of three free-standing, mirrored structures that are mobile, so that their configuration and relationship with each other is interchangeable. The complexity of Still going is heightened because Meccano also functions as a “crystal-image”. In this instance, the mirrored reflection of the viewer and their environment is reflected in adjacent mirror panels that simultaneously envelop and reflect each other, as in an infinity mirror, thus creating a new ‘virtual’ image. By theorising Meccano as a “crystal-image”, its multi-faceted surfaces that reflect Stair #4 in a multitude of ways, can be seen to facilitate additional meanings that may not have been immediately apparent. The mirror-images reflect not only the details of Stair #4 but also the viewers who are looking at their own distorted images in the mirror surfaces of Meccano. In this way, the viewer’s reflections enter the image of Stair #4, enabling multiple interpretations and possibilities for understanding the viewer’s presence within deserted and under-utilised spaces such as these.

\[186\] Deleuze, Cinema 2 - the Time Image, 66.
The image above shows an early iteration of one part of Meccano included in a group exhibition (Stair #3 is seen behind). The two artworks were positioned independently of one another and therefore functioned as isolated fragments, rather than as the ‘assemblage’ installation that I am discussing here. I use the image to illustrate an early example of the artwork’s form and capacity for ambiguity. The image identifies the complexity in viewing the many facets of the distorted reflections of the sculpture. In one instance, an open panel depicts views to the outside which further adds to the already complex process of perception of the artwork. These reflections identify the ability of the “crystal-image” to illustrate the capacity for the unknown, the creation of difference and the possibility of future actions.

What this reveals is a process that enables the artwork to be understood in a similar way to the cinematic time-image. By interpreting the photographic image in this way, I propose that Still going enables its photographic-image, Stair #4, to function as an element (still image) in
something dynamic, akin to a video or film (moving image). This can be understood as part of a continuum: Stair#4 as the photographic image (actual image) is brought into a relation with Meccano’s mirrored surfaces (process of narration) to fulfil the time-image’s ultimate function, which is to make us think (the narrative). What is clear is that the connections between the parts of the process need to be discovered and activated by the viewer, and also that the ever-changing narrative can be understood in many different ways, contingent and specific to the viewer’s interpretation. The understanding of Still going in this way provides an important perspective for me in understanding the relationship between the earlier discussion of Isa Genzken and Wolfgang Tillman’s collaborative installation, Science Fiction: Being Satisfied here and now (2001). The potential for multiple and open experiences and readings of both Still going and Science Fiction is not realised until a specific and unique viewer enters and engages the installation.

Figure 37 Wolfgang Tillmans, Wake, 2001. Inkjet print as part of an installation with Isa Genzken, Science Fiction/hier und jetzt zufrieden sein (Being Satisfied Now). Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, SMB, Schenkung der Friedrich Christian Flick Collection. ©2017. Photo: Thomas Bruns.

187 David Deamer, Deleuze’s Cinema Books Three Introductions to the Taxonomy of Images (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2016), 157 I have derived what I refer to as the three-part cinematic trajectory from Deamer’s discussion of the three components referred to by Deleuze as hyalosign (image); narration (chronosign); narrative (noosign), “where the narrative is the story arising from the narration composed of images”. By interpolating Deleuze’s meaning through Deamer I have been able to position this form of cinematic trajectory as pivotal to my analysis.

*Wake* (2001) is a huge, printed photographic image depicting a section of Wolfgang Tillmans’ studio. The room is diffused in red light, which suggests it is early morning. Gridded lines, primarily from paned windows, cast shadows onto the walls. Empty bottles and glasses are scattered over a dirty floor, giving the impression of the morning after a party. We observe the light in Tillmans’ post-party studio being reflected in Genzken’s adjacent, mirror-tiled walls, creating a real and a corresponding ‘virtual’ image produced by reflections on the gridded lines. This is a “crystal-image” which functions in a similar way to *Still going* and alerts the viewer that the work embodies levels of meaning that go beyond what the photographic image depicts. The viewer progressively understands that what he or she initially recognises is merely the starting point for engagement with the work. The full meaning is progressively understood by the viewer through a process of transformation of ideas and levels of comprehension.

*Science Fiction* was first shown in 2001 in Berlin and conceived by Tillmans and Genzken sometime earlier. It is reasonable to assume that, because of its time and place, it depicts Berlin during the 1990s, the decade after the collapse of the Berlin wall.\(^{189}\) The use of warehouses and other partly derelict buildings that Tillmans’ warehouse studio space evokes, referred to as “any-spaces-whatever”,\(^{190}\) denotes a similar history to the buildings in the SCA complex. The impermanent, interim usage of these buildings, viewed as unsuitable for long-term use, can be seen as a metaphor for the adaptive reuse of old buildings.\(^{191}\) What we confront in *Still going* and *Science Fiction* can therefore be understood in terms of a temporal transition from one state to another.

---

\(^{189}\) Two seemingly contradictory ideas are suggested by the installation: firstly, the non-permanent and transient (the usage of unused buildings for a nightlife culture, clubs, parties and so on, as depicted in *Wake*), and secondly, the hegemonic and monumental (indicated by the size and form of Genzken’s architectural walls). This transitive temporality suggests an aesthetic articulation for the reality of life in Berlin during this period. In other words, the work can be seen to suggest a moment of transition in time between two political systems: as being set free from the control of one political system which has just collapsed (nightlife culture and interim usage suggested by *Wake*), while another system has not yet taken control (the capitalist construction of permanent buildings depicted by the monumental wall sculpture).


In *Still going*, the temporal process of reflecting onto and through the inherent adjustability of *Meccano* evokes a very different reading to the fixed and monolithic structure provided by Genzken’s mirrored walls. The physical form and ease of readjustment of *Still going* make it agile and responsive. Its capacity to change, reconfigure and alter its orientation is an integral part of this installation. In a different way, *Science Fiction* too asserts its temporal capacity. The fixed, monolithic walls of Genzken’s mirrored sculpture can be seen to evoke the hegemonic and monumental aspirations of a new political system. In both these examples the “crystal-image” captures this moment of transition.

![Image](https://www.flickr.com/photos/die-ter/35408981160)

**Figure 38** Wolfgang Tillmans, *Wake*, 2001. Inkjet print as part of an installation with Isa Genzken, *Science Fiction/hier und jetzt zufrieden sein (Being Satisfied Now).*

What is evident in the description of *Still going* and *Science Fiction* is that the idea of seeing, and therefore understanding, becomes the pivotal experience of the artwork and, as such, can be readily understood as the basis of the encounter between artwork and viewer. By proposing that the less we recognise, the better we are able to see, Deleuze clarifies the time-image as an “object not of recognition but of fundamental encounter …”\(^{192}\) The time-image occurs when anticipated links between actions are broken, or when links between characters and events are weakened. In other words, when recognition is reduced, our capacity to see

---

\(^{192}\) Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 139.
and interpret the signs that form the basis of our usual patterns of perception is enhanced.\footnote{Marrati, 
*Gilles Deleuze Cinema and Philosophy*, 59.} We are only able to really “see” when we are able to solely focus on “what there is to see … that which is too beautiful or too unbearable, not only in extreme situations but also in the smallest fragments of everyday life.”\footnote{Ibid., 61.}

The two cinema books *Cinema I* and *Cinema II* offer a chronological discussion on how images can be perceived and explored in terms of the photographic image. By viewing time in this way, the ontological status of images through their classification as either movement-image (action) or time-image can be reconsidered. *Still going* can be seen to illustrate the notion that the time-image emerges by overturning the movement-image.\footnote{Deamer, *Deleuze’s Cinema Books Three Introductions to the Taxonomy of Images*, 157.} It does this, I argue, not by implying the absence of movement, but rather by depicting the importance of, in this example, time (the passing of) over movement (action). In this process, the ‘actual-virtual’ axis is activated, which identifies that “the actual image must enter into relation with its own virtual image”.\footnote{Deleuze, *Cinema 2 - the Time Image*, 263.} This seemingly complex process reinforces the narrative function of the time-image and its capacity to produce a new idea focused on making the viewer think, as an *image-of-thought*.\footnote{Ibid., 157.} The time-image occurs as: the actual image; the narration or process by which a story is told; and the narrative which is the story arising from this trajectory.\footnote{Ibid., 162.} This notion reinforces the idea of seeing, and also understanding, but principally identifies that the time-image requires a considerable effort of memory and imagination in order to be understood.\footnote{Ibid., 245.} In other words, as we have seen throughout this research, the time-image needs to be interpreted by the viewer and requires the viewer to link and relink images in order to fully understand their meaning.

Another way of understanding these ideas is illustrated in the following example of “a very pure time-image: an Ozu still life as unchanging form of time”.\footnote{Ibid., xiii.} Japanese film director Yasujirō Ozu’s film, *Tokyo Story*\footnote{Donald Richie, *Tokyo Story Screenplay by Yasujiro Ozu & Koga Noda Noda* trans. Donald Richie & Eric Klestadt (Berkeley, CA, USA: Stone Bridge Press, 2003), 12.} (1953), describes the everyday of family life in the Japanese household. Through his use of time-images, Ozu introduces ideas that we do not
immediately comprehend within the linear narrative of the film. Viewers engage with these initially enigmatic images as the film unfolds through time, connecting images together to understand the filmmaker’s intention that goes beyond the linear construct of the story narrative. Even though Tokyo Story appears very different from Still going and Science Fiction, these works employ a shared understanding of the concept of transition within their construction, as something moving with time from one established situation to an alternative one.

![Figure 39 Yasujirō Ozu, Tokyo Story, 1953. Filmic image. Ozu interior #14.©](https://ozu-teapot.tumblr.com/post/9548559211/ozu-interior-14-tokyo-story-yasujir%C3%B4-ozu)

My particular interest in Ozu focuses on the way that he depicts the banal and the everyday in static vignettes he inserts in the film. These often include room interiors that always appear similar and reveal the mundane details of daily life. Even though they are a moving image (i.e. filmed), they appear as a two-dimensional fixed composition embedded in the film itself, in which the camera position remains squarely focused on the abstracted and compositionally balanced scene. Similarly to Still going and Science Fiction, Tokyo Story functions as a time-image through which the viewer moves. Ozu uses these vignettes to engage with the notion that disparate conceptions of reality can be plausibly evoked through a focus on the everyday
and the mundane, which I illustrate through photographic images such as *Stair #3* and particularly in the abstracted photographic images in my floor work *Stair #1, Stair #2* [Figure 40, Figure 41].

**Figure 40** Merryn Hull, *Stair #1, Stair #2*, 2018. Photographic image printed onto clear acrylic sheet. 70 x 70 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull.

**Figure 41** Merryn Hull, *Stair #1, Stair #2*, 2018. Photographic image printed onto clear acrylic sheet. 70 x 70 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull.
The meanings of these images are not fixed or pre-determined because what they depict is no longer recognisable. The placement of the images over an irregular pattern of fluorescent lights positioned inside light boxes further adds to the works’ indiscernibility. They allow us to be with time in a particular way, which cannot be reduced to a simplified lived or empirical time. Ultimately though, the aim of the time-image, as we see in the photographic images of Stair #1, Stair #2, is to make us aware of possible alternative meanings in the artwork. In this way, the viewer may also think about the world in which we live in different ways and, through a relationship with time, understand its potential for ‘difference’ and hence its capacity for transformation.

Despite focusing through this chapter on the way that images are linked, it is in fact their unlinking that realises additional potential for the photographic image. This is seen in my two examples Stair #3 and in the work, Stair #1, Stair #2, which depict what I characterise as a zone of indetermination. Damian Sutton positions this zone as “a point that the image reaches when, through its confrontation with time, change, memory and so on, it offers a glimpse of the time that movement cannot express.” As we see in the abstracted SCA stair-well images, the photographic image that requires connections to make sense evokes a different form of response when images are disconnected from their context. Disconnected photographs, as we see in Stair #1, Stair #2, are a poignant example of this, as they result from an apparent absence of recognition of either subject or object. Sutton validates this idea when he discusses that Barthes understood that the photographic depiction of time and place becomes more, not less, effective when the chains of signification are broken.

I previously discussed this idea in the more general context of multi-temporality, as the moment when a particular element (in a photograph or its context) attracts the viewer’s attention in the form of a surprise or a shock. Incidental details may produce the effect of shock, but what is fundamental, is the removal of images from their normal viewing situation. Or, alternatively, when the photographic image is viewed out of context. What this confirms is that the time-image has to be constructed by the artist and needs to be linked (or re-linked or

---

204 Ibid., 319.
205 Ibid.
un-linked) by the viewer in order for it to be interpreted. The ‘virtual’ in this instance, is the photographic depiction of something that is unexpected that identifies transformation, and therefore reveals the potential for different ways of thinking.

Key to my understanding of the significance of the connection between the photographic image and the ‘virtual’, was an interview I conducted with Stephen Little about his exhibition *Equinox* (2016). When I consider the process in my research that led me to notions of transformation, I now recognise that it largely emerged through an interrogation of photographic images within the *BVM*. Here I identified the potential of the photographic image to move beyond mere depiction of subject toward functioning as something much more complex. For this reason, Little’s enigmatic artwork provides particular relevance for my research.

On first viewing, *Equinox* appears incomprehensible, and the viewer is uncertain how to contemplate the work. Little uses two seemingly banal photographic images of astronauts to explore a theoretical subject. He clarifies that the artwork’s intention is to identify an “expanded way of looking at something”, which in *Equinox* connects to the notion of painting as an expanded practice. Little discusses *Equinox* as providing the opportunity for the viewer to look beyond what he or she initially sees and understands, by extracting what they think they know in order to explore an idea positioned within an alternative context. This approach is of course complex, but the ultimate purpose of Little’s investigations is, I suggest, to show that within the theoretical notion of painting there are a variety of different ways for understanding its potential. His work proposes that the formulation of the idea of painting within a completely different context identifies the opportunity for new and unforeseen outcomes. *Equinox*, a metaphor for something perfect, precise and aligned, manifests in this work as something to be seen and understood differently, depending on one’s viewing position. In other words, even within a moment of perfect celestial convergence such as an equinox, there are always diverse ways in which something can be understood. For Little, this depicts the multiple ways of looking at painting. The viewer has

---

206 Deamer, *Deleuze’s Cinema Books Three Introductions to the Taxonomy of Images*, 163.
209 Ibid.
to make the links in *Equinox* and to accept the value of what is being presented. These are difficult issues, which demonstrate that diverse conceptions of reality can be used to make us think beyond what we see, by showing us that alternative ideas are possible.

**Figure 42** Stephen Little, *Equinox* 2016. Two wall mounted photographic images. Installation view. Photo: Robin Hearfield and Anthony Hodgkinson.

Of particular interest is that *Equinox* is accompanied by a musical audio loop that Little discusses as a “processional return”. This repetitive series of sounds can be thought of as a ritornello, which functions as an “in-between movement that begins to structure the nebulosity of chaos”. In his *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, Deleuze identifies, through Guattari, the value of sound in the time-image as the ritornello. *Equinox*’s photographic images are more clearly understood, I argue, through the ritornello. This is because the ritornello, as the sound component of a time-image, reveals the idea of past time preserved within the present through personal association with music. Despite not initially comprehending the photographs, as a result of the ritornello the viewer offers a level of

---

reverence to the work. Little explains that as people arrived in the gallery on the opening night, their voices lowered, and they spoke in hushed tones. It was not until he gestured that they could speak more loudly that conversations returned to the levels expected of a gallery opening-night. In this way, Equinox establishes, through the sound component of the time-image, another example of how the time-image instigates a connection with its viewer. [Refer Appendices 5 and 6].

Equinox, when interrogated through the notion of ‘assemblage’, enables a shift in attention from what something is to its capacity for action in terms of what it can do. It thus exemplifies the transition from viewing two photographs of astronauts placed on two walls, to an understanding of how complex and difficult it is to express one single perspective describing the role of painting today. Important to my research is the notion that the photographic image can establish an encounter where “disparate conceptions of reality are brought into alignment.” My intention in citing Little’s installation is to illustrate how a non-traditional use of photographs – within an ‘assemblage’ – can produce ‘political’ consequences; that is, consequences that eclipse what they actually depict. What may appear on first viewing to be unrelated and incomprehensible has the capacity to establish ideas of significance, through its interpretation as contemporary ‘assemblage’.

Through its potential to function as a time-image, the photographic image conveys multi-temporal conceptions of reality that enable us to think beyond what is depicted in the actual image. This initiates the ‘actual-virtual’ element within the ‘assemblage’ and reveals the potential for transformation from an existing to an alternative situation, which the Moment of ‘Imminence’ instigates.

---

211 Deleuze, Cinema 2 - the Time Image, 89. Deleuze explains that the crystal image is much a matter of sound as it is optical, stating that Felix Guattari was right to define the crystal of time being a ‘ritornello’ par excellence.

212 The term ‘ritornello’ describes a short instrumental refrain or interlude in a vocal work, particularly seen in Baroque music.


214 Botha, A Theory of Minimalism, 41.
CHAPTER 4 THE MOMENT OF IMMINENCE

The moment is an impossible possibility, aimed at, desired and chosen as such. Then what is impossible in the everyday becomes what is possible ...

The moment has a strong tradition in Western culture and particularly Western art. One thinks photographically in terms of the “decisive moment”, as the fraction of a second or the intuitive moment when something can be captured. In this sense, the moment focuses the viewer on the cogency of the present and privileges the importance of the instant. We think of Michael Fried’s “presentness” and Friedrich Nietzsche’s “blink of the eye”, William James’s “moments of nowness” and of what he calls the “specious present”. In these examples the moment is understood as the instant in time when something absolute occurs, as a boundary between what happens before and after. This chapter explicates the moment and particularly focuses on how it acts to enhance the encounter with its viewer.

The Moment of ‘Imminence’ is such a moment, but one which brings the additional dimension of future possibility, through its capacity to identify the potential for evolution and change. It identifies the viewer’s active role in discerning the about-to-happen. In this, the Moment of ‘Imminence’ achieves a very particular status, as it proposes a future which is as yet unknown and therefore open to opportunity. It implies that what is current and existing has the potential to be radically altered. Its role is to map how change may occur by diagramming a current and a future that envision ideas beyond the here and now. The opportunity to think about future possibilities underpins all parts of my research and goes to the heart of capturing what can be envisioned through the notion of the transformative.

The ‘assemblage’ emerges from an arrangement of diverse, deliberately selected, co-functioning elements that set into play the conditions required for the emergence of ‘imminence’. The Moment of ‘Imminence’ sits at the heart of the transformative encounter.

---

This chapter clarifies specific details about the Moment of ‘Imminence’; how the notion manifests in the artworks I describe; what is achieved because of it; and most importantly why I have chosen to foreground this notion within my research. I have alluded to my propensity for intuitive decision making, and the decision to place the term ‘imminence’ at the centre of my research was made in a similar way, after reading Nestor Canclini’s, *Art Beyond Itself: Anthropology for a Society without a Story Line.*

This was reasonable, I suggest, because the term engenders a dynamic quality of immediacy, which, by insinuating vigorous movement from one moment to the next, aptly captures the form of temporality I explore in this research. As I identify in Chapter One, whilst the encounter cannot be accurately pre-determined, it can be actively sought. In this, the Moment of ‘Imminence’ conjures anticipation of the encounter. This moment recognises the heightened state of consciousness that the viewer experiences as they focus on the anticipation of what Jacques Derrida refers to as *l’avenir* (French for ‘to come’). What is important here is the suggestion that what is ‘to come’ is unknown and unexpected, as opposed to a future which may be more predictable.

Anticipation, viewed in this way, is indeterminate and implies being open to the unpredictable. Anticipation also implies hope and with it the possibility of change. In this it extends the potential of “the everyday in order to find the marvellous and the surprising …” Here, Henri Lefebvre identifies that anticipation can shift our thinking towards the potential of what may or is *about-to-happen* which, in the context of my research, is towards the ‘imminence’ expressed and embedded within the artwork.

Lefebvre captures what the Moment of ‘Imminence’ evokes when he writes about the moment in these terms:

> The moment is an impossible possibility, aimed at, desired and chosen as such. Then what is impossible in the everyday becomes what is possible, even the rule of impossibility. And this is when the ‘possible/impossible’ dialectical movement begins, with all the consequences it entails.

It identifies the potential for something to be altered, of an existing state becoming open to challenge and therefore to the possibility of change. Lefebvre is particularly informative in

---

219 Canclini, *Art Beyond Itself Anthropology for a Society without a Story Line.*
221 Ibid.
his *Theory of Moments* where, in writing about characteristics of the moment, he says that the moment is constituted by a choice, it wants to endure, it has its own memory, it has content which it takes from everyday life and, in this, the moment can conceive of the impossible. Further, he writes, “We will call ‘Moment’ the attempt to achieve the total realisation of a possibility. Possibility offers itself and it reveals itself”.

With this in mind, my research clarifies ‘imminence’ in terms of how it manifests within the artworks under discussion to explore various theoretical and physical ways which invite ‘imminence’.

The ‘assemblage’ is in a state of constant flux, with the component parts in continual transition and rearrangement in order to coalesce through varying temporal moments. I argue that the Moment of ‘Imminence’ can only be achieved within an ‘assemblage’ when certain criteria are met. These are: 1) The heterogeneous elements within the ‘assemblage’ co-function, which means that the sensorial/affective and multi-temporal elements productively co-exist with what I term, their enablers; 2) Co-functioning occurs in ways that ensure particular social and ‘political’ outcomes/consequences are engendered; 3) At the same time, the ‘actual-virtual’ activates to identify that transformation can occur, which implies transition from one state to another. This notion is fundamental as it establishes that transformation occurs from an actual state (as the present or an existing condition) to a changed state (as the future or a future possibility of something that might happen); 4) The viewer must also be able to recognise something of themselves or their own history within the ‘assemblage’; 5) The viewer identifies with something recognisable as belonging to the everyday.

Isa Genzken’s installation for the German Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2007, *Oil* (2007), provides a useful example of this process.

---

224 Ibid.
The German pavilion that housed Genzken’s installation *Oil* is a huge, monolithic building with a controversial nationalist history and massive footprint.\(^{225}\) As a result, when Genzken was commissioned to provide the installation for the 2007 Venice Biennale, the exterior of the pavilion posed an obvious challenge. Her solution was straightforward. She built scaffolding around the outside and then used orange plastic construction safety netting to envelope the façade. I do not suggest that Genzken consciously followed the steps outlined above to establish a Moment of ‘Imminence’, nor does she define her work through the philosophical notion of ‘assemblage’. Rather, ideas that can be discerned here provide useful indications of parts of the process which I develop throughout this research. With this in mind I contend that Genzken’s *Oil* can be theorised as contemporary ‘assemblage’.

Whilst I had seen documentation of Genzken’s *Oil*, my interest had focused on the installation itself as an expression of Genzken’s political and environmental comment relating to the world’s (and particularly America’s) dependence on oil. It was only after the

making of my artwork *Waiting* (2018, 2019), that I recognised that Genzken’s façade evokes a similar state of anticipation and sense of waiting for something to happen that I had been developing in my own creative practice.\textsuperscript{226} It acts to find or understand something in itself, or it is waiting to find its own becoming, as Deleuze would suggest. *Waiting* is a narrow, tall, open aluminium column with ribbed horizontal frames sitting over concealed fixing on a floor base. The column’s dimensions and its lightweight construction mean that it gently sways in a semi-precarious manner. *Waiting* is constructed with no sense of how it will be finished.

![Image of Waiting artwork](image)

\textbf{Figure 44} Merryn Hull, *Waiting* (2018). Aluminium, open-framed structure with metallic mesh and fluorescent light on steel base. 4.0 m x 40 cm x 40 cm. Photo: Merryn Hull (Under construction).

In a similar way to *Waiting*, the German pavilion’s façade treatment epitomises the waiting for the encounter with something that is *about-to-happen*. With Genzken’s modifications, it

\textsuperscript{226} Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (London: Continuum 2003), 15.
can be seen to suggest the potential for transformation, as the process of wrapping embodies transformation, because something that exists becomes something-more through the process.

Genzken’s *Oil* coalesces elements to produce a potent ‘assemblage’ discussed as follows:

1) The heterogeneous elements co-function within the ‘assemblage’. This implies the coming together of elements that are in a state of constant flux and reassembly. What is relevant for this study is the capacity to bring about affective new connections between elements. In Genzken’s example, the sensorial/affective register operates through the monumentality of the forbidding building exterior to evoke memories of hegemonic and nationalist German history. Memories of historical significance are seen in stark contrast to the multi-temporal moments evoked by the contemporary and temporary nature of the scaffolding and construction netting. The netting references Christo Vladimirov Javacheff (known as Christo) *Wrapped Reichstag* (1971-1995), which further evokes meaning and perception, driven by the affective experience. Sensorial and temporal elements coalesce with their visitors who arrive at the building’s main entry portico, unsure how to proceed as the building appears to be under construction and potentially out of bounds. Their uncertainty becomes a dynamic, performative element within the ‘assemblage’.

2) The co-functioning elements occur in a way to ensure that particular social and ‘political’ outcomes/consequences are engendered. Genzken’s wrapped facade promotes a national discussion about the suitability of the monolithic building to reflect the values of a contemporary Germany. Should the building be demolished or is it a piece of history that should be retained? In a similar way, Christo’s *Wrapped Reichstag* had alluded to the rebuilding of Germany after World War II and the fall of the Soviet Union. The wrapping, seen as either a covering up (or concealing) or the potential for transformation from one thing to another, can be interpreted in the same way in Genzken’s ‘assemblage’. Her use of construction safety netting is particularly poignant as it also proposes the containment of potential danger.

---

3) *The ‘actual-virtual’ activates to show that transformation is possible.* Genzken’s work identifies that the ‘assemblage’ is open to evolution as well as to other influences. What this implies is that elements within the ‘assemblage’ seek new ways to express the current and the future. This proposes the capacity of the system to transform, as it implies transition from one state to another. In Genzken’s example, this is transformation from an actual (current) state that denotes the contemporary dialogue about the building’s architectural heritage to a ‘virtual’ (future) state that could imply the building being altered or demolished and rebuilt.

4) *The viewer must also recognise something of themselves or their own history.* Genzken’s installation resonates with Christo and Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon (known as Jeanne-Claude) wrapping of not only the German *Reichstag* but also the coastline in Little Bay, Sydney in late 1969. This evokes memories for me as a first-year architecture student. I visited the wrapped coast with other students to view our senior architecture students working on the wrapping of Little Bay under Christo’s direction. I have always kept a small piece of the wrapping fabric.

5) *The viewer also identifies with something recognisable as belonging to the everyday.* The scaffolding and construction netting connote impermanence and that something is *about-to-happen* as either a work in progress or literally in a state of construction. They are recognisable as familiar, readily accessible forms and fabric in everyday usage.

This extra-ordinary sculptural installation functions as a powerful ‘assemblage’ and evokes diverse ideas simultaneously: the sensorial and affective, the historical, the ‘political’, the personal. Genzken’s intervention engages elements of the ‘assemblage’ to establish the conditions in which the Moment of ‘Imminence’ can emerge. The scaffolding modifies the building into a giant, minimalist, three-dimensional sculpture with repetitive horizontal bands and a reduced, simplified architectural form. The netting initially takes on a soft pink hue but on closer inspection becomes a strong orange colour, further reinforced in many locations by

---

228 Kaldor Public Art Projects, "Wrapped Coast - One Million Square Feet, Little Bay, Sydney, Australia 1968-69," http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/projects/project-01-christo-and-jeanne-claude. This project was the first of the John Kaldor Public Art projects. It was positioned by Kaldor as something between a monument and an event as it evoked strong comraderie amongst artists and university students involved in making and visiting the site.
two or sometimes three overlays of the orange netting. It triggers an immediate shock for the viewer. It is unexpected, and they are not certain how to respond. The shock signals the potential for the Moment of ‘Imminence’ to open the viewing to new possibilities.

We need only to look at the actual façade of the German pavilion to recognise the force of Genzken’s intervention and its role in initiating the ‘actual-virtual’ potentiality. The building has four huge columns on its front façade which, through their overpowering monolithic form,\(^\text{229}\) can be seen to reduce the individual into a submissive viewing experience. The dominating façade embodies the values of a past hegemony that Genzken’s orange safety netting elegantly transforms. This material of the everyday not only obscures the dominance of the architecture but also acts as a critique for the future potential of the building. The temporariness of the scaffolding and netting opens the opportunity for visitors to envision and explore alternative treatments for the façade of the building.\(^\text{230}\) This enables the viewer to take part in the work’s performativity, thus actively contributing to what was at the time a controversial dialogue. The temporariness of the wrapped façade also provides an introduction to the vast interiors of the German pavilion and acts to bracket the process of reception, giving the viewer an immediate indication of the type of dialogue to be found inside.


\(^{230}\) Ibid., 8.
To experience art such as this is quite literally to experience the act of creation 'in medias res' and the work in the act of being born. What the perceiver witnesses is the very emergence of order; the artwork organising itself into existence ... the perceived thing is not an ideal unity in the possession of the intellect ... it is, rather, a totality open to a horizon of an indefinite number of perspectival views ... art, perception and creation are revealed as one and the same act. 231

Genzken’s scaffolding and wrapping enable the viewer to witness “the very emergence of order; the artwork organizing itself into existence” and, in this way, to understand the work “in the act of being born”. 232 Here, the creative act itself becomes the artwork. Whilst the materiality of the façade of Genzken’s Oil requires pre-planning, purchasing, organising and constructing, it involves the immediacy of the viewer’s perception of the act of making. In this, Oil identifies ‘imminence’ by proclaiming something that promises and modifies meaning through insinuation. It does this by providing a series of impending revelations, by proclaiming something that could happen without overtly stating it, by not committing to established facts and leaving what it says unresolved. 233 Artworks like this do not illustrate a particular situation but instead propose a number of questions. They catch us by surprise. They suggest what is happening or what is on the verge of happening and identify the capacity of the artwork to reveal itself in different ways at different times. They identify that ‘imminence’ enables meaning through a series of procedures that incorporate contemporary temporalities into the artwork. In this way an artwork with ‘imminence’ makes possible the re-imaging of the future. These ideas synthesise the minimalist aesthetic and elements of ‘assemblage’ to focus on the Moment of ‘Imminence’ which, through an integrated framework, I now discuss as the Theory of ‘Imminence’.

232 Ibid.
233 Canclini, Art Beyond Itself Anthropology for a Society without a Story Line, xiii.
We can thus summarise these laws ... of [imminence] ... These laws have nothing to do with a conscious formula that would simply need to be applied; they are a part of this irrational logic, or this logic of sensation, that constitutes (painting). They are neither simple nor voluntary. They do not assign a univocal role ... The constants they imply change depending on the case at hand. They govern extremely variable terms, from the viewpoint of both their nature and their relations ... This then is the principle of [Imminence]...234

In the quote above, Deleuze describes a series of principles that he refers to as “laws” within Francis Bacon’s art practice. In a similar way, the Theory of ‘Imminence’ does not elicit a “conscious formula” in order to become “part of this irrational logic” that is at play in my art practice. These principles do not propose a notion of “univocal” roles; instead they imply variability and ongoing change “depending on the case at hand.” Within this context, these “laws” of ‘imminence’ are uncertain, not fixed and remain dependent on their individual circumstances. Despite operating within such a broad framework, the Theory of ‘Imminence’ conceives of a range of very particular ideas that exemplify the essence of temporality in terms of an artwork’s potential to embody active transformation. They evoke a dynamic and transforming art practice that has at its heart its capacity for transformative viewer engagement.

My installation Lines of flight has been discussed throughout the dissertation. The ultimate intention of Lines of flight is to explore its specific and unique process of transformation. The minimalist column-forms are not arbitrary. They result from experimentation with a variety of posts, panels and materials, assembled in different configurations in order to partially collapse from their starting positions. The posts and panels progressively fall until, through their own weight they reach a point of balance that I refer to as their resting position. These experiments were repeated many times [Appendix 7] until final resting configurations were achieved. Twelve of these configurations were selected as the basis for Lines of flight and the posts and frames then partly welded into final configurations. I include the video work titled Kaio 13/02/08 (2018), as part of the final installation as it depicts some of the working documentation for the early parts of the experimentation, and functions as a type of key or insight into the process of making that I engaged in here.

234 Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 82.
In early experimental iterations, steel mesh panels are set out on the floor rather like the gridded structure of reinforcement bars for a reinforced concrete column. Aluminium posts are positioned through the steel mesh panels and a rubberised spigot is placed under each corner of the steel mesh over the aluminium section. The handmade friction spigot is constructed with one smooth internal surface so that, while being able to partially grip the post, they are also loose enough to slide down it. As this occurs the rigid mesh panels drop, tilt and progressively force the vertical posts downwards until they settle out of their vertical alignments. At this moment, a small stainless cable tie locks the spigot into place. Their resting position is reached and the structure settles into an arrangement of stability. The final form of the column is largely beyond the artist’s control and is itself an example of ‘imminence’ expressed through the work’s making. The column-forms evoke the notion of the artworks being able to ‘make themselves’. Unlike other artworks which, through their capacity for transformation, remain ephemeral, this work is materially permanent. Once the column finds its resting position, the aluminium frame is fixed, then spot welded into place. Whilst it appears precarious, it is stable in its various forms within each iteration. It builds on the intention of allowing the columns to find their own resting position and hence equilibrium.

These experiments do not suggest that this type of self-forming process affirms an unequivocal notion of free-will. Instead, these experiments are based on a systemised methodology predicated on limiting variables that include post dimensions and profiles, panel sizes, the commencement point for each experiment with the same configuration and progressive releasing of spigots from top to bottom. The ultimate aim here is to demonstrate how the work’s materiality functions conceptually to embrace, “…the accidental, chance or the undetermined”.\footnote{Elizabeth Grosz, \textit{Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures} (Ithaca, New York, United States: Cornell University Press, 1999), 18.} It is the open-endedness embedded in the work that is significant, understood as embodying the role that chance, the undetermined and the notion of \textit{difference-in-itself} resulting from repetition, play as generative forces in the making of the work. We can think of this ‘methodology of making’ as a consciously planned trajectory without being able to predict or anticipate a specific future.\footnote{Ibid., 19.} In other words, something akin to direction without destination. It is in this way that the dynamic, open-ended and evolving aspects can be identified both conceptually and materially. It is this particular notion of \textit{difference-in-...}
itself that this means of studio experiment conjures and, in so doing, gets to the heart of ‘difference’. Whilst I commence each experiment with a minimum number of variables, they are given the self-governing potentiality, within the constraints of this limited form of semi-technical experimentation, to then form themselves. In this sense, the artwork aspires to capture a sense of ‘imminence’.

In order to position the Theory of ‘Imminence’ as the pivotal focus of my research, seven artworks proposed for my doctoral exhibition titled (Be)Comings and goings (2019) all embody characteristics of the theory. [Refer to Appendix 9 (Be)Comings and goings (2019) for an indicative plan of the proposed exhibition to be shown in the main gallery at SCA]. The group of seven artworks have evolved through studio research from earlier iterations to foreground repetition of making, together with an analysis of the theory and philosophy which underpin them. The artworks in (Be)Comings and goings were conceived intuitively, conceptually developed and tested, detailed and constructed concurrently, prior to spending time to finesse their individual systems of construction. They developed as a group to be shown together and evolved from the specific materiality and physical research undertaken in earlier iterations, specifically in my LR: Series (2017), [Appendix 1]. They can be discussed as freestanding, three-dimensional sculptural forms composed of an aluminium armature or frame onto which various elements are applied.

Each of the artworks in (Be)Comings and goings exemplify the Theory of ‘Imminence’. The key work in the installation is Lines of flight (2018), which comprises twelve column-like structures positioned adjacent to photographic images on floor-mounted light boxes titled Stair #1, Stair #2 (2018). The other artworks are: Meccano (2016, 2018), which consists of three mobile, mirrored sculptures; Stair #4 (2018), a photographic image mounted on two-way mirror sheet that is placed over a window and which, together with Meccano forms an integrated grouping titled Still going (2019); I only ever wanted to be a painter (2018), which comprises an electrically charged glass panel placed on the wall that transforms and becomes obscure when approached by the viewer; Waiting (2018, 2019), a four-metre high column draped in metallic mesh with fluorescent lights; and Becoming of Unbecoming (2019), a swaying, seemingly precarious and highly reflective gilt-finished metal panel placed on a solid base. Included is also a stop-motion video of segments of the making of Lines of flight, titled Kaio 13/02/08 (2018), positioned as working documentation on a small wall-mounted screen.
During the final making and presentation of the seven ‘assemblage’ artworks, I have come to recognise that each piece incorporates all characteristics of the Theory of ‘Imminence’ identified in this thesis. As these ‘assemblages’ were made concurrently, each informed the other and, whilst different, they evolved from each other as iterations of earlier work, much of which has already been discussed. These artworks incorporate each characteristic of ‘imminence’ in varying degrees. Deleuze well captures this view when he says,

*Perhaps the highest object of art is to bring into play simultaneously all these repetitions, with their differences in kind and rhythm, their respective displacements and disguises, their divergences and decenterings; to embed them in one another and to envelop one or the other in illusions the ‘effect’ of which varies in each case.*

The Theory of ‘Imminence’ can be thought of as being composed of a series of aesthetic strategies underpinned by philosophical concepts. The following ideas characterise the principles of the theory, which I discuss in more detail in relation to individual artworks. I position these philosophical concepts as “fragmentary wholes” that may or may not be aligned, that may sometimes match up but are “… not pieces of a jigsaw puzzle”. In this way I see them as a framework which, when integrated, creates artworks that produce conditions for “the exercise of thought”. On one hand, my insistence that each characteristic must be evident in each artwork and, on the other, that they are not parts of a jigsaw puzzle, may appear contradictory. This apparent contradiction gets to what is at stake with the Theory of ‘Imminence’. Whilst it is based on a logical categorisation of facts, it is also fully idiosyncratic, so that the artwork can be seen to be constantly identifying new possibilities of creativity.

These ideas are evident in my artwork Waiting, discussed earlier in this chapter. I have experimented with various lighting systems placed inside the sculpture so that it is the light that wraps the column. I have also experimented with different types of wrapping fabrics and identified a fine metal mesh which is ideally suited to wrapping the column as it is partially reflective and also transparent, so that the skeleton of the open structure is visible underneath. It radiates with an *extra-ordinary* metallicized glow when light is shone through the structure.

---

239 Ibid., 36.
and the mesh material is readily adapted to various methods of assembly, particularly
creasing and folding. It stands in isolation and, whilst belonging to the group of familial
works, it remains isolated. This is in contrast to Lines of flight where the connection between
the twelve column-structures tends to suggest a narrative to describe the relationship between
them. In Waiting, isolation disrupts meaning, enabling the work to remain open to new
possibilities. By separating Waiting from the group, the link that exists between other
columns has been severed, in order to enable the viewer to liberate Waiting from any form of
assumed representation or narration. The work can be seen to be in a state of anticipation,
waiting for “something inside itself” to happen. It acts to find something, either something
inside itself or its own ‘becoming-different’. In this, the structure epitomises waiting for the
about-to-happen.

The principles of the about-to-happen, understood in this way and expressed through the
Theory of ‘Imminence’, are analogous to notes within music. Each perceptual, emotional and
intellectual state experienced by the viewer can be envisaged as parts of a melody, with
previous notes remaining and future notes being anticipated at the same time, through the
interconnectedness of each note within the piece. It is the opportunity provided by the
temporal span which enables the observer to appreciate the ongoing flow of notes, while
concurrently anticipating the about-to-happen and the not-yet. The Theory of ‘Imminence’
identifies an open future and an integrated “…opening up of the past and the present to what
is virtual in them, to what in them differs from the actual, to what in them can bring forth the
new.” It harnesses time in a variety of ways to encourage the viewer to spend time
understanding and connecting with the artwork. The Theory of ‘Imminence’ achieves this
through the promise of the about-to-happen and encourages the viewer to stay with the
artwork for long enough to discover more about the work.

Let me now take a step back in order to comprehensively explain the Theory of ‘Imminence’.
I do this by dividing the concept into eight parts, diagrammatically illustrated in the following
flow diagram, which also identifies key inter-relationships and opportunities for connection.
The flow diagram depicts the sequence of activities, from the initial establishment of the

---

240 Deleuze, Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation, 15.
University Press Ltd, 2010), 81.
242 Grosz, "Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming," 1.
philosophical concepts that enable the artwork to explore a particular idea, to progressively establish the end result of the process, as the transformative encounter. The framework enables me to validate ideas which had initially been subjective. Importantly, the framework also enables my research to highlight the artwork’s capacity to convey ideas of social and ‘political’ consequence, through its theorisation as ‘assemblage’. As these elements need to be constructed by the artist and then interpreted by the viewer, the theory explicates the interaction between artist, artwork and viewer. In this way, the transformative encounter between artwork and viewer becomes the ultimate outcome of the Theory of ‘Imminence’.

**Figure 45** Theory of ‘Imminence’ – Indicative Flow Diagram.

The flow diagram describes the eight methodological stages that constitute the Theory of ‘Imminence’. By analysing the artworks in *(Be)Comings and goings* through the framework of the Theory of ‘Imminence’, I am able to more thoroughly discuss the eight stages in relation to how they manifest within individual artworks.
1) **Philosophical Concepts:** are the “skeletal frame”\(^{243}\) through which ‘imminence’ confirms the temporal dimension in the artwork. It is the capacity to conceptualise time as ‘becoming’ and, in so doing, to resist any form of causality, therefore enabling temporality to focus on open-ness to the future. This form of future-oriented temporality integrates a cluster of concepts, such as chance, randomness and open-endedness, with ‘becoming’.\(^{244}\) Philosophical concepts establish the potential for understanding artworks through diverse temporalities that are incorporated within the ‘assemblage’. In this they create a temporal map of new possibilities for transformation, enabling the viewer to explore new ideas and therefore new ways for understanding and viewing art. Whilst these ideas derive from various philosophers, theorists and artists, the philosophical concepts which I identify in my research build on particular ideas that come directly from the everyday of contemporary experience. This is evident in *I only ever wanted to be a painter* for example, which builds on the concept that, through a repetitive act, the viewer becomes aware of the temporal dimension of the encounter. In *Still going* the viewer is able to think beyond what they can see, therefore enhancing the viewer’s capacity for thought. Direction without destination is exemplified in *Waiting* by embodying chance and the open-ended. *Becoming of Unbecoming* explicates the notion of ‘becoming-other’ and, with it, the capacity to become more than what it initially seems.

2) **Aesthetic Strategies:** identify how the artworks interpret philosophical concepts by using an array of aesthetic strategies. They also ensure the artwork’s capacity to let in the potential for something more to happen in the form of a shock or surprise. They identify how the artwork’s minimalist aesthetic is expressed. As an example, *Waiting* deliberately stands in isolation as discussed above, reinforcing the severed links with other sculptures in order to establish the potential for a narration that remains open to diverse interpretations. The reflective surface of *Becoming of Unbecoming* signifies a temporal span enfolding primal impression, retention and protention. In *Still going*, mirror surfaces function not just as reflecting screens but also portals or passageways to an array of different opportunities.

---


\(^{244}\) Grosz, *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*, 3-4.
3) **Minimalist Aesthetic**: confirms the minimalist aesthetic as fundamental to the encounter with the artwork. This is achieved by ensuring that the artwork embodies characteristics derived from minimalism through diverse ideas such as: the literal use of materials for their intrinsic properties; use of industrial materials and fabrication techniques; establishment of a pre-determined seriality through repetitive use of similar elements; contextualisation of the art object in real time and space; sensory perception through phenomenology; engagement with radical realism; exploration of the threshold between art and non-art through the use of utilitarian and non-artisanal materials; use of the readymade. This is apparent through my material of choice, aluminium, which I use principally in its raw form to accentuate its inherent characteristics. This is seen in the frame of *Meccano*, which has been sanded and buffed to enhance its intrinsic qualities. Pre-determined fabrication is evident in *Lines of flight, Meccano* and the *Stair* images in their repetitive use of similar materials and concepts. The sculptures stand confidently within their own literal space, encouraging their viewer to engage with diverse ideas ranging from sensory perception, through the iridescent gold of *Becoming of Unbecoming* to the overt realism of *I only ever wanted to be a painter*.

4) **Shock**: ensures extended time to enable the viewer to recognise the possibility of an alternative viewing response. This is a shock or a surprise in terms of something unexpected occurring that signals the potential for the next moment and allows changes to occur within the normal patterns of viewing. The shock reinforces anticipation of the about-to-happen through something particular that attracts and diverts the viewer’s attention. The shock has a strong physical dimension, which we see in *Still going* as the surprise discovery of the ghost-like photographic image *Stair #4* printed on the mirrored screen. It is a shock to discover in *I only ever wanted to be a painter* that the elaborate mechanism of changing levels of opacity ultimately denies its viewer an image behind its veiled screen. In a similar way, the iridescence of the 23K gilt surface surprises the viewer in *Becoming of Unbecoming*, as does the slight movement and momentary awareness of the precariousness of the thin tall structure of *Waiting*. The shock signals its future-focus as the essence of these works through the dynamic potential of an action, which, as the promise of the about-to-happen, identifies its potential for transformation.

5) **Becoming-Assemblage**: ‘Assemblages’ are multi-dimensional, heterogeneous, co-functioning, co-existing, multi-temporal groups of elements. Of key relevance is that an
'assemblage' is composed of specific elements with the clear purpose of identifying, not only new ways of functioning, but – of significance for my research – insinuating ‘political’ consequences. The implication is that the deliberate act by the artist of bringing certain elements together results in social and ‘political’ consequences. In other words, particular forms of assembling provide the opportunity for the artwork to establish meaning, particularly through the ‘actual-virtual’ co-existence. We see the photographic image enunciate a current and a future to show how transformation can occur. It is the stair image that activates the ‘actual-virtual’ in Still going, by positioning the banality of the existing stair-well against the possibility of future occupation. Similarly, in Lines of flight the transforming sculptures, together with their escaping shadow lines, project over abstracted stair images to capture the potential for a new future. The ‘assemblage’ brings these ideas together through its capacity for different elements and ideas to productively co-function, and for ‘political’ ideas such as the transformation of SCA to occur. Meccano exemplifies that the connection has to be made between parts of the assemblage for meaning to happen. We see in the dislocated fragment [Figure 36] discussed above that if the connection is not made there is less theoretical significance afforded to the artwork.

6) Moment of ‘Imminence’: as the about-to-happen, reinforces the dynamic quality of rapid transformation in terms of moving from one moment to the next. This is a moment of heightened awareness, with the promise of an open future, while remaining receptive to future possibilities. Rather than illustrating an idea, it suggests meaning. The Moment of ‘Imminence’ results from the coalescence of the ‘assemblage’ elements. It is the dramatic transformations on the surface of Becoming of Unbecoming. It is the waiting to find itself or the waiting for the viewer to participate in the completion of Waiting. It is the about-to-happen qualities of the lines in Lines of flight and the promise unfulfilled in I only ever wanted to be a painter. It is the viewer’s heightened awareness of the complex narrative available in Still going and the evolving recognition that it is their responsibility to link and relink the various parts of the narrative.

---

245 Hamilakis, "Sensorial Assemblages: Affect, Memory and Temporality in Assemblage Thinking," 175.
7) **Intuitive Appeal**: suggests the use of the term intuitive to mean the “method for the discernment of differences.” This implies a receptive viewer who is capable of discerning and appreciating the “secret vibration” that builds on internal difference. My use of the term ‘intuitive’ here is important because of the significance I have given to the term in the establishment of my research question. I use it in the same way in this context. It connotes an idea that is straightforward that aims to get to the heart of a feeling about an artwork. Rather, it implies an acceptance of a “simple and immediate resonance of life”. The phrase in this context suggests accessibility, authenticity, humility, even modesty, and embodies transparency in its process of making. It is not self-righteous. It suggests an inner sense of something familiar but also new in its orientation. It is recognised in the milky, semi-reflective aluminium framing in *Meccano* which, through its artisanal, studio-making, connects with the viewer in a recognisable way. The enigmatic and unpredictable resonate with the viewer of *I only ever wanted to be a painter*, as does the unexpected labour-intensive golden glow on one side of the common aluminium panel in *Becoming of Unbecoming*. It identifies a capacity to understand and appreciate the value of ‘difference’, as seen in the glamorous and evocative metal mesh of *Waiting* and in the hand-crafted spot welds in *Lines of flight*. The enigmatic, abstracted photographic images in *Stair #1, Stair #2* are recognisable as familiar though unidentifiable, adding to the appeal of the artwork.

8) **Transformative Encounter**: emerges as the outcome of the preceding seven principles. The viewer recognises that it is his or her viewing experience and capacity to connect ideas within the framework that enable a dynamic moment of encounter. The encounter’s main quality is the temporal and as this is experienced through time, in terms of “seeing new things”, “reaching new understandings” and through which ultimately, it is the viewer who transforms. This identifies being open to change, which signifies the lack of any ultimate purpose in terms of a controlled outcome of the transformation. Fundamentally, it is the notion of the ‘virtual’ that substantiates the transformative encounter and also reinforces that the artwork exists only in potential until experienced and activated through its encounter with the viewer. It is the physical presence of the

---

247 Ibid., 5.
248 Ibid.
viewer that enables the artwork to transform, thereby establishing the viewer’s performative dimension as fundamental to the transformative encounter.

Positioning the viewer’s relationship with the artwork as temporal establishes the viewer’s role as part of an open system undergoing continual change. It is through understanding the potential for transition from one state to another that the artwork provides the opportunity for looking at the world in a different way. In this, the Theory of ‘Imminence’ affirms the power of new ideas and of being able to imagine the unforeseeable. By being able to think differently, the viewer is given a sense of what new ideas can mean. The temporal dimension of the artwork therefore acts to enable the viewer to comprehend the unique quality of each moment and thing and thus to think of new possibilities. The Theory of ‘Imminence’ identifies a contemporary philosophy suited to contemporary art. Its aim is to capture what is at stake for contemporary works of art that deliberately seek to capture the potential of future possibility.

These artworks engender a transformative encounter with their viewer and provide the opportunity for thinking about transformation in a different way. It is the temporal dimension of the work that enables the viewer to discern a transition from one state to another and to recognise the possibility of thinking about contemporary art in new ways. Whilst many artworks possess the capacity to create a genuine encounter with their viewer, and others provide examples of ‘imminence’ as discussed in the context of this thesis, it is those works which fully elicit all parts of the Theory of ‘Imminence’ that establish the particular capacity to convey meaning at a very deep and insightful level. It is in this way, I posit, that an encounter can be transformative. This is ultimately a choice which the artwork provides and which the viewer chooses to accept.
CONCLUSION

But this passage, whether abrupt or gradual, is the great moment in the act of [the sculpture]. For it is here that [the sculpture] discovers, deep in itself and in its own manner, the problem of pure logic: how to pass from the possibility of fact to the fact itself? For the diagram was only a possibility of fact, whereas [the sculpture] exists by making present a very particular fact...

The foundation for my thesis was the subjective conviction that artworks by four artists (my exemplars) identify ideas of significance for contemporary sculptural practice. I based this assumption on an awareness that these artworks possess compelling qualities; recognition of the diverse potentialities rather than similarities between them; and my belief in the value of intuition within artmaking. My research project commenced by interrogating why and how these works appear significant and what this knowledge contributes to contemporary art practice. Early in my research I visited one of the four exemplars, Robert Irwin’s *Excursus* at Dia:Beacon in New York, and found myself in an environment which surprised and greatly interested me. It went beyond the purely spatial and enabled me to engage with an encounter which “shimmered with time”. I have come to recognise this experience as an articulation of what I now refer to as the temporality of “imminence”, which I define as a moment of heightened awareness that relates to something that is about-to-happen.

My research establishes that it is through the conception of time as ‘becoming’ (as transformation) that a different notion of temporality can be envisaged. The notion of temporality, in the way that I use the term throughout my research, replaces the idea of the fixed and unchanging with the dynamic and open, in order to express ongoing and evolving transformation. By investigating and substantiating various forms of temporality within the context of ‘imminence’, I identify how artworks establish a transformative encounter with their viewer through their capacity to express ideas with contemporary relevance. These ideas, introduced in Chapter One, Encounters in Minimalism, position the minimalist aesthetic as fundamental to the transformative encounter in my work. I claim that it is the co-

---

250 Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 160.
functioning capacity of diverse elements within contemporary ‘assemblage’ which, through its origins as both art-historical and philosophical ‘assemblage’, enables the artwork to engage with its viewer on multiple levels and through multiple temporalities. I draw on James Meyer’s notion of multiple minimalisms; Marc Botha’s work on contemporary interpretations of Minimalism, particularly Robert Morris, Michael Fried, Clement Greenberg, Rosalind Krauss and Hal Foster, to identify the contradictions which underpin the minimalist sculpture. This occurs through both its phenomenology of embodied perception and its realist conception as reduced and of the everyday. My research establishes that it is when these diverse elements coalesce that the viewer’s anticipation of the about-to-happen is activated and the artwork’s full potential revealed.

The second chapter, Becoming-Assemblage, discusses contemporary ‘assemblage’ through two elements, the sensorial and the multi-temporal, which co-exist within the affective ‘assemblage’. Irwin’s Excursus: Homage to the Square exemplifies the first idea of sensory perception, as well as the conditioned placement of the sculptures theorised through Francisco J. Varela to explore Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological reduction. The second element, the multi-temporal, is interrogated through Robin Clark’s use of the term “temporal object-event” and Adrian Barden’s interpretation of ‘events’, to establish that these ideas exist in potential until activated through their encounter with their viewer. My artworks I’m OK, You’re OK #1, #2, #3, as iterations of each other, are discussed in this chapter.

Conceptions of Reality, Chapter Three, discusses the third element within the ‘assemblage’, which is the artworks’ capacity to reveal opportunities for expanded thought through the notion of the theoretical concept. I argue that this occurs most effectively in the form of the photographic image, which enables the viewer to think beyond what he or she may initially see depicted in the image. To do this I engage the notion of the cinematic model, developed by Gilles Deleuze, to discuss a range of temporal structures for use by the still photographic image. I claim that the photographic image activates the ‘actual-virtual’ element of the ‘assemblage’ in order to establish social and ‘political’ outcomes. In Wolfgang Tillmans’ Wake and Stephen Little’s Equinox, the viewer progressively understands that the artwork embodies levels of meaning that go beyond what the photographic image depicts. These theoretical and enigmatic artworks demonstrate that diverse conceptions of reality can be used to make us think beyond what we see, by showing us that alternative ideas are possible.
Nestor Canclini’s reference to the term ‘imminence’ inspired its use within my research, which I discuss in Chapter Four, Moment of ‘Imminence’. This chapter puts in place eight principles within the process I designate The Theory of ‘Imminence’, as a deliberately constructed, definitive framework for the establishment of the transformative encounter. By validating ideas which had initially been intuitive, the Theory of ‘Imminence’ constructs the opportunity for contemporary sculptures to provide a platform for comment on socially engaged issues. It provides a universally applicable template to link philosophical ideas to the artwork’s potential to establish a transformative encounter with its viewer.

Of theoretical significance, my research identifies the minimalist aesthetic as fundamental to the transformative encounter. Through its physical and material form, placement within a particular context and its capacity for the viewer to focus on the idea underpinning the artwork, my research identifies a trajectory from an historical to a contemporary minimalism. This is evident in particular artworks, such as Becoming of Unbecoming that expounds contemporary minimalism through its simplified form, iridescent and imperfect gold surface, underlying sense of precariousness and its offer of philosophical meaning, if the viewer chooses to explore it. Meccano, too, embodies minimalist tendencies in its elemental forms, precision of making and readily available mirror surfaces. It is through its relation with the photographic image Stair #4 that its meaning becomes available and its contemporary significance apparent. Together Lines of Flight and its floor work, Stair#1, Stair#2, express an intuitive confidence in their capacity to empower minimalism with social meaning and refute criticism that minimalist artworks have no capacity for connection to social or ‘political’ conditions. These artworks coalesce both Minimalist pre-planned industrial production with the post-Minimalist focus on chance and random encounters through intuitive decision-making to establish a unique art form deriving out of many minimalisms, positioned within a contemporary context.

Contemporary ‘assemblage’ identifies a field of contemporary art that resides within multiple, overlapping notions of minimalism and particularly ones that assemble material, physical, emotional, perceptual and philosophical elements. Of key significance is that the term ‘assemblage’ builds on existing art-terminology, expanded through philosophical interpretation. This empowers a group of diverse elements to engage with the capacity for transformation through the Deleuze-Guattari philosophy of ‘actual-virtual’ co-existence. This idea, fundamental to all aspects of my research, identifies the possibility for transition from
an actual (an existing) state to a ‘virtual’ (a future) state. This is a powerful idea, which identifies, through philosophers such as Henri Lefebvre, that what may appear impossible can be imagined as a ‘becoming-possible’. The potential for transitioning from an existing to an alternative state is fundamental to the notion of ‘assemblage’, in that it captures the capacity for things to change. The photographic image used in this context initiates the ‘actual-virtual’ element within the ‘assemblage’, thereby effectuating ideas of social and ‘political’ significance. The photographic images in the floor work *Stair #1, Stair #2*, placed adjacent to the sculptures in *Lines of flight* for example, provide the opportunity to explore complex issues. Through its focus on transformation, the artwork reinforces the contemporary experience of dislocated perceptions and different ways of seeing and understanding the world from a variety of perspectives. It suggests the capacity to break away and change from the constraints of the old and the familiar to move to a new open future. *Lines of flight* exemplifies, through its minimalist form, that what appears impossible can ‘become-other’ through its capacity to transition from one state to another.

The interrogation and prominence given to the idea of ‘imminence’ is perhaps the most significant implication of this research. The potency of the *about-to-happen* is a moment which brings the additional dimension of future possibility, by identifying the potential for evolution and change. It proposes a future which is *as-yet* unknown and open to opportunity. It identifies that the future can be radically altered. It engenders a dynamic quality of immediacy through its insinuation of vigorous movement from one moment to the next. It conjures anticipation of the encounter through the heightened state of consciousness that the viewer experiences. It suggests that what is *about-to-happen* holds the promise of a new future. It implies hope.

The viewer’s presence is fundamental to the capacity of the sculpture to transform. In *Becoming of Unbecoming* we see the viewer in an engaged performance with the artwork and, in its capacity as a “temporal object-event”, we recognise that the artwork’s performativity exists only in potential until activated by the viewer. It is the viewer’s physical presence that enables the artwork to transform, thereby establishing the work’s performative

---

[251] Elizabeth Grosz, "Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming," *parallax* 11, no. No. 2 (2005): 7. The chapter title references the title of Grosz’s text, the Becoming of Unbecoming. Here, the term suggests “the becoming of life is the unbecoming of matter ... its placement in a different trajectory of becoming".
dimension as a fundamental part of the transformative encounter. The precariousness of the artwork is disconcerting and presents a Moment of ‘Imminence’, where the potential for change occurs in the work’s viewing. As a result the viewer understands that he/she is critical for the work’s inherent performative dimension.

My research establishes a direct connection between the writings of French post-structuralist philosopher Gilles Deleuze and contemporary sculptural practice. Many of his ideas synthesise the views of other philosophers, so that his work can be thought of as a model of aesthetic thinking encompassing multiple and pluralist philosophies. His writings on aesthetic issues, such as cinema and painting particularly, identify principles which I expand in the Theory of ‘Imminence’. In this sense my interest in Deleuze can be seen to focus on the principles that emerge from his work rather than on his particular ideas. As I outline previously, Deleuze’s writings hold significance for my argument through what he identifies as art’s capacity to insinuate rather than directly illustrate meaning.

The artworks discussed throughout this research exemplify diverse temporalities. By embodying ideas explicated in this thesis, I show that they cannot be readily positioned within formal categories of art. Whilst this is a common characteristic of most contemporary art practices, the aesthetics of these sculptures appear on first viewing to reside in categories which may include the concrete, non-objective, Minimalist and/or post-Minimalist, contemporary “unmomumental”, conceptual and/or expanded painting, for example. These sculptures “hover” somewhere between these disparate ideas and exist across recognisable boundaries. Their indiscernibility is, of course, what this research aspires towards. I recognise, however, potential limitations for an aesthetic which appears to be one thing while asking for time to be recognised as something-more, particularly relating to pre-conceptions imposed by some viewers on minimalist artworks as anti-feminist and elitist.

---

255 Bal, Hovering between Thing and Event: Encounters with Lili Dujourie.
One such categorisation relates to performance art. The sculptural examples of contemporary ‘assemblage’ discussed throughout this research would not generally be viewed as performative. Despite this, my research directly connects with the performativity of the viewer, clearly evident in reflections in the early photographic image of *Becoming of Unbecoming*. It is possible, I claim, to envision future collaborative opportunities for these sculptures within more traditional performance art practices and contexts. One example is a recent exhibition that I attended, titled *Critical Bodies* (2018), which incorporates contemporary photographic, video and performance-based work that places the body at the centre of its investigation into a range of emotions and experiences. I propose that the sculptures discussed throughout my research have the capacity to establish a performative role in similar performance-based exhibitions. This could manifest through ideas such as distorted reflections, mirrored views or through engagement with other viewing options such as placement within extra-ordinary sculptural forms or aesthetic strategies incorporating sensors, disappearing images or other forms of physical or philosophical transformation.

---

256 Cherine Fahd and Julie Rrap (Curators), "Critical Bodies," ed. University of Sydney Verge Gallery(2018). "The exhibition focuses on contemporary photographic and video work that places the body at the centre of investigation. The body has been a vehicle for experimentation into all realms of human experience, including emotion, violent action, religious expression, political engagement, gender questions, and medical intervention. This exhibition demonstrates how 'the body' continues to provide a rich source of exploration for younger generations of artists."
This thesis establishes that the transformative encounter occurs through ideas that make us think, enable us to understand something that we don’t immediately recognise and to believe in evolving transformation. It is the capacity of the ‘assemblage’ to engender social and ‘political’ outcomes that is of key significance for this research. It is the recognition that what seems fixed is able to transform and, with this, the realisation that anything is possible. The Theory of ‘Imminence’ affirms the capacity to imagine the unforeseeable and, by being able to think differently, to understand the potency of new ideas.

It is the coalescence of many temporal moments within contemporary ‘assemblage’ that promotes transformation from one state to another and identifies the potential for change. This confirms new opportunities for encounter and, with them, the broader possibility to look at the world in different and extra-ordinary ways. In this, my thesis identifies that the temporal dimension of the sculpture acts as a catalyst for the transformative encounter, which, when activated by the viewer’s presence, establishes new ways for understanding and viewing contemporary art.
APPENDICES
## APPENDIX 1 – Light Research (LR: Series 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>ITERATION #2</th>
<th>FORM OF BECOMING</th>
<th>ITERATION #1</th>
<th>MATERIALITY – PROCESS</th>
<th>NATURE OF ‘IMMINENCE’ EVOKED IN NEW WORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sensor Sensorium, 2017</td>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>I'm OK, You're OK #1, 2016</td>
<td>Use of smart glass with thermal-activated sensors; transparency of glass changes when activated by human movement; a variety of objects/finishes come into view, and then disappear again, when the glass is de-activated</td>
<td>Physical change in materiality – rapid awareness of the unexpected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Corten Gold, 2017</td>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>Columns, 2016</td>
<td>Corten steel structure with a single surface of gold or polished steel; the polished surface remains stable but reflects its architectural context</td>
<td>Physical change – Corten oxidises and changes colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Now I Find You #2, 2017</td>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>Finally, I See You #1, 2016</td>
<td>Panels of clear, acrylic sheet with layers of varnish; some panels are one-way mirrors but in different colours; some with photographic images. Positioned with two spotlights onto the work that cast shadows and therefore de-stabilize the image in relation to viewer location</td>
<td>The image emerges in a variety of ways; seen as partly stable but also dematerialising depending on the location of viewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Boxed Light, 2017</td>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>I’m OK, You’re OK #2</td>
<td>Framed shapes with lights with different diffusers; coloured light is contained within the box and their mixed colours, viewed through clear viewing panels</td>
<td>The colour mixes itself; changes depending on viewer location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mirror, mirror on the wall, 2017</td>
<td>Absolute</td>
<td>Me, Isa and Isa &amp; Me, 2016</td>
<td>Framed, clear acrylic boxes, with different reflective, surface treatments; fitted inside lightweight welded, steel-frames</td>
<td>The extra-ordinary views are unforeseen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Boxed gold, 2017</td>
<td>Absolute</td>
<td>I’m OK, You’re OK #2</td>
<td>Boxed frames on wall; some partial panels of gold or polished metal; fluorescent tubes</td>
<td>The extra-ordinary views are unforeseen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Boxed Aerogel</td>
<td>Absolute</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Small pieces of aerogel arranged in a variety of ways</td>
<td>Photos of a virtual image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lanes of Darlo, 2017</td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>All works</td>
<td>Photos on mirror appear ghost-like; printed onto clear and coloured semi-transparent acrylic sheets; other objects standing in front of the mirrors</td>
<td>Expected images in work are different to what is anticipated; Ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Window (again), 2017</strong></td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td>All works</td>
<td>Photo of a large window; it deliberately <em>connects</em> with the gallery space so that it looks real; visually distorting panels hang in front</td>
<td>A theoretical work; presented as metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>PS-2, 2017</strong></td>
<td>Virtual</td>
<td><em>I’m OK, You’re OK #2</em> digitised image</td>
<td>Hanging digitised image printed onto acrylic sheet; suspended from frame with light projected to create reflected shadow on wall; appearance of digitised shadow theatre</td>
<td>Subtle movement of the hanging image creates shifts in the reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2 – *Light Research* (LR: Series 2017) – EARLY EXHIBITION

See SCA Gallery Proposal (LR: Series, 2017 #01-10)
LIGHT RESEARCH (LR: SERIES #01-10), 2017

INDICATIVE IMAGES

#01 / #03
SENSOR SENSORYUM, MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL (behind)
Sweat glass and mirror over wall, mirror — glass automatically switches On and Off

#02
CORTEX GOLD
Corrugated gold, sculpted, curved, on stand

#04
FINALLY I SEE YOU #3
Parallels of acryllic, mirror, mirror, casts shadows onto wall

#08
BOXED LIGHT
Light source concealed inside framed box, as colour washes interior. 3.0m (H) x 1.0m (W) x 1.0m (D)

LIGHT RESEARCH (LR: SERIES #01-10), 2017

INDICATIVE IMAGES

#06
BOXED AEROSOL
Sculpted glass, gold object, sitting on wall, white

#07
GOLD
Gold, gold, gold object

#08
LAMPS OF CARELO
Photos on coloured mirror panels, visitors see themselves in distorted images

#09
WINDOW #4 (again)
UV light source projected onto wall

#10
10 P-5
hanging clipped prints on reflective, transparent materials
APPENDIX 3 – *Isa Essay* (ISA GENZKEN April 2016)

Excerpt from an essay written in April 2016 to discuss Isa Genzken’s influence on my practice. This research was continued in my work titled *ME, ISA AND ISA & ME* in the SCA Post Graduate Gallery, SCA, March–April 2016, and further explored in its second iteration in June 2016 at Articulate Gallery.

**IMAGES OF GENZKEN’S MID-CAREER WORK (1980s–2004)**

GENZKEN’S INFLUENCE ON MY WORK

An informal analysis of Genzken’s work in terms of a performance or logic model, based on a process of OBJECTIVES > STRATEGIES > OUTCOMES > PURPOSE, provides a preliminary way of viewing her work trajectory in relation to my own. My research suggests her PURPOSE as ‘Being Contemporary’ (in terms of being relevant to our time) and the four OBJECTIVES she utilises to achieve this as being: 1) to activate viewer engagement; 2) to engage with/explore art-historical references; 3) to use architecture and spatiality as a visual and narrative platform; and 4) to express her own artistic identity. These OBJECTIVES sit comfortably with my own Purpose and assist to explain the empathy I have with Genzken’s work. The interpretation of Genzken’s OBJECTIVES help to identify a shared range of STRATEGIES on which my own work is focused and helps to articulate the preferred OUTCOMES to which her work aspires.

My interpretation of each of Genzken’s four OBJECTIVES is briefly summarised in the following table and expanded within the following text.

---

### INFORMAL ANALYSIS OF ISA GENZKEN’S ULTIMATE PURPOSE & REQUIRED OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ULTIMATE PURPOSE</th>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>REQUIRED OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| TO BE CONTEMPORARY (in terms of being relevant to our time) | 1 To activate viewer engagement | - Explores complex narratives  
- Utilises the photographic image as a connector to the everyday  
- Uses a “found object-based language” where objects retain their identity  
- Explores a contemporary interpretation of the readymade  
- Creates recognisable environments with everyday objects  
- Use industrial and cheap, consumerist materials  
- Works across disciplines | 1. Complex interpretation of contemporary issues  
2. Serious social concerns – though achieving a lyrical & poetic quality  
3. Non-didactic  
4. Relevance to a younger generation |
| 2 To engage with / explore art-historical references | | - References aesthetics and formal language of Constructivist, Modernist and avant-garde art and architecture  
- Engages with German artists ie Richter, Polke, Palermo  
- Learns from Newman and Kelly  
- Minimalist sculpture in terms of phenomenological experience | 1. New work, but with a shared history and recognisable as part of a continuum  
2. Idiosyncratic, critical, playful and new visual language  
3. Deeper context for the Minimalist “social” space |
| 3 To use architecture and spatiality as a visual and narrative platform | | - Aligns architecture with narrative structures  
- Avoids building critique to enable new architectural engagement  
- Connects place and object  
- Explores various forms of viewer engagement  
- Choreographs environments as film-sets  
- Explores scale and colour  
- Uses the window as pictorial representation  
- Explores diverse surfaces | 1. New thinking about using architecture in art - not related to building critique  
2. “Real-time movie set”  
3. “A sense of architecture” but not about architecture per se  
4. As a spatial container to support the exploration of ideas and relationships between objects |
| 4 To express her own artistic identity | Her early work: | - Avoids connection to a so-called “female aesthetic”  
- Aims to create work viewed as ‘serious’ by male artist colleagues  
- Tries to be accepted by German artist peer group  
- Minimises “personal” references | Her new work:  
1. Critical practice, but on her terms  
2. Lyrical and vulnerable  
3. Optimises future potentials  
4. Able to do the work she wants |
I have always said that, with any sculptures you have to be able to say although this is not a readymade, it could be one. That’s what a sculpture has to look like. 

*Isa Genzken 2003.*

*The conflation of the sculptural and the photographic on the basis of a shared realism forms one of the pillars of Genzken’s assemblage aesthetic.*

New York gallerist David Zwirner has shown Genzken’s work in New York and London since 2005 and sees in her work a connection “... to the kind of cross-disciplinary work grounded in real-world experience” that he identifies with a young generation of artists who seek an activated viewer engagement expressed through narrative, objects and performative and interactive experiences. For this reason Genzken’s work moved in the early 1990s towards assemblage. In so doing she moved from the constructed object towards the assembled one, in an effort to not just represent the world but to be seen to be connected to and in the world. In other words, she moved from the creation of objects placed in an environment to the creation of environments themselves. It was not however till around 1999 that Genzken’s three-dimensional assemblage aesthetic became what has today become her idiosyncratic “found-object-based language”, which explores a complex and very contemporary notion of viewer engagement.

Finding a connection to the moment, suggests Laura Hoptman, inspired her to re-evaluate the legacy of the ‘readymade’ but within a different and more contemporary context. The materials Genzken chose, such as the shiny building foils, toys, cardboard pizza boxes, safety tapes and orange construction netting, meant that working with these real-world materials she created installations that engage with the everyday in substance as well as subject. It is the use of the actual object that enables Genzken’s work to represent the twenty-first century. It acknowledges without any implied criticism a culture that celebrates “... things found in the world, cheap, disposable things that are no less brilliant for their

---


261 Ibid., 151.
Narrative has always been a major part of Genzken’s work. Hoptman points out that it is difficult to emphasise how boldly contrary to the prevailing artistic and critical tastes her overt use of narrative was at the time it emerged. Her use of narrative has become more complex as her use of materials becomes more diverse. She has moved from using cut-out photographic images with coloured glass and contact paper to using actual objects such as shopping carts, wheelchairs, umbrellas, dolls, toys, mannequins and household furniture in more recent work. Hoptman states that, though they appear chaotic, these works reveal a “spatial and intellectual rigour” that enables the observer to go on a narrative journey that varies from ideas about New York to concerns of our times and comments about her friends and colleagues.

Just as she can depict the ethos of a city with a couple pieces of coloured glass or a pizza box, Genzken can catch the moment by piecing together bits of reality that create a narrative that is pertinent, even urgent, to the moment.

Her former husband, Gerhardt Richter, used the photograph as a connector between painting and everyday life and began making paintings directly from photographs. Genzken shared this technique and, as Hoptman suggests, uses photographs as a kind of ‘readymade’. Photographs and objects find a new meaning in Genzken’s work, without losing their original identity. Genzken explains this idea in a conversation with Wolfgang Tillmans where they discuss the “economy” of photography in terms of it being “unobtrusive and unpretentious ... as a gesture, it is somehow less pompous. Because the photo creates a kind of universality or accessibility...”

The objects that Genzken incorporates into her sculptures retain their original meaning when they move from the everyday world to the world of art. Hoptman puts forward the view that Genzken’s series of installations of the past decade identify a new kind of assemblage that reasserts their meaning by treating them as a kind of evidence. In sculptural ensembles such as Fuck the Bauhaus (2000) and The American Room (2004), inanimate objects are reanimated, treated as actors and placed "within a complex narrative.

262 Ibid., 167.
263 Ibid., 134.
264 Ibid., 137.
265 Ibid., 169.
tableau, placed in physical situations reminiscent of dioramas or film-set maquettes."\textsuperscript{267} Hoptman suggests that it is their relationship to the everyday that links these new works to Genzken's earlier sculptures/installations, and the retention of the meaning of the 'readymade' object becomes another strategy used by her to explore the notion of contemporary viewer engagement.

2 ENGAGE WITH ART-HISTORICAL REFERENCES

Here it seemed that the emphasis on the inextricable triadic unit between spectator, sculptural object, and architectural container was reconfigured in a manner that seemed to have understood at least the implications of (the) Lissitzky of the Proun Room period.\textsuperscript{268}

Hal Foster discusses some of the influences on Genzken's work in his \textit{Fantastic Destruction} essay of 2014,\textsuperscript{269} identifying that she has, since the start of her career, engaged with Modernist and avant-garde movements in art and architecture in ways that are both "idiosyncratic and astute".\textsuperscript{270} Her early work particularly references the aesthetics and formal language of Constructivist and Modernist artists’ work, such as El Lissitzky’s spatial studies, Moholy-Nagy's constructions, Herbert Bayer’s graphic designs and Walter Gropius' modular architectural systems. She also identified with some of her German artist colleagues, such as Gerhard Richter, Blinky Palermo and Sigmar Polke, in terms of their notion of an “aesthetic autonomy”, and shared their views that on one hand there was a desire to develop a unique German post-war cultural identity, yet on the other was the desire to be aligned with an American model of international-style consumer culture.

Buchloh highlights Genzken’s admiration for the work of the American Post-War abstractionists Barnett Newman and Ellsworth Kelly, whose paintings became so large that the viewer would become chromatically immersed in them and their field of vision expanded beyond traditional pictorial boundaries into a phenomenological experience. It was the emphasis on scale in Kelly’s, Morris Louis’ and Newman's work from the late 1950s, Buchloh

\textsuperscript{267} Hoptman, "Isa Genzken: The Art of Assemblage, 1993-2013," 137.
\textsuperscript{269} Hal Foster, "Fantastic Destruction," ibid., 191.
argues, together with their avoidance of architectural “social space”, which identified a dialectic that Genzken’s work has incorporated as another fundamental strategy within her contemporary sculpture.\textsuperscript{271}

Genzken’s encounter with Minimalist sculpture was important. Buchloh suggests that, whilst Minimalist sculpture was opposed to the idea of a purely pictorial abstract sublime, it failed to recognize that the construction of a utopian ideal using chromatic or sculptural means alone would “lead to this cul-de-sac of corporate décor.”\textsuperscript{272} Genzken’s insight into El Lissitzky’s work, specifically the \textit{Proun Room} from 1923, allowed her to understand that, because the chromatic fields in Newman’s and Kelly’s paintings lacked a definition of “social” and “discursive” space, they were prevented from being a real departure from pictorial to phenomenological space.\textsuperscript{273} Genzken’s sculptures of the late 1970s addressed these ideas by moving beyond the limitations of the phenomenologically neutral space.

\textit{On the one hand she literally inverts Newman’s pictorial strategies of enveloping the spectator within the colour field by fusing colour exclusively within the spatial and formal definition of the sculptural objects. Yet these elements of the abstract sublime appear no longer in the hieratic position of a vertical plane but are defined by Genzken as pure stereomatic objects, discreet and separate from the body of the spectator.}\textsuperscript{274}

Genzken’s \textit{Columns} (1990-2000) are usually associated with her interest in Modernist architecture, but these slim, tall, hollow, wooden constructions may be better understood as referencing her interest in Minimalism, particularly some of her early experiments with Bruce Nauman that explored ideas identified in Maurice Merleau-Pointy’s \textit{Phenomenology of Perception}. Hal Foster refers to the unique interpretation of the \textit{Columns} as being minimalist in terms of their “serial production, in which repetition undercuts any referential logic”, suggesting that Genzken’s \textit{Columns} inhabit the opposition established between anthropomorphism and seriality and between the statue and the readymade.\textsuperscript{275}

\textit{Many 1960s minimalists, as is well known, had always been affected by diversion, contextualisation, and multiple perspectives, and phenomenological}

\textsuperscript{271} Buchloh, "Isa Genzken: The Fragment as Model," 16.  
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid., 18.  
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid., 17.  
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid., 19.  
\textsuperscript{275} McDonough, "A Certain Relation to Reality": Isa Genzken between Subject and Object."
reduction proposed its reduction as a means of achieving more concentrated comprehension or perception of the object or of anything taken out of its context in short-lived moments of stability. Minimalist presentations of objects and materials was intended to assist or encourage efforts of perception along these lines on the part of the viewer.\footnote{276}

Whilst acknowledging the influence of American and German Minimalist artists such as Carl Andre and Blinky Palermo on her early work, she has also recalled recently that "...her experience compelled her forward on a search for a deeper context for Minimalism."\footnote{277} This ultimately became one of the main influences on her work and, as Buchloh concludes, she situated herself between Beuys and his work with objects and conceptual art on the one hand, and Barnett Newman and Ellsworth Kelly on the other, to confront what she has referred to as the massive onslaught of minimalism.\footnote{278} In a recent interview with Simon Denny she acknowledged this, saying:

... trying to get this balance between minimalism and something else beyond that – in dialogue with minimalism, but with content. That was always the thing with minimalism, there was no content allowed of course, but only the thing in the space, that was what Sol LeWitt was always about, and Carl Andre – it was all about avoiding content.\footnote{279}

3 TO USE ARCHITECTURE AND SPATIALITY AS A VISUAL AND NARRATIVE PLATFORM

To be equally attracted and repulsed by the legacies of modernist design and functionalist architecture that had also defined the utopian aspirations of many of the key painters and sculptors of the twentieth-century avant-gardes had been one of the paradoxical artistic positions of the post-World War II period.\footnote{280}

\footnote{276} Diedrich Diederichsen, "Subjects at the End of the Flagpole," in Isa Genzken October Files 17, ed. Lisa Lee (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2006), 75.
\footnote{278} Buchloh, "All Things Being Equal," 93.
\footnote{280} Buchloh, "Isa Genzken: The Fragment as Model," 34.
By the mid-1980s any form of engagement with Modernist architecture in terms of purely visual and formal relationships had become problematic. For architecture to be used at all within a critical framework, Joseph Strau suggests, narrative relationships had to be introduced; alternatively architecture had to be rediscovered as a new narrative form. He identifies that Genzken was successful in achieving “a sense of architecture” in works that were architecture-related but also overlaid with parallel narratives. Some of her so-called architectural works that allude to Mies van der Rohe’s skyscrapers illustrate how removed the modernist architectural vision has become. Of these coloured planes Strau states that, “... like the modernist value of truth to materials, the modernist faith to rationality of structure dies a definitive death here.” It was only in the late nineties that, by aligning architecture with varied narrative structures and not analysing them in terms of building form, it became possible to identify new architectural possibilities for social and aesthetic narratives. It is because they deny architectural subjectivity, suggests Buchloh, that Genzken’s architecture-sculptures enable us to think about architecture at all.

A connection between place and object is an obvious characteristic of Genzken's work. She experimented with various forms of viewer engagement, either in the form of setting elements of the work in motion or in mobilizing viewers themselves, as in some of her earlier installations where viewers are invited to enter them either visually or physically. Scale is a constant issue for Genzken. Height and placement are carefully considered in accordance with an adult-sized viewer in order to apprehend a required perspective. The height of a base, for example, is chosen to set the viewer's eye-level with exact precision. One example is sculptures placed on iron bases so high that most viewers experience them as if the works towered over them like buildings. Her Sociale Fassaden series are set high enough to exceed the height of the average human but slender enough so as not to seem overly monumental. What results for the viewer is a sense that these sculptures are both figures and architecture. "She wants the viewer to see how the great, grand, and monumental can be brought down to size ... reveal a similar desire to diminish the power and self-importance as expressed in architecture." Colour is another area of passionate engagement and a strategy she favours for the activation of the viewers, as seen in her use

284 Lee, "Isa Genzken, Model Citizen," 268.
of industrial materials that emphasise colour, form and space and share the basic principles of minimalism.

Her overall engagement with built space is as keenly investigative as it is playful. Genzken’s desire for her work to interact with the world around it grew to the point where mere site-specificity or the manipulation of formal spatial relationships between the object and viewer were not sufficient. In order to suggest a connection to film, she defines sculpture as a series of performance events in space to be executed by the viewer. She even suggests that sculptures should function as motion pictures rather than sculptures. “You see a new picture from every different angle”, she said. To support this idea, she produced a forty-seven-minute silent film to accompany one work as a tour through several of her sculptures, shot at eye level so that the viewer is at scale with them.

*Experiencing Genzken’s environments in time, we are not just wandering through her version of a film set; we are participating, in a way, in her real-time movie.*

4 TO EXPRESS HER OWN ART IDENTITY

... even her most abstract works might still recall objects in the real world...

This associative aspect was there from the very beginning and was also intentional, but from the viewpoint of Minimal art, it was absolutely out of the question and simply not modern.

Genzken’s idiosyncratic work reinforces her desire to be free from influence and to pursue her practice on her terms. She has always done this, even when it was difficult to do so, particularly in terms of establishing a practice perceived as critical and accepted within a male artist-dominated field. For this reason, she made the decision not to align herself with Feminist art in order to avoid being associated with a “female” aesthetic. Likewise she deliberately chose male mentors and created early work that formally related to the

---

287 Ibid., 165.
dominant sculpture practices of the time, the New York School, believing this enabled her work to be perceived as serious.

None the less it was for Genzken always about finding her own way and achieving in her work a balance between formal and idiosyncratic ideas. She decided that, because of the perceived social status of being a female artist, the “personal” had to be minimized in early work. Even so her early sculptures which deliberately tried to achieve spatial and conceptual neutrality, such as the Ellipsoids (1976-1982), attracted metaphorical interpretations such as “their seemingly phallic hypertrophy, the typical product of female hysteria”. Undoubtedly the strain to be accepted by that generation of German artists drove her projects forward.

By the mid-1990s Genzken had changed the context of her work from the rigours of the Dusseldorf Academy and the influences of her German male colleagues and of American Minimalism to the inter-disciplinary work of a new generation of artists concerned with expressing contemporary levels of realism and engaging with the viewer in different ways. This changed everything for Genzken, enabling her to express her own identity.

Despite the recent success of the Isa Genzken Retrospective at MoMA (2014), which described her work as “...representing both a rare artistic freedom as well as a disciplined, almost obsessive sensitivity toward the relationship of individuals to their sculptural surroundings,” Genzken’s work received many problematic reviews. Most of these were personal attacks positioning her work in relation to the male artists in her life: her former husband Gerhard Richter, her close colleague Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and her friends Wolfgang Tillmans and Kai Aithoff. Others raised her paternal grandfather’s Nazi connections. The term ‘crazy’ was also used. Even though this is a term Genzken herself has used in her collaged book, I Love New York, Crazy City, Hal Foster, writing in October Files 17 (2015), suggests that a male artist of her stature would not be treated in this way and would certainly not be subjected to the epithet ‘crazy’.

---

290 Ibid., 65.
292 However in spite of the criticism levelled at her work, the MIT October Files 17 (2015) titled ISA GENZKEN has produced an extensive critical analysis of her work in terms of an artist who has “...altered our understanding of art in significant ways.” This comprehensive set of essays addresses the full range of Genzken’s work and positions it as offering “…a highly original interpretation of modernist, avant-garde, and post-minimalist practices even as she engages in pressing socio-politics and economic issues of the present.”
CONCLUSION – ‘EXTRAORDINARY VIEWS’

Window and mirror have served as paradigms for pictorial representation, while the camera registers the indexical trace of what is before the lens. The struggle to depict the world is rendered moot by Genzken, who simply brackets a bit of reality.  

The window has been a familiar motif in art-history, and Genzken has used it, within the context of referencing architecture, to focus the viewer’s experience of looking through or beyond its frame. Windows, mirrors and photos are all framing mechanisms that capture moments in time for Genzken. According to Michael Darling, her work focuses on the opportunity of creating views for letting the world in and the viewer out. This reference to my original thesis title, Extraordinary Views, reinforces the connection with my work. Her non-didactic approach to social issues, delivered in an idiosyncratic, playful and new way, reveals a sense of hope for the future, despite her works’ obvious concern with world issues. Diederichsen acknowledges this idea in Genzken’s work by describing it as resting somewhere between utopia and ideology. This for me is the unexpected joy of the work – in all its apparent chaos there is a sense of profound optimism.

Her influence goes to the purpose of my work, which I express, in a similar way to her, as being of our time in order to make a meaningful connection with the viewer. Like her I have come to believe that my work needs to contain ideas that have some immediate and easily understood connection for the viewer. Genzken uses diverse strategies to make these connections: the art-historical references for example can show that this work is quite different from the past but has a shared history and is therefore part of a continuum. Genzken used narrative and photographic images at times when it was not seen to be acceptable to do so, in order to create a connection to the viewer. For similar reasons, in my SCA installation, I have placed small architectonic objects within Columns that include abstracted figurative photographs. These works have received criticism as being overtly literalist.

---

294 Lee, "Isa Genzken, Model Citizen," 266.
Genzken’s knowledge of art history has enabled her to reference Modernist art and architecture. Her *Fuck the Bauhaus* construction for example is visually similar to Herbert Bayer’s 1924 diagrammatic plans for a ‘news kiosk’. Similarly, Genzken’s formalist aesthetic made her earlier work vulnerable to criticisms of being inaccessible and inappropriate within the context of her desire to be seen as being ‘of our time’. These are criticisms I confront in my own work. Her references to architecture also sit comfortably with me. As a former architect I am, like Genzken, interested in using ‘a sense of architecture’ to support the exploration of ideas and inter-relationships between objects and viewer, without undertaking any form of building critique.

Her mid-career work, particularly from the 1980s to 2004, continues to excite me in terms of the use of bold colours; the art-historical references; the elements of surprise; the capacity to be playful while also engaging with the viewer through a recognition of shared ideas that can be both shocking and confronting but which also foster joy and optimism.

So, thank you Isa. My secret dream is to produce work that somehow, somewhere you will see. I will be standing off to one side in a crowd looking over at you as you look at my work. You won’t say anything, as is your style, but you will look over to me and nod your head … recognising your legacy to me but also acknowledging work that is distinctively my own.

The alternative is too terrible to contemplate. That you will look at my work, look through it and walk away.
APPENDIX 4 – M. Hull and B. Hester Transcript of Interview (29th April 2016)

Merryn Hull and Bianca Hester Interview at SCA 29th April 2016

Excerpt from an unpublished interview:

_Interview between Bianca Hester and Merryn Hull that took place after curating Merryn’s work titled ME, ISA AND ISA & ME in the SCA Post Grad Gallery, SCA, March–April 2016. The interview references an essay written by Merryn about the German contemporary artist Isa Genzken and her influence on Merryn’s work._

_This interview’s reference is to the Genzken Essay produced in part as Appendix 3._

BH: After reading your essay, the predominant question that emerges for me is: what motivates your specific preoccupation with Isa Genzken? I ask this because your essay expresses quite a fixation with Genzken that could foreseeably be trained upon another artist who operates in a similar fashion.

So, I want to know what motivates this specific obsession? I say obsession because there are some interesting moments in your text that become personal in tone where the text begins to read like a ‘love letter’ to Genzken. I guess I’d like to begin this discussion by exploring this ‘love affair from a mediated distance’. What sparked or initiated it?

MH: I’ve been looking at her work for some time and I particularly like the thrown together, seemingly effortless feel of it and her ability to make strong social comment in a humorous and visually exciting way, without appearing to be didactic. When I started my PhD, I came back to her and I really got to know her work. ‘Obsession’ may not be the right word but it’s close to it! Genuine admiration, respect and gratitude for who she is and the work she does may be closer. I relate to her as teacher or mentor. I’ve spent years collecting catalogues from her exhibitions and they are great sources of reference material relating to her own writing about her practice, colleagues’ writing about her work and views expressed by art critics and historians such as Hal Foster and Benjamin H. D Buchloh. I relate to her as an artist and as a mature woman. I understand the struggle she has been through and I like her honesty, openness and determination. At the heart of this ‘obsession’ is a shared belief in specific ideas such as the use of ‘everyday’ objects and materials, together with an idiosyncratic form of minimalism, within an ‘architectural’ or spatial context. Beyond that, there’s actually not much similarity in our work. It’s more an ideas and concept connection.

BH: Those moments in the essay where your writing becomes quite personal, whereby you start to write ‘to her’ – are the moments when your fixation with her is performed
in the text. I wonder how you might elaborate or enact this fixation in ways that expand beyond an informing influence? For example, is there a way you might develop contact with her directly and make pursuing this engagement part of your method?

**MH:** I don’t plan to make contact with her, for the reason that I can’t think of one question that I could ask her for which I don’t already have an answer. By this I mean I have read so much about her that I believe I can work out her answer to questions. If I can ever find that question, yes, I will try to find a way to ask her. Though in truth the idea of meeting her terrifies me!

Maybe the way I write about Genzken is a bit weird?

**BH:** That’s what I find interesting about it! You also discuss how Genzken argues for making work for the ‘current moment’, and I want to ask how you perceive or define this current moment in relationship to your own context of production? When did you understand this moment that you’re in as ‘contemporary’? And when did your awareness of it emerge?

**MH:** You’re right that I’m very focused on how to express the ‘current moment’, as it’s at the heart of my research question. This is where Genzken’s influence as ‘mentor’ is key. The use of narrative is one strategy I have used to define this ‘current moment’, by giving my work meaning beyond the purely visual. I’m not an activist artist though I feel strongly about social issues. I therefore aim to produce work with an idiosyncratic aesthetic which aspires to achieve contemporary relevance on a range of levels. For example, I’m particularly interested in conceptual art questions such as why I choose to call my 3-D work ‘painting’. I use signifiers in my work to depict the ‘everyday’ because objects and ideas that are recognisable as ‘ordinary’ and celebrated as special in an art context can, in my view, express the potential of the ‘current moment’. My work, like Genzken’s, acknowledges an art historical lineage and aims to be recognisable as contemporary by being similar but slightly different from that history. It is through connecting to some of these ideas in Genzken’s work that I am able to contemplate the ‘current moment’ in my own. I became aware that the form of ‘painted’ abstracted expressionism with which I was engaged previously had for me become laboured. I found my work felt more activated in terms of connecting to the ‘current moment’ when I engaged with construction and created objects which I placed in installations.

**BH:** The idea of iteration also seems important to your process. I wonder if this connects back to your engagement with an architectural practice? When you develop
work through an iterative process, each iteration changes depending on the context. The contexts through which iterations occur both change and enrich the repetition. This links specifically to the ‘columns’, that seem to have developed through a process of repetition. Those columns speak to me in architectural terms – they seem provisional and propositional – becoming models that propose other possible forms to be developed in time.

**MH:** Yes. That’s right. My original columns explored a particular narrative, which was to depict the progression of my practice under Genzken’s influence. I discovered that this wasn’t obvious to the viewer, and some columns were received as being more resolved than others. Provisionality, as you say, is another element in my definition of expressing the ‘current moment’. Not in the sense that they are incomplete, though they may be, but that they remain open to new interpretations or change. In this sense Genzken and I share a strong Bauhausian interest. For me this manifests in the multi-functionality of my work in terms of its re-usability and adaptability, which acknowledges a direct influence of the work of Walter Gropius and his aspiration for craft aesthetics with pre-fabricated construction components. This notion of reusability facilitates iteration. For similar reasons experimentation is fundamental to Genzken’s practice. I don’t agree however with the idea of my work being propositional in terms of architectural models. Whilst I see my work having a sense of architecture it is definitely not about architecture or modelling new architectural forms.

**BH:** Something you reference in your essay is the notion of ‘envisioning another world’. This is an evocative proposition. What for you is that other possible world?

**MH:** A slow reveal of possibilities! Discovering additional levels of meaning in the work, aligned with a feeling of positivity and a sense of optimism. Ultimately a sense of being aware of the potential for new possibilities. This may sound a bit silly.

**BH:** No, it doesn’t sound silly at all. Does this desire then provide a context for the title of your work, being ‘Extraordinary Views’?

**MH:** Yes, it certainly does. Views can be thought of as something that you see or ideas that you find in the work when you find something that you hadn’t expected to find, or you didn’t understand until you left the work and thought about it in a different way. It can manifest as a belief in your own unique view of the world, or ideas that shape your world which can be seen as your right to be that person in whatever way you want to be. So, it’s about all that. I would hope that my work, through what I
think of as an idiosyncratic connection to the ‘current moment’, could enable a strong connection with the viewer along these lines.

**BH:** That’s kind of a drive to liberation, and freedom. And it relates back to what you mentioned about your admiration for Isa Genzken.

**MH:** That’s right. I think she’s had to fight for her own identity in the art world and, having found it, she has now given herself the right to make work exactly the way she wants. This is probably the most important reason why I admire her.
APPENDIX 5 – Transcript Interview Dr Stephen Little – Merryn Hull

Stephen Little and Merryn Hull Interview at the National Art School on 20th March 2017

Excerpt from an unpublished interview:

Interview between Stephen Little and Merryn Hull following Stephen Little’s Equinox at ES74, Alexandria in Sydney, showing from 23rd August to 4th September 2016.

MH: Your work evokes for me a sense of potentiality, in terms of being open to new ideas. As such, how do you think it engages with the philosophical idea of becoming?

SL: I think the notion of becoming, for me, is to do with an appreciation or acknowledgment of movement and change, changes in form through a sense of flux. It’s not so much that you can change one thing in and for itself, but maybe the values, or the new values that other things can bring to things, and what they can offer in terms of the potential for change, and perhaps unforeseen outcomes.

So, what that tells us is that painting isn’t a static thing, and it’s not just about the physical or material nature of it, but it’s about how we engage with it. It’s about the conceptual, ideological, historical, perceptual: there’s a whole range of different ways that we engage with it, and these are all very, very important. So, there’s a constant shift, and there’s that sort of flux, that I find quite curious, and interesting, in terms of a notion of flux, or imminence, or becoming. And it’s this moment, where something happens, where in a sense you have a, I suppose, a notion of imminence, or that state – if we call it ‘the edge of the blade’ – that we’re talking about here, of changing from one thing to a state of becoming something else. Duchamp spoke about that in-between space (the infrathin). But at the same time, I think it’s also … speaks to an anticipation, I suppose, of surrounding positions whose status, or the status quo, may have become untenable, or its currency is changing. Maybe there’s something about its position that has fallen into some kind of jeopardy. And it’s not so much about actively changing things. Sometimes I think it’s about developing and moving on. So it’s saying that a certain position is no longer enough, as it would have been maybe ten years ago. It’s maybe not enough today. So rather than trying to do something new, we’re just sort of adding to it, or extending it.

MH: Yes, so it’s being open to …

SL: Other potentials.

MH: It seems to me that this is what I see in your work, a sort of positioning in a way, that makes you think about what more is possible. What more can happen, as a result of what you’ve put forward?

SL: And quite often, I think, it’s whenever you have a question, or a problematic or something … that needs to be addressed, that it’s very easy to address a situation from within … But if we extract a problem, and then we take it out of painting and let’s say we locate it somewhere else, like a sociological position, or something totally outside of the context of painting, then we can seek a way to address that problem in this new context.
MH: And is that what you do? Can you give me an example of that?

SL: ... my work *Equinox* shown at ES74 in late 2016. Here we have a question of precision, which is to do with the notion of the equinox, and its celestial progression and procession through the sky, and you have all of these planets, the whole sort of universe, all comes together at a particular point, like wheels in clockwork and they come to this momentary fixed point, where everything is sort of precise and specific, and aligned, and correct, and it’s like the perfect model of celestial mechanics and imminence and connection, and all of these sorts of things. And the thing with that that I find quite interesting was that, even in that, if I take that as a, say, painting ... that even when it’s totally sure, and totally concrete, you still have this incredible corruption of boundaries.

And so, if I’m thinking about a notion of an equinox as being perfect and precise and aligned, I also acknowledge that, depending on where you’re standing, you’re going to see it differently ... or distillation, where everything comes to a finite point. And we’ve found that finite point is actually hugely corrupted. And it’s full, and contains so many disparate and different perspectives, and different occurrences and different convergences, that it’s not just this one thing, and it’s not just this immaculate moment of conception or something.

MH: So, the point in *Equinox* is, you’re using equinox as an example of that perfection, that precision of a stellar...?

SL: Well, as a model for that ... In this instance *Equinox*, the work, is an installation with two big painted walls. In a simple way, that has as much to do with getting something to work, visually and spatially and stuff. The black wall has an astronaut on it, Sam Rockwell from the movie *Moon*, in a white spacesuit, so it talks about space. The brown wall is derived from the surface colour of Mars and has an image of Matt Damon from the movie *The Martian*. These images were originally from small 8 x 10 photographs that had been autographed by the actors. So, for example in the Matt Damon photograph, he’s on his knees, he’s looking down, he’s kind of pensive, and there’s this notion of him being alone, like Robinson Crusoe. And he’s staring into space, and the space that he’s staring into has his signature on it that reads as a kind of abstract glyph. He’s literally staring at his own signature. And then in step two, I have taken the original 8 x 10 and had it rephotographed and blown up to the point where Matt Damon is almost life size. He’s no longer just a small image of Matt Damon; in terms of scale and size he now inhabits real space – our space. And he’s still looking at his own signature, but the signature now has become supersized, bigger than real, more real than real. And at the same time, you have this narrative of a guy who’s on Mars, by himself, who’s looking at this signature, which is now blown up, it’s supersized, and you have a picture of someone who’s enlarged to life size, but actually it’s a total fiction. He’s dressed up in this space suit and he’s meant to be on Mars, but he’s actually in the middle of the Wadi Rum in Jordan. But there are all of these different fictions and meta narratives and spatial plays in terms of the real.

We see the work incorporate compositional space, allegory, background, middle-ground, foreground, scale, reality, fiction, notions of truth, falsity, they all inhabit those pictures and are all conflated and forced to occupy that single pictorial space. So, with the printed components presented separately on single-tone painted walls, the work...
invoked a tone of isolation, pensive introspection and solitude. And so, it is that sort of singularity that seems to be represented. But that singularity as I have just explained has all of these other facets to it, which are multi-dimensional relations that are brought to bear. So, there’s all kinds of narratives and relationships and bridges to be made.

And having the figures, not in the centre of the wall, but spaced apart means that they’re isolated within the walls, and they’re isolated from each other. And the figures are both looking in, so if they’re looking in, they’re looking into that corner wall, where the two different coloured walls meet. They’re looking at that point where things meet I suppose, or converge, which again ties back to the notion of the equinox ... So basically, it’s relative and depends on your perspective ... that I can see all of those possibilities and readings, it’s not just a single entity. There’s a myriad of different ways you can approach something ... So, it’s really about this expansion of how we look and think ... to see itself from the outside.

MH: And then, do you think people understand that? I mean, do you think when people see your works, your Equinox, they are able to get what you’re saying?

SL: Well, no, the answer is no. On one hand, some people might, but you know, I think they probably have to come from a particular perspective, and they probably have to understand previous works, and maybe see a certain sort of approach or methodology ... whereas other people might come into the space and see two photographs on the wall and say, “Is that it?”

And you know, they don’t get that it’s not about the photographs, they don’t understand that it’s also about the walls and multiple readings and different types of dimensions of space. They don’t understand all the different meta narratives that are present, and you know that the images to do with space are very much to do with the narrative, to do with the gesture on the surface – of a signature – to do with celestial convergence, and all that, and of course its relation to painting too, as a particular localised problematic. I don’t assume that people are going to register ... I think it’s something that’s just going to take a little bit of time ... I think the text can be quite hard for some people. But I think, I’ve tried to say what I needed to say as concisely and hopefully as clearly as I could, without trying to write a book about it. But I suspect it would take a little bit of sitting down and reading it, and spending a little bit of time, and maybe reading it a second time too, and looking at footnotes, just to get to the crux of it.

MH: I thought that what you wrote for Equinox, which I didn’t understand at all on the first reading, but then as I spent more time with it, I started to understand it, and I started to really get what you were saying. I think the more you write about the work, the more people are able to understand it, because the idea is actually quite straightforward. And it’s that process of being able to look beyond what you’re seeing, and understand, which is everything about what you’re saying with painting.

SL: Well it’s taking that little thing that we seem to think that we know, and extracting it, and putting it into another context, to actually show that we actually don’t know it half as well as we thought. There are all these potentials, and variables, and convergences, and the metaphor, and allegory, the narrative and the meta narrative,
and spatiality. I mean it’s a hyper-dimensional discipline in a sense, and then whenever you try to pack it back in a way which is, I suppose, understandable, when you link it back to painting, that can be quite provocative and difficult ...

**MH:** I mean, the idea can be linked to any discipline, really, but you’re linking it to painting by retaining so many of those traditional painting conventions.

**SL:** There are certain links to traditions. It could be to the painting proper, like painting the walls, but it could be about painting the walls with rollers, which could also be about an everyday paint job rather than a fine art thing. The audio component of *Equinox* ... seemed fitting for a number of reasons. ... I thought that was quite important in terms of the soundtrack because it is quiet and it’s introspective, and it’s only a very short piece of music, but it’s looped. It only goes for about three minutes, but it plays continuously, so there’s this notion of procession and return, which again was similar to celestial harmonics, where things would go around and come around and you have a point where they meet and converge and go around again. And also, in terms of the music, it was soft enough and light enough, and shall I say aerated enough, that it didn’t impact too much on the visual work, or the visual part of the work, and there are certain gaps between some of the notes that become almost like broken silences. I thought that was important because it gave silent gaps that separate things out. It’s not like a lot of voices speaking at once, or it’s not following the music’s inferred lead. How should I say, it’s not like a ...

**MH:** Continuous?

**SL:** It’s not a continuum, in the sense of, here’s the music, here’s the melody, but it’s actually quite soft and drawn out, and it’s quiet and drawn out. And that drawn-out-ness creates these gaps where you wonder what’s going to come next, so there’s always that possibility, of waiting, and that pregnant silence waiting for that next key note on a piano. I very much felt that in documenting the work, and seeing the work, people looking at these coloured walls, these expanses of wall with images on them, it becomes very much about visual art. It becomes very much about pictures and looking, and I thought also by having an audio with that, it had this multi-dimensional aspect to it, and multi-sensorial aspect to it, so it wasn’t just about looking but it’s also transportative. I think the music sets a particular tone for viewing the work, and it’s not just about the visual and pictorial, but it’s also about introspection, so it becomes a space to lose oneself, I think, in the space, and in your thoughts. I was speaking to someone one time, and they asked me about it. I sort of flippantly made some off-the-cuff reference to the Rothko Chapel, where you go in and there’s this space and this moment, and they were like, “Yeah? I don’t see it. I don’t see it”. And it’s, well, maybe I got it wrong. But then I had other people come up to me and say, “It’s just like being at the Rothko Chapel or something.” And it’s, like, that’s kind of weird that they would choose to say that. So maybe it’s exactly how some people respond to it, in that sort of internalised, introspective space, which is poetic, which is spatial, which is thoughtful, which is self-reflective. But I don’t know, I just have to leave it open I guess, if it was successful or not in those terms ...

**SL:** I mean it’s interesting that when I was writing a room sheet for it, I suppose something that I wanted to get across, but without prescribing what the work was all about, was in a sense, to get out some of these ideas that I was thinking, and present
some of the propositions that I had that seemed to feed into some of these ideas I had. So, without talking about painting proper, I mean I hardly actually speak about painting in the room sheet, but it’s really about opening up some of these concerns, some of these ideas with a view to bring them together in this text, or in this work.

I was very conscious that I didn’t want to be overly prescriptive in terms of dictating to people what the work meant, or how I envisaged it. And obviously whenever we do things like this, we can always do things and then five years later you start to view things differently that you’ve done. You understand why you did it, but you have a, perhaps you can have a greater insight into the value of it, that you wouldn’t have had at the time.

And the other interesting thing was at the opening when I had all of these people turn up. I came up the stairs and there were about 15-20 people in the space within the first few minutes or so, and everyone was standing and whispering and speaking in hallowed tones, which I thought was quite strange. I’ve never heard that in a gallery before, so I don’t know what that was. Was it the tone? Was it the music? Was it the reductive nature of what was on show? Was it something to do with a sensitivity or something that sort of permeated from the work, that people seemed to relate to? I suppose it’s not really for me to say, because I couldn’t say, I wouldn’t know. But it’s an interesting reaction. Most people come and have a drink and talk about the work for a minute or two if that, and then talk to each other, but this was kind of like going to a church or something. I had to tell people to feel free to speak loudly ... I wasn’t sure if I’d walked into a funeral ... I wasn't sure if I'd walked into a funeral.

MH: It must have been strange. I thought the room sheet was particularly good. I felt you didn’t do as comprehensive a one for Red Planet.297

SL: No, I thought I ... there was something quite difficult with Equinox that I felt needed to be articulated and spelled out in some ways, like different aspects of it. And then hopefully people start to make the links and speak about bridges and things. Whereas with the Red Planet show, this was very different, and the works, they work collectively, but they also work very much independently of each other as different units. And also, with Red Planet, it was very much, much more straightforward I think, in terms of how we might read the work. Whereas Equinox is more allegorical and a bit difficult, well I felt it was a bit difficult for people to get a handle on. So, there’s always the potential for loss for the people who come and it can be totally lost on them ...

And how do we deal with the audience? ... I’ve had people ask me, “These framed printed images, these big images from Equinox, do you have them up on your wall at home?” And I say, “Well, no I don’t”, because they demand space, they’re part of an installation, and I don’t take part of an installation and present it like it’s a finished work, because it has no real currency. You know, the currency lies in it being one component that is part of a whole. So, I always feel that it’s actually doing a disservice. I’d rather not see the work up than put part of a piece up and have people see that

as the be all and end all of the work, because it’s a total mis-registration of what’s actually going on.

**MH:** Well that’s right, I absolutely understand that. To see one of those photographs on the wall it’s lost, there’s no understanding of what the intent of the work has been. ... Now the first question, just getting back to the temporal idea of imminence, to define the *about-to-happen* time? Do you think imminence has any relevance in your work?

**SL:** I think perhaps it may do. I mean I haven’t thought of it in terms of imminence, but I do think of it in terms of, like I said, I guess notions of flux, and whenever we take a reading of something, or see something for what it is, or what we imagine it to be, you know, there’s always the opportunity for a reappraisal from a different perspective, that’s going to open it up in other ways. And I think that’s quite important because it’s about building bridges between different, disparate positions ...
The term equinox denotes a transitory alignment between the sun and the earth that creates a temporary balanced parity between night and day. The information that is derived from such occurrences and the properties of exactitude that accompany such alignments can be rationalised into defining principles from which formal concepts are deduced. As a precise and predictive model for celestial convergence the equinox model conjointly embodies a logical disjunction in its latitude to address variance within formal models of accuracy. Variances include our location at a precise moment in time, planetary geometry and atmospheric changes that alter the duration and appearance of sunlight to give different experiences of the same event. Other variables may include perceptual, sensorial, physical, spiritual, poetic, esoteric, philosophical and existential registers that separate our experience of an event from others to make it uniquely our own.

The framed images in Equinox are up-scaled autographs originally writ large on 8 x 10 film stills. These re-sized images serve to demonstrate a range of pictorial dynamics with which to address systems of discernment and classification. Tropes incorporating compositional space, allegory, narrative, background, middle ground, foreground, scale, reality, fiction, and notions of truth and falsity – are conflated and forced to occupy a single pictorial space. Presented separately on single tone walls the work evokes a tone of isolation, pensive introspection and solitude.

In Equinox, the inclusion of a musical audio loop (processional return) and pictorial notes intimating solitude, flawed logics, suspect realities and meta-fictions give rise to a corruption of assumed and stable boundaries to generate new propositions, meanings and resonances. Their convergence, in sympathy with Wittgenstein’s

---

298 As Command Module Pilot for Apollo 11, astronaut Michael Collins circled the Moon alone while Armstrong and Aldrin descended to the lunar surface. Given the implied solitude of his mission role Collins has been described in pre-flight press articles as a lonely man (“Not since Adam has any man experienced such loneliness”). Collins would later debunk this as a purely relative notion when he wrote, “Far from feeling lonely or abandoned, I feel very much a part of what is taking place on the lunar surface ... I don’t mean to deny a feeling of solitude. It is there, reinforced by the fact that radio contact with the earth abruptly cuts off the instant I disappear behind the moon. I am alone now, truly alone, billion plus two over on the other side of the moon and one plus God only know what on this side. I feel this powerfully – not as fear or loneliness – but as awareness, anticipation, satisfaction, confidence, almost exultation. I like the feeling ... Where I know the Moon to be, there is simply a black void; the moon’s presence is defined solely by the absence of stars.”

A treatise on family resemblance invokes a language of abstract relations that enables a reconfiguration of painting’s agency within broader zones of exchange. A position that favours likeness, resemblance and principles of similarity over those of exactitude reveals that levels of discrepancy while not formally deemed as ‘incorrect’ generate unforeseen correspondences and lead to new conclusions.

Liberated from former material and ideological constraints painting now occupies an open zone of divergent relations with multi-layered interwoven logics. As an expansive meta discipline aligned with principles of difference and aggregation, the classification of painting as a single entity with a distinct and independent existence is rendered a metaphysical fiction. Similarly, the accrual and development of knowledge pertaining to this discipline is durational and relies on a stream of incomplete and irregular voices to filter, calibrate and influence meaningful outcomes.

Stephen Little – July 2016

---

299 In Philosophical investigations, Ludwig Wittgenstein showed that what we understand by the term ‘relation’ is not always clear. He favoured the terms ‘family resemblance’ to show how a process of identification through ‘relation’ may exhibit ‘blurred edges’ resulting from a lack of distinctive traits. For example, one can say ‘stand roughly there’, and indicate a spot by pointing. So the lack of precision used to indicate a meaning does not necessarily make the expression meaningless. In this respect ‘family resemblance’ is presented as the preferred analogy in connecting particular uses of the same word, but it also serves to show the lack of boundaries or discrepancies of exactness that characterise different uses of the same concept.


300 Rosalind Krauss: “From the theory of grammatology to that of the parergon, Jacques Derrida built demonstration after demonstration to show that the idea of an interior set apart from, or uncontaminated by, an exterior was a chimera, a metaphysical fiction. Whether it be the interior of the work of art as opposed to its context, or the interiority of a lived moment of experience as opposed to its repetition in memory or via written signs, what deconstruction was engaged in dismantling was the idea of the proper, both in the sense “vision is what’s proper to the visual arts” – and in the sense of the clean or pure – as in “abstraction purifies painting of all those things, like narrative or sculptural space, that are not proper to it.” That nothing could be constituted as pure interiority or self-identity, that the purity always invaded by an outside…”

APPENDIX 7 – Making of *Lines of Flight* – Contact Sheets
Indicative images showing the final making of some of the selected sculptures.
APPENDIX 8 – Framework Analysis Theory of "Imminence"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Artist, Title, Date</th>
<th>Merryn Hull. <em>Lines of flight</em> (2018) and <em>Stair #1, Stair #2</em> (2018)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Two integrated artworks placed side by side to form an installation. Twelve column-like structures placed adjacent to eight photographic floor boxes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1  | PHILosophical CONcepts | • Title depicts ways of understanding the work  
• Suggests infinitesimal possibilities of escape ... from the constraints that seek to define and enclose creativity  
• Builds on philosophies of ‘becoming’, chance, repetition and ‘difference’ |
| 2  | Aesthetic STRategies | • Random lines as shadow projections of the column-forms evoke the notion of movement and reinforce transformation  
• Engages Husserl’s three-part process of temporal consciousness focusing on protention, as anticipation for future actions |
| 3  | Minimalist Aesthetic | • Pre-determined production of components and photographic images  
• Repetitive use of similar materials and concepts  
• Sculptures stand confidently within their own time and space  
• Capacity to engage diverse ideas from embodied perception to overt realism  
• Aluminium principally used in natural form to enhance intrinsic qualities |
| 4  | shock              | • Occurs as the viewer breaks strong shadow lines  
• Indiscernibility in terms of not knowing what the images represent |
| 5  | Assemblage         | SenSorial / Affectiv e | • Surfaces of photographic images reflect viewer and context  
• Colour derived from stair images, extends meaning to envision positive future potential and sense of hope |
|    | Multi-Temporal     | • It is the viewers’ presence that activates the work by walking through the light and breaking the projected shadow lines  
• The viewers’ reflections activate minuscule movements in the precariously and unwelded parts of the structures  
• Architectural continuum reflects minimalist tendencies |
|    | Enablers            | • Siting within the historic SCA main gallery |
|    | Actual-virtual     | • Abstracted images, not recognisable as SCA stairs, provide a sense of the familiar without actual recognition  
• The indeterminate arrangement of patterned shadow lines on the photographic images evoke dynamic transformation |
|    | Self                | • Recognition of SCA stairwell and/or personal reflection on empty spaces |
|    | Everyday            | • Imperfect photos, flawed surfaces, peeling paint and aluminium flat bars |
|    | Social and ‘political’ outcomes | • Reinforces the capacity to break away from the constraints of the old and familiar and move to a new, open future  
• More broadly, change is possible. Even institutions like SCA can transform! |
| 6  | Moment of ‘Imminence’ (about-to-happen) | • Recognition of the self-forming properties of the structures and sense they are just making themselves – finding their own resting positions  
• Shadows just forming  
• Slight movement of individual components within structures  
• Precariousness of structures  
• Recognition of a positive capacity to transform |
| 7  | Intuitive Appeal   | • Hand-crafted spot welds establish an artisanal feel  
• Enigmatic, abstracted photographic images are recognisable as familiar though unidentifiable |
| 8  | Transformative Encounter | • Provides the opportunity for thinking about transformation in a different way  
• Fundamentally the temporal dimension of the work enables the viewer to discern a transition from one state to another and therefore recognise the possibility of thinking about art in different ways |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Artist, Title, Date</th>
<th>Merryn Hull. <em>Still going</em> (2018), <em>(Meccano</em> (2018) and <em>Stair #4</em> (2018))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Composed of two parts: one is a photographic image <em>Stair #4</em>, printed on a two-way mirror placed over a window; the second <em>Meccano</em>, three mobile aluminium-framed structures with attached sheets of two-way mirror</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1 | PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS | • The artwork enables us to think beyond what we can see and in so doing reveals new opportunities and ideas  
• Enhances viewer’s capacity for thought  
• Functions as a double “crystal image” which brings together an actual and a ‘virtual’ image to the point where they can no longer be distinguished  
• Depicts Deleuze’s *any-spaces-whatever*, as the underutilised SCA complex |
| 2 | AESTHETIC STRATEGIES | • Mirror surfaces not just a reflecting surface, but become portals which identify a range of diverse opportunities  
• The use of mirror is also an architectural trope to shift views; intensify light; and extend space beyond the everyday |
| 3 | MINIMALIST AESTHETIC | • Pre-determined production of components and photographic images  
• Repetitive use of similar materials and concepts  
• Capacity to engage diverse ideas from embodied perception to overt realism  
• Aluminium used in natural form to enhance intrinsic qualities |
| 4 | SHOCK | • Surprise discovery of the ghost-like photographic image *Stair #4* |
| 5 | BECOMING-ASSEMBLAGE | Sensorial / Affective  
• The viewer is threatened and attracted by the occluded mirror surfaces  
• Photographic image in constant transition from clear image; ghost-like shadowing; viewer’s own reflection; and multiple reflections of adjacent surfaces and context  
Multi-Temporal  
• The three mobile structures are located either side of *Stair #4*; their final location and relationship with each other remains open to change  
Enablers  
• The photographic image *Stair #4* positioned over an open aluminium frame, that leans informally against an external window  
Actual-virtual  
• Reinforces the actual (the photographic image *Stair #4*) which is reflected in the mirror-image the ‘virtual’ (*Meccano*) – opportunity to see the existing, and at the same time imagine the possible  
Self  
• Capacity to see one self in relation to the artwork  
• Recognition of importance of viewer’s presence  
Everyday  
• Aluminium frames and demountable capacity  
Social and ‘political’ outcomes  
• SCA is “still going” but the transition can be viewed as positive  
• The viewer recognises that *Stair #4* captures themselves and others populating the empty spaces depicted in the photographic image |
| 6 | MOMENT OF ‘IMMINENCE’ *(about-to-happen)* | • The viewer becomes aware of the complex narrative available and recognises it is their responsibility to connect parts of the narrative  
• The viewer understands that they are active participants in the creation of the artwork’s narrative |
| 7 | INTUITIVE APPEAL | • The milky, semi-reflective aluminium framing reinforces the studio-made feel and adds to the artwork’s accessibility |
| 8 | TRANSFORMATIVE ENCOUNTER | • The temporal dimension of *Still going* adds to the viewer’s awareness that they are part of an open system which is constantly evolving  
• The viewer becomes aware of the future populated stair-wells and may see this as a positive transition |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Artist, Title, Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Merryn Hull. <em>I only ever wanted to be a painter</em> (2018)</td>
<td>Maps the trajectory of my professional career. It incorporates a piece of switch-glass placed over a frame, activated by sensors so that when a viewer approaches, the levels of opacity change from cloudy to clear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS</td>
<td>• Explores the concept that through a repetitive act the viewer becomes aware of the temporal dimension of the encounter&lt;br&gt;• Repetition reinforces ‘difference’ as the essence of the artwork&lt;br&gt;• Explicates the notion of physically seeing and also understanding the meaning of the work&lt;br&gt;• Reveals what Deleuze calls the “secret subject” of repetition which is something indiscernible, open-ended, that causes us to think</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AESTHETIC STRATEGIES</td>
<td>• Activates a field of indiscernibility through surface finish and changing light intensity to promote the viewer’s interest to examine the work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MINIMALIST AESTHETIC</td>
<td>• Use of industrial materials and fabrication techniques&lt;br&gt;• Engagement between embodied perception and radical realism&lt;br&gt;• Explores threshold between art and non-art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SHOCK</td>
<td>• Denies the viewer an image or any sense of something happening behind the veiled screen&lt;br&gt;• This action shocks or destabilises the anticipated expectations associated with normal patterns of viewing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>BECOMING-ASSEMBLAGE</td>
<td>• Glass surface functions as a changing screen-membrane open to a range of diverse encounters&lt;br&gt;• Functions within an <em>architectural-installation-sculpture-context</em> as a “temporal object-event” activated and brought to life by its viewer&lt;br&gt;• The switch on and switch off mechanism establishes a tangible link between viewer’s presence and absence&lt;br&gt;• Anticipated links between actions are broken&lt;br&gt;• The uncertainty and indeterminability of the work creates ambiguity&lt;br&gt;• The overtly temporary nature of the changing surface opacity&lt;br&gt;• Sense of vulnerability as viewer uncertain of their involvement with the work&lt;br&gt;• The simple aluminium frame resembles a commercially available shelf unit&lt;br&gt;• Hand-crafted spot welds establish artisanal feel&lt;br&gt;• Explores multiple meanings of time including waiting for the idealised image (hidden from view) to be revealed&lt;br&gt;• Reinforces that it’s OK not to know what’s <em>about-to-happen</em>&lt;br&gt;• The notion of anticipating the <em>about to happen</em> is, in this example, that nothing happens&lt;br&gt;• The work leaves its anticipation unfulfilled&lt;br&gt;• The idea of direction (or trajectory) without any discernible destination reinforces the future-oriented status of the artwork&lt;br&gt;• It captures the enigmatic and unpredictable which facilitates a connection with the viewer&lt;br&gt;• The viewer is directly involved in the work’s exploration of possible outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Artist, Title, Date</td>
<td><strong>Merryn Hull. <em>Waiting</em> (2019)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>A narrow, tall aluminium-framed column with open, ribbed horizontal frames, standing over concealed fixing. The sculpture is wrapped with a fine steel mesh and sways gently in a semi-precarious manner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1 | **PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS** | • Title depicts ways of understanding the work and implies it is “waiting” to find something within itself  
• Direction without destination  
• Stands in isolation though recognised as part of a familial group |
| 2 | **AESTHETIC STRATEGIES** | • Stands in isolation – link with other structures severed which disrupts narration enabling *Waiting* to remain open to new interpretations  
• Light is used as a stimulus to enhance the intensity of surface encounters |
| 3 | **MINIMALIST AESTHETIC** | • Stands confidently in its own time and space  
• Use of industrial materials and fabrication techniques  
• Simplified column form |
| 4 | **SHOCK** | • Slight movement and momentary awareness of the artwork’s precariousness  
• Appears to be an enclosed, rigid column then the viewer becomes aware that it is open to transformation |
| 5 | **BECOMING-ASSEMBLAGE** |  |
| Sensorial / Affective | • Heightened sensory awareness – surfaces translucent, neither clearly transparent nor fully opaque  
• Functions as screen-membrane enabling diverse surface encounters |
| Multi-Temporal | • The final wrapping does not take place until the structure is in its exhibition  
• Overtly temporary nature of wrapped mesh highlights impermanence  
• Architectural in terms of structure’s physical and material form and minimalist tendencies |
| Enablers | • Placement within the gallery important as it reveals its severed relationship with familial sculptures |
| Actual-virtual | • Confronts the viewer to think about the work’s meaning |
| Self | • Familiarity with standard columnar-form |
| Everyday | • Aluminium frames and mesh fabric are everyday materials |
| Social and ’political’ outcomes | • Suggests that everything is not what it initially appears  
• The work’s inherent indiscernibility identifies that it takes time to comprehend meaning within an artwork |
| 6 | **MOMENT OF ‘IMMINENCE’** *(about-to-happen)* | • The structure is waiting to find itself or as the waiting for the viewer to participate in its completion  
• Waiting to escape from itself and to find its own becoming-different  
• Reinforces its future orientation |
| 7 | **INTUITIVE APPEAL** | • Initial viewing suggests a conventional column-form with a minimalist aesthetic  
• As the viewer explores the work, it reveals a multitude of difference  
• Immediately accessible; process of making is authentic and reveals the artist’s hand; humble in the simplicity of its wrapping and stapling  
• Fine steel mesh evokes glamorous and evocative silk fabrics but the viewer recognises that this is a metal material which is capable of being bent and creased |
| 8 | **TRANSFORMATIVE ENCOUNTER** | • Provides the opportunity for looking at an artwork in different ways  
• The viewer catches sight of ideas just at their point of occurring  
• The viewer is implicit in an encounter which is temporal nature and reinforces the uniqueness of difference |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5</th>
<th>Artist, Title, Date</th>
<th>Becoming of Unbecoming (2019)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>A 23K gilt-covered aluminium panel which is attached at floor level to a solid base. The panel sways randomly from its anchored position</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **1 PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS** | • ... the becoming of life is the unbecoming of matter ... its placement in a different trajectory of becoming ...  
• Explicates the notion of 'becoming-other' and with it the capacity to become more than what it initially seems |
| **2 AESTHETIC STRATEGIES** | • Mirror-like surface signifies the temporal dimension in the artwork  
• Allows the viewer to experience a temporal span through a threefold unfolding of primal impression, retention and protention |
| **3 MINIMALIST AESTHETIC** | • Stands confidently in its own space  
• Use of industrial materials and fabrication techniques  
• Engagement embodied sensory perception and radical realism  
• Explores threshold between art and non-art |
| **4 SHOCK** | • The iridescence of the 23K gold leaf surprises the viewer  
• The viewer’s image in the gold reflective surface is unexpected |
| **5 BECOMING-ASSEMBLAGE** |  |
| Sensorial / Affective | • Luminous and iridescent gold surface reflects and distorts its environment and viewer, enabling heightened sensory awareness  
• Positioned so that its rear matt surface faces the viewer in the gallery to bracket what the viewer anticipates within a phenomenological reduction |
| Multi-Temporal | • Architectural form initially appears to be a minimalist structure |
| Enablers | • Stands with its back to entry to gallery to bracket anticipation |
| Actual-virtual | • The title of the work identifies the work’s capacity for the potential of thought in terms of both a becoming as well as the undoing (unbecoming) of what has been  
• This suggests the potential to become more and other (in other words to start again)  
• The reflective iridescent image on the work’s surface reinforces a temporal transition from one state to another |
| Self | • The viewer’s reflected self |
| Everyday | • It is after all a simple aluminium panel |
| Social and ‘political’ outcomes | • Signals the undoing of what has been and the capacity to start again  
• May be seen to have religious interpretations |
| **6 MOMENT OF ‘IMMINENCE’ (about-to-happen)** | • As the viewer discovers the 23K gilt surface they also become aware of the precariouosity of the artwork which is disconcerting  
• It provides a sense of something on the verge of happening, in terms of potential meaning for the future |
| **7 INTUITIVE APPEAL** | • The work is enigmatic in that it captures the contradiction between a compelling golden glow found on a simple aluminium panel  
• Provides an opulent surface  
• Whilst the application of the gold surface is labour-intensive, the overall sense is of an immediate uniform surface  
• Recognisable as an evocative but flawed surface |
| **8 TRANSFORMATIVE ENCOUNTER** | • The work symbolises that change is possible  
• This is a symbol of hope and belief in a positive future and reaching of new understandings of the potential for transformation |
APPENDIX 9 – *(Be)Comings and goings* (2019) – Indicative Plan of Proposed Exhibition for Examination

The attached plan for Gallery 2 at SCA identifies a possible layout for the PhD exhibition for examination, subject to final clarification with SCA Gallery curator.
APPENDIX 10 – (Be) Comings and goings (2019) – Documentation of PhD Exhibition for Examination

It is noted that the layout illustrated in Appendix 9 was not fully implemented in order to facilitate collaboration with other candidates. The two works Stair #1, Stair #2, 2018 and I only ever wanted to be a painter, 2018 were therefore relocated from the Main Gallery to an adjacent smaller gallery. Stair #3, 2018 which had not been intended for exhibition, was placed within the Main Entry lobby of the SCA complex.

The following photographic documentation is arranged chronologically in the order in which each artwork is first mentioned within the thesis – relevant page numbers are noted within the captions. The photographic images have been selected to explore the performative dimension of the viewer’s encounter with the artwork. They aim to reinforce the transformative encounter as a dynamic moment of connection that brings meaning and further reinforces the relationship between the ‘assemblage’ sculptures, the viewer and their environment.
Figure 47 Merryn Hull, *Stair #3*, 2018. Two-way mirror acrylic, aluminium frame, fluorescent tubes, electric cable. 60 x 60 x 12 cm. Installation view, Sydney College of the Arts, Rozelle. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.32)
Figure 48 Merryn Hull, *Stair #3*, 2018. Two-way mirror acrylic, aluminium frame, fluorescent tubes, electric cable. 60 x 60 x 12 cm. Installation view, SCA Main Entry Lobby, Rozelle. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.32)

Figure 49 Merryn Hull, *Stair #3*, 2018. Two-way mirror acrylic, aluminium frame, fluorescent tubes, electric cable. 60 x 60 x 12 cm. Installation view, SCA Main Entry Lobby, Rozelle. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.32)
Figure 50 Merryn Hull, *Lines of flight*, 2018. Polished aluminium welded sculptures on solid bases. 240 cm high with variable dimensions. Installation view. SCA Main Gallery. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.36)

Figure 51 Merryn Hull, *Lines of flight*, 2018. Polished aluminium welded sculptures on solid bases. 240 cm high with variable dimensions. Installation view. SCA Main Gallery. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.36)
Figure 52 Merryn Hull, *Stair #1, Stair #2*, 2018. Digitised images mounted on clear acrylic panels over light boxes, electrical cable. 280 x 140 x 12 cm. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.48)

Figure 53 Merryn Hull, *Stair #1, Stair #2*, 2018. Digitised images mounted on clear acrylic panels over light boxes, electrical cable. 280 x 140 x 12 cm. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.48)
Figure 54 Merryn Hull, *I only ever wanted to be a painter*, 2018. Aluminium wall frame, switch-glass panel, sensors, aluminium shelf, aluminium box, fluorescent light tube and electrical cables. Dimensions variable. View of glass switched off. Glass panel is 60 x 90 cm. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.73)

Figure 55 Merryn Hull, *I only ever wanted to be a painter*, 2018. Aluminium wall frame, switch-glass panel, sensors, aluminium shelf, aluminium box, fluorescent light tube and electrical cables. Dimensions variable. View of glass switched on. Glass panel is 60 x 90 cm. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth. (P.73)
Figure 56 Merryn Hull, Installation view of Still going, 2018 composed of two parts: Meccano, 2019, with Stair #4, 2018, behind. Meccano comprises three aluminium-framed mobile structures with attached two-way mirror surfaces, approximately 250 x 100 x 50 cm; Stair #4 is a digitised photographic print over two-way mirror on aluminium frame placed in front of gallery window, 240 cm 120 cm. Photo: Isobel-Markus Dunworth. (P.84)
Figure 57 Merryn Hull, Installation view of *Still going*, 2018 showing two parts: *Meccano*, 2019, with *Stair #4*, 2018, behind. Photo: Isobel-Markus Dunworth. (P.84)

Figure 58 Merryn Hull, Detail view of *Still going*, 2018 showing two parts: *Meccano*, 2019, with *Stair #4*, 2018, behind. Photo: Isobel-Markus Dunworth. (P.84)
Figure 59 Merryn Hull, Installation view of *Still going*, 2018 showing two parts: *Meccano*, 2019, with *Stair #4*, 2018, behind. Photo: Alex Golding. (P.84)
Figure 60 Merryn Hull, *Waiting*, 2019. Aluminium, open framed aluminium structure with metallic mesh and ultra-violet LED spotlights, electrical cables. Installation view. Photo: Nina Cholerton. (P.99)
Figure 61 Merryn Hull, *Becoming of Unbecoming*, 2019. 23K gold, aluminium panel, black paint. 240 x 120 cm. Photo: Nina Cholerton. (P.120)
Figure 62 Merryn Hull, (Be)Comings and goings, 2019. Installation view. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth.

Figure 63 Merryn Hull, (Be)Comings and goings, 2019. Installation view. Photo: Isobel Markus-Dunworth.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Bankston, Samantha E. "Becoming and Time in the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze." Purdue University, 2011.


Little, Stephen. Interview by Merryn Hull (20th March 2017).


