Embodied Practice, Experience and Intuition

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an account of the means by which I have attempted to overcome a time of major crisis for me as an artist where I have not enjoyed ‘the making’ aspect of my practice. Practice has led me to this research, and it is imperative that research revitalizes and rejuvenates my practice in turn.

Three kinds of movement guide the direction of this analysis. Firstly: rehabilitative exercises as an extension and continuation of my ‘making’ practice. Secondly: pedalling a bicycle as a conceptual model for a sustainable practice where ‘the thinking and the making coax each other into being.’ Thirdly: standstill, in which my studio practice becomes concerned with the particularity of this time, when the artist, ‘despite the urgency of the situation … [is] haunted by the question, one worth of the idiot: we [artists], what are we?’

These movements in turn propel discussion in the four subsequent chapters: the framing of embodied practice, the harnessing of the potential of experience, the philosophical critiques of the position given to the artist in the production of the readymade, and the notions of abstraction, relation and intuition and their role in material practices.

Through examining writings by Gilles Deleuze, Elizabeth Grosz, Boris Groys, Agnes Martin and Isabelle Stengers and others, as well as other modes of production such as cooking and football, this thesis explores my approaches to my ‘making’ body’s state of crisis and how new ways of generating movement may become possible for that body.

This thesis is accompanied by a presentation of a body of artistic work comprising of a sculptural installation titled Enquiry on Porosity.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the masters except where indicated in the Preface*,

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(iii) the thesis is 12054 words as approved by the RHD Committee.

Akira Tamura (practicing as Akira Akira)
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INTRODUCTION TO THREE KINDS OF MOVEMENT

MOVEMENT ONE: REHABILITATIVE EXERCISES

Although I have always enjoyed playing football (‘soccer’), it was only briefly during my teenage years that was I part of an organised team. I was lucky to avoid any major injury during this short period of playing sport competitively. In fact, I have never broken a bone in my life. I can only imagine therefore how difficult and gruelling it must be for an athlete recovering from a serious, let alone career threatening, injury. A footballer who has torn an anterior cruciate ligament in their knee, for example, may not be able to play for up to six months to a year before making a full recovery and regaining full fitness.¹ While in recovery, their ‘footballing’ movement is completely absent. They are strictly limited to performing rehabilitative exercises such as swimming, cycling, jogging and weight training as set out by physiotherapists and fitness coaches.² Above all else, the lack of footballing movement can cause a great deal of fear and anxiety to the injured footballer.

Since mid-2010, I have not enjoyed ‘the making’ aspect of my practice. This period has been a time of major crisis for me as an artist for, up to this point, my practice was sustained by joy (or love of labour) that arises from the process of making. Presently, I still do not feel that I’m back to my ‘full fitness’, as it were. Consequently, I have spent a considerable period of time over the course of this project ‘rehabilitating’ like a footballer enduring an absence of ‘footballing’ movement. If the absence of ‘art making’ movement from this thesis subsequently leaves an impression that it is too ‘theoretical’ or ‘philosophical’, it is precisely because it resulted from the kinds of rehabilitative exercises that my ‘making’ body has been undertaking. It is as though I am learning to move differently, strengthening certain parts of my ‘making’ body through engaging in

other processes and strategies, and building up my overall fitness through this project so that when the time comes, I shall be ready.

Initially, I undertook activities as diverse as learning Portuguese, running, and reading every single page of *A Thousand Plateaus* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. As haphazard, disorderly or even nonsensical as this assemblage may appear, it was in retrospect an important process to go through in order to establish what I need to address here. I undertook these activities as a set of rehabilitative exercises, as an extension and continuation of my ‘making’ practice. This was, for my project and my practice as a whole, vitally important. To return to the football analogy: How could an injured footballer withstand so many hours in the gym and swimming pool without ever kicking a ball if they did not see it as part of, and as a process toward, re-building their overall practice? Yet just as exercises such as aquarobics and Pilates resemble nothing of football, theoretical inquiry cannot be confused with artistic production as far as my own practice is concerned. The question for me then is how to plug the assemblage of ideas and techniques that emerges from these rehabilitative exercises into my ‘making’ practice.

**MOVEMENT TWO: PEDALLING**

The making and the thinking coax each other into being.³

The above quote from artist Julia Dault resonates very strongly with my current thinking on my practice. To my mind, making and thinking are only as independent as the left leg and the right. My practice therefore can be seen as a coordinated movement of both legs, generating forward motion for the entire body. The image I have in mind here is of pedalling a bicycle rather than walking or running. While it’s possible to move forward by limping or staggering in these latter modes of terrestrial locomotion whereby one leg physically compensates for the other, this option is not available when on a bicycle. Unless a roughly equivalent force is continuously applied to both pedals, your journey on

two-wheels is going to be a very brief and perhaps quite painful one. While this conjures up a very particular image of ‘sustainable practice,’ it in turn suggests that my own may only ever move forward in an uneven, highly precarious manner given this unwieldy relationship between the making and the thinking. At the same time, this image of pedalling a bicycle also suggests a particular mode of learning. As children, no amount of technical advice from parents would have enabled us to ride a bicycle. It is a process of having to learn to move our bodies in an entirely different way from that with which we are accustomed. This can only be learned by falling down repeatedly yet feeling compelled to do it all over again. In this sense, learning to ride generates two kinds of simultaneous movement; one being physical and the other being a kind of forward motion, of which Gilles Deleuze alludes to when he writes:

> Learning to swim or learning a foreign language means composing the singular points of one’s own body or one’s own language with those of another shape or element, which tears us apart but also propels us into a hitherto unknown and unheard-of world of problems.\(^4\)

The first two chapters of this thesis are primarily concerned with the ways in which I consider the particularity of an experience. The position from which I approach this endeavour is anchored to ‘an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation whereby each immediately summons the other.’\(^5\) ‘Feeling’ is not merely a sensation but also an action/movement. I am therefore ‘feeling my way through’, as it were, eliciting sensations as a source of both enrichment and complication for my subsequent movement.\(^6\) In Chapter 1, \textit{NOTE ON EMBODIED PRACTICE}, I explore a kind of forward movement that is generated through my ‘learning-to-ride’ like processes of ‘doing’. Only

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\(^{6}\) With the near-paralysis of my ‘making’ body as I experience it now, Massumi’s point takes on greater significance and resonance: ‘If you start from an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation, the slightest, most literal displacement convokes a qualitative difference, because as directly as it conducts itself it beckons a feeling, and feelings have a way of folding into each other, resonating together, interfering with each other, mutually intensifying, all in unquantifiable ways apt to unfold again in action, often unpredictably.’ Ibid.
intermittently in my various practices of making, running and learning a foreign language, do I ever feel the exquisite smoothness and the velocity of forward motion that my pedalling of ‘doing’ and ‘thinking’ is capable of engendering. Given the dormancy of my ‘making’ body, I in turn seek to explore issues that arise from this unwieldy, precarious synthesis of an experience in Chapter 2, *NOTE ON EXPERIENCE*. I consider how, for example, I can approach an emergent experience so as to re-potentialize it later as an echo, which potentially reverberates and resurfaces throughout my future experience.

Making is still an unrelenting preoccupation in my everyday life even when I’m not consciously participating in the making process per se. With this as a starting point, in Chapter 3 *NOTE ON ATTENTION*, I explore Marcel Duchamp’s readymade and its environmental impact as I seek ways in which to reconcile my practice with its crisis of production. This leads to a discussion on intuition in Chapter 4, *NOTE ON INTUITION*, where I examine it as a vital component of production but one which manifests only silently. I explore the notions of abstraction, relation and intuition in and through the collaborative work of artists Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, the film *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait*.

**MOVEMENT THREE: STANDSTILL**

What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing.7

It is actually very difficult to dissociate the term ‘practice-led research’ from an image of ‘practice’ pulling an artist like a pack of wild dogs dragging a sled. This visual analogy may not be entirely inappropriate as ‘practice’ led me to the point on the map where undertaking a research degree was considered beneficial and meaningful to me as an artist. Given the severity of my current crisis in ‘making’, however, this analogy is also highly problematic. The dogsledding-practice has either run so far and so fast to the point of complete exhaustion, or it has simply run away, having abandoned the sled-

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artist. Feeling confused, disoriented and deserted, I’ve come to spend a considerable amount of time pondering the question, ‘Whatever could have happened for things to have come to this?’\(^8\), with both bewilderment and despair.

**Figure 1:** The final scene of *The Seven Samurai* (1954) Director: Akira Kurosawa

In the final scene of the Akira Kurosawa film, *The Seven Samurai* (Fig.1), the leader of the samurai, now only numbering three, reflects on what has just taken place: ‘Again we are defeated. The winners are those farmers. Not us.’\(^9\) Of particular relevance to my research project is Deleuze’s reformulation of this ontological reflection into a question;

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What is a samurai? What is a samurai, not in general, *but at this time*?\(^{10}\)

If practice has indeed led me to this research, it is imperative that research, at least in part, revitalises and rejuvenates my practice in turn. This thesis is therefore concerned with the particularity of *this time*, when the artist, ‘despite the urgency of the situation, …[is] haunted by this question, one worthy of the Idiot: we [artists], what are we?’\(^{11}\)

\(^{10}\) Gilles Deleuze and David Lapoujade, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995* (Cambridge, MA: Semiotext(e) 2006), 318. (My emphasis on the original).

\(^{11}\) Ibid.
CHAPTER 1: NOTE ON EMBODIED PRACTICE

Figure 2: A plastic ball extracted from a roll-on deodorant bottle

One morning in 2007, I looked at my roll-on deodorant bottle. I had just applied it to my underarms as I had done for many years. I am still unsure as to what led me to this astounding and perhaps overdue realisation but there it was: a perfect sphere. A plastic ball, the actual component that made the deodorant roll-on, fixed firmly in the bottle, was nothing short of a perfect sphere. Lured by its delicately seductive surface, the decision to incorporate this small, translucent plastic ball into my studio practice as a readymade object was made in a flash.\footnote{This will be discussed further in Chapter 3 – NOTE ON ATTENTION.} In stark contrast, the process of obtaining this plastic ball itself (Fig.2) is anything but a fast-paced operation. I can only speculate how long it takes to go through a bottle of deodorant under usual circumstances but I imagine the process of emptying out its contents can certainly take several months. With my daily rotation of seven different deodorants, each with a ball that differs only slightly in size, the process becomes infinitely slower. This long-drawn-out ‘production’ of seven perfect
‘readymade’ spheres, the act of feeling my way through lived time, which cannot be hurried, draws a parallel with philosopher Henri Bergson’s infamous tale of sugary water:

If I want to mix a glass of sugar and water, I must, willy nilly, wait until the sugar melts. This little fact is big with meaning. For here the time I have to wait is not that mathematical time which would apply equally well to the entire history of the material world, even if that history were spread out instantaneously in space. It coincides with my impatience, that is to say, with a certain portion of my own duration, which I cannot protract or contract as I like. It is no longer something thought, it is something lived.\(^{13}\)

What this demonstrates is that as soon as it’s taken up as an act of ‘artistic production’, even the most ordinary of my daily procedures can entail a minefield of conceptual, ethical and philosophical implications. Out of a myriad of ideas that could be taken up as significant, one of particular relevance here is the notion of encounter as that which is capable of engendering new possibilities. In the case of my deodorant, its daily contact with my body constitutes a momentary encounter of two durations, one that in fact exposes my perception to that very occurrence itself. In this sense, my engagement with materials of different kinds, sizes and varying complexity amounts to a process of opening up my body to the potential of another body and vice versa.\(^{14}\)

In another instance where this notion of encounter is at work, a text may be likened to a mountain. Though the phrase ‘to have a mountain to climb’ is perfectly apt in describing the task ahead whenever I pick up a book to read, my likening of the two is by no means a mere metaphorical adaptation. Despite their vast differences, both a text and a mountain provide a particular body or terrain with which my own body interacts through the process of reading or climbing respectively. When you climb a mountain, your body feels heavier because of its interaction with the body of the mountain and the gravity at work, and the act of climbing through which this is brought about. In other words,


\(^{14}\) The wasp-orchid coupling that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari discuss is one example of this opening. See Chapter 10, ‘1730: BECOMING-INTENSE, BECOMING-ANIMAL . ..’ in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 232 – 309.
through a physical encounter with another body, one’s own body undergoes an experience which can in turn activate a heightened self-awareness of its own limitation. Similarly, when I read a text such as A Thousand Plateaus, I feel the sheer vulnerability of my ‘reading body’ more intensely as it struggles to cope with the steep textual-conceptual terrain of the book. It’s important to emphasize that the act of climbing is, in this sense, a means to experience and feel the materiality of my own body, something which also occurs when grappling with a body of text. My persistence in reading such a complex text therefore derives from my sheer enjoyment of an introspective process as well as the act of feeling my own ‘bodily’ limitation that emerges through the event of encounter, rather than from the desire ‘to conquer’ the famous terrain of A Thousand Plateaus.

When climbing a mountain, my physical manoeuvres are made in response to its terrain. This is in part due to my body’s pliancy and ability to change its form according to the surfaces of the particular geological terrain that it encounters. This also means that when my body meets another with a much greater fluidity, one which changes at a rate much faster and to a much greater extent than my own such as pizza dough and plaster, I am required to deploy an entirely different set of physical and conceptual manoeuvres. In these instances, my movement may more closely resemble that of a surfer whose primary objective is ‘a sort of putting[oneself] into-orbit… [in] the form of entering into an existing wave,’ or that of an athlete who practices skate and snowboarding, which also ‘deploy the same fluid “streaming” techniques [as surfing but] combined with a rigorous ad hoc engagement of the surrounding milieu.’

The making that occurs in the studio, in this sense, is a hub of encounter with materials and deployment of certain processes and techniques, which harbours and facilitates ‘the potential to differ… that is actualized in connections and relations among powers.’ Through its participation in the production

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17 The wasp-orchid becoming that Deleuze and Guattari raise is elaborated very concisely by Claire Colebrook: “The wasp, in order to live and be a wasp, must connect with an orchid, and the orchid can maintain its life only with the wasp’s migration from orchid to orchid. Life, then, is not a being that then evolves or differs, but is the potential to differ, a potential that is actualized in connections and relations among powers.” Claire Colebrook, Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed (London: Continuum, 2006), 6.
of new connections and relations, my ‘making body’ becomes more than it once was, alongside other bodies also becoming more and otherwise.

This in turn means that the near paralysis of my ‘making body’ indicates a shutdown of certain capacities in that body, which have so far played a vital role in facilitating a complex network of connections and proliferating relations. With this, the analogy of rehabilitative exercises that I began this thesis with takes on greater significance. The notion of recovery or rehabilitation can no longer be confined to an attempt to return the body to its former state. Learning to move again is to learn to move differently from the time before the injury, which is in fact to re-populate that very same body with an entirely different set of connections and relations. The significance of this project then lies in developing new techniques for my practice to integrate as it recovers, as well as formulating ways of thinking (or a bodily awareness of my ‘making body’) with which to approach such an endeavour.

Running and learning a foreign language are but two instances from which I may abstract a certain awareness that my studio practice can engender for itself in its own terms. For instance, you set out to go running on a regular basis from tomorrow. In the beginning, it may only take a ten-minute scurry around the neighbourhood to make your heart pound violently to the extent that, in agony, you just have to stop running and begin walking. As your heart becomes more used to this vigorous beating on an occasional but nonetheless regular basis, this could then extend to a twenty-minute run twice weekly. The distance and frequency of running is likely to increase gradually as the exercise regime becomes more routine, so much so that your running begins to generate its own particular rhythm. After a period of time, however, comes a moment of surprise. You suddenly feel ease in your steps, a kind of inexplicable weightlessness. However infrequently and momentarily such a feeling arises in your regular running regime, it is through this fleeting sensation that you grasp, on the one hand, the very notion of your body moving differently, and on the other, your embodying the very capacity ‘to run’. The qualitative transformation of your body that this fleeting sense of weightlessness signals may be at the heart of what compels and lures you to run again,
and again, and again. Put back into the context of my studio practice, this merely underscores the most basic principle of ‘doing’: Only through the very process of making, can an impetus for my ‘making’ body to move again and move forward be engendered. The task at hand is not to re-(dis)cover the peculiar sense of forward motion that Deleuze speaks of. My ‘making’ body can only re-generate and re-assemble that which compels and lures it into action through the process of making.

The sense of physical discomfort and exhaustion that one might first experience yet stagger through at the start of a new running regime is likely to return whenever one strives to run that much longer and that much faster over a period of time. This process may be likened to the degree of struggle and exhaustion that I initially endured as a non-native English speaker. As with a ‘running body’ that gets built slowly and restructured over time through a regular running regime, my ‘language body’ that was so entrenched in the materiality of the Japanese language had to go through a radical transformation in order to forge new connections and relations with an entirely foreign materiality that is the English language. This meant that I was a language-learner comparable to somebody for whom running was an entirely new modality of movement. For quite some time, my command in English, as a series of encounters with another body that is language, was nothing short of a tragicomedy as well as a titanic struggle. Even so, just as one may still feel compelled to go for a run despite fatigue and muscle ache, I felt compelled to endure many weeks and months of feeling the sheer heaviness of my own (language) body and the severity of its immobility. At best, I composed every single sentence in my head prior to saying it aloud to make sure it made perfect sense. Then, like the momentary feeling of weightlessness which can occur when running, I experienced the first of the series of brief moments in which I noticed myself speaking as though words were simply flowing out of me. Through this feeling of a momentary increase in fluidity, I came to experience, and indeed to understand, my own capacity ‘to speak’ in the most concrete and visceral way imaginable. This feeling, more than just a feeling of my own learning curve, also triggered self-awareness of my ability to embody the capacity ‘to speak’, and in effect the capacity to engage with the multi-faceted materiality of language.

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18 I also speak on this from my own experience of running regularly over a period of time.
When considering these two examples in relation to my studio practice, it's easy to interpret the role of struggle as that which is necessary within an artistic practice, reinforcing a stereotypical (and by now even a mythical) narrative of the artist reaching an epiphanic, revelatory moment in the studio after experiencing a series of 'writer's blocks' and existential crises. Though I still hold the view that struggle is necessary in my practice, it is for an entirely different reason. Struggle is something that's felt as a sign of a body's capacity for change. My 'making' body feels its own heaviness and immobility precisely when it attempts to overcome its limitations through an encounter with that of another, 'which provides the obstacle, the question, the means by which [it] grows, develops, undergoes evolution and change, [and] becomes other than what it once was.' As opposed to a body that is truly immobile, my 'making' body elicits struggle as a signal of potential change, which at present only exists as a myriad of intangible particles. In terms of the two examples used, a sudden sense of weightlessness when running and an increased mobility in one's own speaking represent a coagulation of these intangible particles, which, once formed into a bloc of sensation, can enter into our perceptual field with an unparalleled level of velocity, lucidity and impact.

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CHAPTER 2: NOTE ON EXPERIENCE

Helplessness, even a mild state of helplessness is extremely hard to bear. Moments of helplessness are moments of blindness. One feels as though something terrible has happened without knowing what it is. One feels as though one is in the outer darkness or as though one has made some terrible error - a fatal error. Our great help that we leaned on in the dark has deserted us and we are in a complete panic and we feel that we have got to have help. The panic of complete helplessness drives us to fantastic extremes, and feelings of mild helplessness drive us to a ridiculousness. We go from reading religious doctrine and occult practices to changing our diet. Or from absolute self-abasement or abandonment to every known and unknown fetish. It is hard to realize at the time of helplessness that that is the time to be awake and aware. 20

The above is an excerpt from artist Agnes Martin’s notes for a lecture she gave in 1973, in which she discusses, among other things, the notion of helplessness. The degree of resemblance to which her description bears to my own sense of struggle and despair that I outlined earlier is frighteningly uncanny. What I find most interesting, however, is her assertion that ‘the time of helplessness… is the time to be awake and aware’. Her remark’s strong resonance with my current thinking is on both practical and theoretical grounds. As I increasingly struggled to physically produce artworks, my perception of my own studio practice underwent a significant transformation. With the degree to which my ‘making’ body is paralysed, the task at hand could not be ‘to make things, and resolve relations into things, more and more minutely framed and microscopically understood… [but] to liberate matter from the constraint, the practicality, the utility of the thing, to orient technology not so much to knowing and mediating as to experience… the rich indeterminacy of duration, to a making without definitive end or goal.’ 21

20 ‘On Perfection Underlying Life’ in Agnes Martin, Writings = Schriften, ed. Dieter Schwarz (Ostfildern-Ruit, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2005), 70-1. (My emphasis on the original).
21 Grosz, Time Travels, 143. (My emphasis on the original).
With this in mind, I will consider the particularity of each unfolding experience as a reservoir of the rich indeterminacy of duration, which I may harness in turn. With ‘an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation whereby each immediately summons the other,’ the task for my dormant ‘making’ body is to develop a particular kind of attunement, to become aware of even the slightest ‘making’ movement that it may generate. With a heightened sense of awareness for its own movement that elicits sensations, my ‘making’ body will in turn trigger its own subsequent movement. In this sense, ‘feeling’ as an action and ‘feeling’ as a sensation form a mutually sustaining and intensifying relationship that generates movement, one comparable to the coupling of ‘the making’ and ‘the thinking’ which is paramount to pedalling my studio practice forward.

In the essay by philosopher Giorgio Agamben Form-of-life, I have identified a mutual working mechanism for both ‘thinking’ and ‘making’ practices, which further reinforces this analogy of pedalling a bicycle as a conceptual model for developing a sustainable practice.

I call thought the nexus that constitutes the forms of life in an inseparable context as form-of-life. I do not mean by this the individual exercise of an organ or a psychic faculty, but rather an experience, an experimentum that has as its object the potential character of life and of human intelligence. To think does not mean merely to be affected by this or that thing, by this or that content of enacted thought, but rather at once to be affected by one’s own receptiveness and experience in each and every thing that is thought a pure power of thinking.

What Agamben calls thought and a pure power of thinking strongly evokes the notion of work that Agnes Martin speaks of:

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22 Massumi, Parables for the Virtual, 1.
24 Ibid, 9.
In your work, in the way that you do your work and in the results of your work your self is expressed. Behind and before self-expression is a developing awareness in the mind that effects the work. This developing awareness I will also call “the work”. It is a most important part of the work. There is the work in our minds, the work in our hands and the work as a result.\textsuperscript{25}

In both instances, the emphasis is on a very particular kind of awareness. ‘One’s own receptiveness’ in Agamben’s term can be likened to what Brian Massumi describes '[a] kind of direct and immediate self-referentiality of perception.'\textsuperscript{26} It is a self-awareness of the very openness and pliancy of one's 'thinking' body, which the act of thinking can bring to the fore of one's consciousness. That is to say, 'a pure power of thinking' is not necessarily felt or observed once a thought or idea has been produced but in the midst of its unfolding. This process gains much more clarity when put in the context of cycling. What constitutes your cycling body is your ability to move your body in a very specific manner. Although this can be abstracted to some extent from the distance you've cycled or the time that it has taken, the particularity of each cycling experience gets lost in the process of metric conversion. A 50 kilometre bike ride can no more demonstrate ‘a pure power of moving (body),’ to appropriate Agamben’s phrase, than a 10 kilometre ride. Agamben would instead point to developing of awareness through immersion in the immediacy of this unfolding experience in which one comes to grasp one’s own capacity ‘to think’.

This bears an immense significance to my approach in the studio. If Martin is correct in emphasising that ‘There is the work in our minds, the work in our hands and the work as a result,’\textsuperscript{27} to seek the effects of my making in physical outputs of studio production alone would be far too inhibitive. This becomes even more palpable once studio production comes to the point of virtual standstill. What this calls for is a more intimate approach to engaging with each and every experience in and outside the studio, one that is more concerned with ‘develop[ing] an acquaintance with things through intuition… [a] Bergsonian [understanding that involves an] internal, intimate apprehension of the

\textsuperscript{25} Martin, \textit{Writings = Schriften}, 67. 
\textsuperscript{26} Brian Massumi, \textit{Semblance and Event} (Cambridge, MASS: MIT Press, 2011), 44. 
\textsuperscript{27} Martin, \textit{Writings = Schriften}, 67.
unique particularity of things, their constitutive interconnections, and the time within which things exist.\textsuperscript{28} The crucial task here is to become aware, or in the words of artist Bruce Nauman, ‘\textit{Please Pay Attention Please}’.\textsuperscript{29} With this in mind, the notions ‘to experiment’ and ‘to experience’ as discussed by philosopher Isabelle Stengers take on a critical role in illuminating the crux of this thesis, echoing many of the concerns that I’ve discussed so far.

The verb ‘to experiment’ is here used in a sense akin to ‘to experience’, that is, without ‘on’ or ‘with’, which would induce the idea of a separation between the experimenter and what she is experimenting on or with. It is thus a (French-inspired) neologism meant to signal a practice of active, open, demanding attention paid to the experience as we experience it. For instance, a cook would be said to experiment the taste of a new dish.\textsuperscript{30}

This notion of ‘experiment’ taken up here implicitly expresses the process of an encounter, the proximity of one body to another, and the active attention paid to an experience as it unfolds. While the relevance of this to a studio practice is obvious, her use of cooking as an example is also worth noting as it effectively elucidates the relevance of ‘to experiment’ and ‘to experience’ to material practice more generally. The notion of material is assigned a greater degree of dynamism, as its active participation in the ‘making’ process undertaken by the artist, the cook or the designer is properly acknowledged. Stengers thus reiterates this reciprocity and the mutually intensifying interaction ‘between the experimenter and what she is experimenting on or with.’

Unlike French, English does not allow the word ‘experiment’ to be used for an experience that implies an active, open, and demanding attention. No more than laboratory experimentation can be reduced to careful, systematic observation, can experience or the transformation of experience brought about by a scientific proposition be reduced to a new way of seeing. In both cases, a

\textsuperscript{28} Grosz, \textit{Time Travels}, 143.
reciprocal influence is implied, that puts to the test both what brings about and what is brought about.\textsuperscript{31}

For now, it’s apt to continue on with Stengers’ example of cooking, the process that I partake in daily with a genuine sense of enjoyment. For instance, a dish requires \textit{something}. There is a bitterness that is overpowering or a flavour that is inexplicably bothersome but nonetheless present. Remediing such a situation demands my rigorous involvement in Stengers’ sense of ‘to experiment,’ wherein I will transform a certain portion of my ‘tasting’ body in order to become attuned, or attentive\textsuperscript{32} to the particularity of intertwined flavours. In fact, my enjoyment in cooking derives from this process of mutual transformation that occurs in and across the cook and the cooked, which cannot be simply reduced to a recipe or a formula. The process of making and thinking in studio that prompts a sense of joy comparable to that found in cooking also gains impetus when the unfolding of a similar transformation becomes tangible. In both kitchen and studio, I therefore partake in the process of developing a concept and practice of awareness that Agamben and Martin speak of, a highly specific practice of ‘feeling,’ which in fact closely resembles Bergson’s intuition as ‘the movement by which we emerge from our own duration, by which we make use of our own duration to affirm and immediately to recognize the existence of other durations, above and below us.’\textsuperscript{33} With this backdrop, it is hardly surprising that Deleuze simply states: ‘Intuition is the joy of difference.’\textsuperscript{34}

In the context of this thesis and my studio practice more generally, Martin’s statement, ‘It is hard to realize at the time of helplessness that that is the time to be awake and aware,’\textsuperscript{35} provides two pivotal points as to how I approach the state of crisis my ‘making’ body is/was in. On the one hand, it describes the difficulty of the task at hand when one


\textsuperscript{35} Martin, \textit{Writings = Schriften}, 71.
is actually in a crisis; to go beyond the perceived immensity and palpable urgency of what is to be done when faced with one’s own severely incapacitated body. On the other hand, it pinpoints the unfolding of an experience as that which provides a vital impetus for the movement-to-come, by directing our attention onto the tasks ‘to be awake’ and ‘to be aware’ neither of which can be acted upon retrospectively nor prospectively. This places the artist squarely not in future or past but at this time. If awake and aware, the artist can then participate in ‘a practice of active, open, demanding attention paid to the experience as [they] experience it’ in the fullness of its particularity. With such shift in perception and re-orientation in approach, the artist’s ‘making body’ can also begin to draw, as my own is starting to do now, inspiration and strength from a collection of experiences and exchanges, strategies and techniques, that is sustained by and shared with many other modes of production such as cooking, reading and writing to name but few.

CHAPTER 3: NOTE ON ATTENTION

Since 2007, I have been consistently working on the production of perfect spheres by applying a bottle of roll-on deodorant on my underarms everyday. (Fig.3) What was for years simply a daily procedure of personal hygiene, suddenly took an artistic turn to become firmly integrated into an aspect of my studio production. From early on, I firmly insisted on first using up the deodorant prior to removing the ball as I felt it was ethically paramount that I finish it as before. This daily practice of working on a piece of ‘readymade’, however, also meant that the ball itself had to be ‘made’ first. I currently have seven perfect spheres in production. I ‘work’ daily on a sphere at a speed which cannot be accelerated by any means whatsoever.

Figure 3: Daily rotation of roll-on deodorants
With almost one hundred years of history behind it, the Duchampian readymade as both an artefact and a mode of artistic production is very much a part of visual art discourse. The question "Is the Readymade Still Revolutionary?" therefore appears rather futile from the position of a practicing artist from which I write here.\(^{37}\) In this chapter, I will instead concentrate on the readymade’s continuing effect as it is felt in my daily experience, and in particular, its ‘environmental’ impact and the potential practical and theoretical implications this entails. The notion of environment as applied here is closely aligned with how Grosz positions it vis-à-vis vertebrates.\(^{38}\) Rather than ‘revolutionary’, I will in turn re-position the readymade as that which is evolutionarily significant for artists, not only impacting the cultural convention of artistic production per se but also profoundly transforming the very environment in which artists live and work. With the more prominent role that the readymade has taken on in my practice, I’ve become more attentive to the milieu of the ‘everyday’ that my studio practice occupies and operates within. Using Boris Groys’ article *The Speed of Art* as a kind of Duchampian readymade coin, (Fig.4) my discussion will therefore flip between its two sides of ‘everyday’ and ‘speed’.\(^{39}\) This precedes a more substantial discussion on intuition in the next chapter like the toss of a coin that takes place prior to a football match. (Fig.5)

\(^{37}\) In her recent article, Niamh Coghlan examines the exhibition ‘*It is what it is. Or is it?*’ at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Texas. See Niamh Coghlan, ’Is the Readymade Still Revolutionary?’, *Aesthetica* Jun/Jul 2012, no. 47 (2012).

\(^{38}\) “Vertebrates open themselves up to a path of evolutionary development that now includes not only the natural environment, but also a social, cultural, and technological universe, one open to continual argumentation and transformation by conventions and inventions. This spreads the scope of their possible interest and action more widely than a given habitat. The environment is now extended in its scope and range and open to concerted change, to new possibilities they invent." Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 229.

Figure 4: Claire Fontaine, *Change*, 2006, ten twenty-five cent coins, steel box-cutter blades, solder and rivets, 90 x 40 x 40 cm

Figure 5: A scene from The 2006 FIFA World Cup Film: The Grand Finale (2006) Directed by Michael Apted, (from left to right) Captain for Italy Gabio Cannavaro, assistant referee Dario Garcia and captain for France Zinedine Zidane at Olympiastadion, Berlin on 9 July 2006
Every so often, I find being an artist an utterly daunting reality and I hold Marcel Duchamp partially responsible for my predicament. As Groys says, ‘Today it is enough for an artist to look at and name any chosen fragment of reality in order to transform it into a work of art.’\footnote{Ibid, 115.} I have long been preoccupied with my studio practice in a way that knows no temporal, physical or social boundaries. There is little to no demarcation on where ‘art’ ends and where ‘everyday’ begins in my daily life.\footnote{I suspect this is predominantly the case for a great number of artists working in today’s climate.} Given this, if my studio practice were a musically inclined individual, it would unapologetically belt out the Michael Jackson song, \textit{I Can’t Help It}, perfectly in tune.\footnote{The chorus of Jackson’s 1979 song reads: ‘Can’t Help It If I Wanted To. I Wouldn’t Help It Even If I Could. I Can’t Help It If I Wanted To. I Wouldn’t Help It, No.’} On one side of Groys’ Duchampian coin, ‘everyday’ is represented as this complete dissolution of the boundary between one’s everyday life and one’s studio practice, or their mutual corrosion. Operating on the premise that any fragment of reality can potentially be turned into a work of art, one will move through their physical reality as though it is a continuous encounter with one gigantic composite of possible readymades. In effect, this expands the field of materials out of which an artwork may emerge exponentially, thereby radically transforming the living environment for artists. Unless one takes a holiday in a sensorially sealed environment like the hibernation chambers found in the 1968 sci-fi film \textit{Planet of the Apes},\footnote{Arthur P. Jacobs, \textit{Planet of the Apes}, directed by Franklin Schaffner (Moore Park, NSW: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2004) Videodisc (DVD).} virtually every concrete form is now on the verge of entering into the milieu of an artist’s practice regardless of the time or the place it is encountered. As soon as industrially produced objects are incorporated into one’s studio practice as readymades, the delicate, wafer-like wall that used to separate the everyday from art quickly disappears due to the ubiquity of these readymade forms in daily life. As an artist working ‘equally with both self-produced as well as externally produced objects,’ even my shopping now potentially qualifies as a process of art production.\footnote{Groys, “The Artist as Consumer,” 56.} It’s hardly surprising then that I sometimes feel suffocated by art making as a notion, with its presence so unrelenting even when it’s not consciously being acted upon. It is as though physical reality is filled with relations and connections that ‘we can’t actually see but
can't not see either’. At times, this feels incredibly burdensome and even unbearable to the extent that I feel like I’m about to go into a bad case of artistic hyperventilation or panic attack. On the one hand, I could pretend that the bicycle wheel was never re-invented by Duchamp in 1913 and climb back into the comfort of a pre-Duchampian cave. On the other hand, the prospect of actually doing so seems as ridiculous and inconceivable as that of having a brown paper bag permanently attached to my face to normalize my breathing. Instead, I shall toss Groys’ readymade coin to see if my luck will change.

Figure 6: A scene from Planet of the Apes (1968) Director: Franklin J. Schaffner

Massumi, Semblance and Event, 41. More on relation and abstraction in Chapter 4.
On readymade art production, Duchamp states that:

[It] is an artwork that becomes an artwork because I declare or the artist declares it as an artwork without any participation of the hand of this very artist to make it.\(^{46}\)

This complete removal of the artist’s hand from the production of art itself is at the heart of Groys’ theoretical speculation. His claim is that in naming an ‘already-made’ an artwork, rather than an object that has been physically constructed by an artist, the speed with which art is produced has accelerated to an unparalleled level; approximating ‘the speed of light.’\(^{47}\) In an era in which ‘an ideal performance’ consists of ‘a service provided with the speed at which e-mail travels,’ the lightening speed at which a readymade can be declared seems like a godsend for artists.\(^{48}\) Even if the act itself happens in a flash, Groys’ association of the notion of instantaneity with the production of readymade is highly contentious. As I will argue, the role of artist in this mode of production is gravely misconstrued by Groys. It is perhaps ironic that I will point to the phenomenon that occurs at the equivalent speed, lightening.

As my primary school teacher told the class, light travels much faster than the speed at which sound travels. This is evident when we see a flash lighting up the sky before we hear the roaring sound of thunder. One always precedes the other unless we are located right in the immediate vicinity of the lightening strike. As a child, when I worried about being struck by lightening, my parents assured me that I needn’t be too concerned since there was an interval of several seconds between my seeing the flash and hearing the rumbling sound. What’s more, well before either enters our perceptual fields, the formation of dark clouds sends some warning signals. However scientifically unfounded, we look to the sky for signs of when to go back inside, stop fishing at the beach, or swinging a metal club at the golf course. These clouds are described by Massumi as ‘a field of charged particles’ in his discussion on the notions of subjectivity and expression:


\(^{47}\) Groys, "The Speed Of Art," 115.

Before the flash there is only potential in a continuum of intensity: a field of charged particles. The triggering of the charge is a movement immanent to the field of potential, by which it plays out the consequences of its own intensity. The movement involves the field in its entirety. It is non-local, belonging directly to the dynamic relation between a myriad of charged particles. The flash of lightening expresses this non-local relation. Expression is always fundamentally of a relation, not a subject.49

When Groys claims that, with the readymade, art production achieved the speed of light, he is effectively separating lightening from the field of charged particles from which it emerges. In declaring that an art object may be come into being as speedily as a lightening strike, Groys condenses its production into the act of declaration alone. This wrongfully assumes lightening could strike out of the blue (sky) without any other relations whatsoever. If there is no visually observable premonition for possible lightening, we would be perennially fearful of being struck, too hesitant to brave the outside world unless desperate beyond reason. Before going on, I must explain what constitutes such clouds under the terms of the current discussion. In this regard, artists may form a collection of objects by filtering through the myriad of material fragments that they encounter according to some set criteria. An Object’s distinct physical properties such as colour, as well as the ‘where’, ‘when’ and ‘how’ of it entering into a collection may be used to narrow down what constitutes the cloud of potential readymades. More culturally structured categories such as ‘sports equipment’, ‘product packaging’ and ‘Modernist furniture’ may also be used as effectively. Whilst such a strategy goes some way to build up the reservoir of potential readymades, how the morphogenesis of a readymade itself may be triggered remains unclear. The artist’s decisiveness, what convinces them to finally declare something an artwork, remains vague. As it stands, all that appears in front of us is a semi-random collection of ‘things’. Lightening hasn’t struck nor has anything that resembles the speed of light taken place. I direct my attention now to ‘Duchamp’s conception of the artist as a “medium,” [or] a spiritualist,’ as

elaborated by a Paris-based artist collective Claire Fontaine whose name itself is in fact a readymade.\(^{50}\)

From this perspective the author of the readymade is nothing but the humble listener of the potential to be an artwork contained in any object... the result of this modest and miraculous action is measurable: each artwork contains a ‘personal coefficient of art,’ which is the arithmetic relation between ‘what is unexpressed but was projected’ and ‘what was unintentionally expressed.’\(^{51}\)

With this conception of the artist in relation to the readymade, I can begin to disperse some of the significance that Groys has disproportionately placed on the act of declaration that I (and other artists) have also inherited. Rather than propping the artist up to be an almighty, Zeus-like figure that could trigger lightening at will, the notion of an artist as a medium or spiritualist positions them in a much more modest but also more sustainable role of listener and facilitator. The production of readymade then takes a slight but hugely significant shift in theoretical and practical terms. Rather than being concerned with the artist’s transformation of something into a work of art, the question then becomes primarily focused on how artists look and listen to identify in objects ‘what is unexpressed but was projected.’ Artists work with such latency in order to facilitate its re-projection.

At this point, I would like to return to the initial premise of this discussion, the readymade as having an evolutionarily significant, environmental impact on artists. Such an assertion is based on the notion of environment as that which includes ‘a social, cultural, and technological universe, one open to continual argumentation and transformation by conventions and inventions.’\(^{52}\) By extension, this also positions the readymade as a mode of artistic production, as a set of artistic, and indeed, ‘manufactured tools.’\(^{53}\)

\(^{50}\) Fontaine, "Readymade: Genealogy of a Concept," 57.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.

\(^{52}\) Grosz, The Nick of Time, 229.

\(^{53}\) Ibid, 33.
Unlike bodily organs, that is, the tools of bodily morphology, the manufactured tool is always imperfect; it requires training the body to modify its activities to accommodate the tool’s potential uses. The body must transform itself, at least temporarily, through the prolonged use of an otherwise extraneous device.\textsuperscript{54}

Artists make bodily adjustments in response to the potential readymade entering into their milieu, signalling shifts in their modes of looking and listening. To consider ways in which such adjustments could be made, I will at this point briefly, and speculatively, draw on the notions of ‘soft eyes’ and ‘suspended attention,’ which are discussed by Melbourne-based artists Sarah crowEST and Elizabeth Newman respectively in relation to studio practice.

The method of looking with ‘soft eyes’ has an immense significance for crowEST’s studio practice, which partakes in a continuous and ceaseless proliferation of forms. During her ongoing studio experimentation, crowEST skilfully appropriates this approach from ‘the HBO television series \textit{The Wire} where it is used to describe the way a detective should use their eyes to scan an entire crime scene without looking hard and staring at particularities.\textsuperscript{55} Newman’s ‘suspended attention’ on the other hand points to a particular mode of listening. In what Sigmund Freud describes as ‘suspended attention,’ Newman, who is also a practicing psychoanalyst, engages in ‘a practice of evenly suspended attention, uninterrupted by judgement, with equal weight given to all the signifiers – a listening without understanding, a way of listening that occurs when the ego is resting.’\textsuperscript{56} While both these approaches will be taken up again in the next chapter, what’s important to my argument here is that they are operative under a vastly different framework from Groys’ rhetorical question, the one which has caused me so much anguish when he asks:

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 228.
\textsuperscript{55} Incidentally, it was crowEST borrowing my DVD copy of \textit{The Wire} at the start of her Ph.D. candidacy at the VCA that later came to provide this significant insight to my own research. See Sarah crowEST, “An Unaccountable Mass: Bothersome Matter and the Humours Life of Forms,” (Ph.D., University of Melbourne, 2012), 57.
What deserves our attention? And what doesn’t? Among the thousands and thousands of images [and objects] with which we are bombarded, which ones shall we choose as valuable and which ones shall we discard as worthless? And according to what criteria?\cite{Groys2007}

If I were ever to suffer from a serious case of artistic hyperventilation or panic attack, it would be largely due to my over persistence with this very question. Rather than concentrating on what may or may not deserve my attention, I shall focus my effort instead on breathing slowly. After all, I need to regain my calm before the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: NOTE ON INTUITION

The tossing of Groys’ readymade coin in the previous chapter signalled the imminent kick-off of a football match in this chapter. The match about to be underway, however, has already taken place. On 23rd April 2005, the Spanish league match between Real Madrid and Villarreal CF was played at Real Madrid’s home stadium Santiago Bernabéu. In terms of sporting history, it is of no particular significance, as the result had no real bearing on the overall outcome of the 2004-05 Spanish La Liga season. FC Barcelona won the league title while Madrid finished second with Villarreal the distant third. The match, however, is highly pertinent in the context of contemporary art as it provided a platform for the collaborative work of artists Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno. Together they directed the filming of the Madrid – Villarreal game to produce the motion picture Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait. The film has generated a number of useful and incisive questions to consider in relation to the notions of abstraction, relation and intuition. With this unexpected ‘theoretical turn’ as a starting point, I will explore these notions in relation to my own studio practice with and through a discussion on football.

In a fascinating philosophical exploration of football, Brian Massumi outlines the game’s constitutive elements. By default, it begins with a ball. Thereafter, the emergence of a game is contingent only upon two other basic elements, two teams and a field of play. Think of a Saturday afternoon football game in a park, for example. A semi-random group of people come together. This group is then divided into two to make the opposing teams. With careful placement, water bottles become improvised goalposts, which in turn create the field of play, the physical boundary within which the players and the ball move. In addition to these basic elements, the ball’s crossing of the goal line as the determinant of the winning/losing team remains consistent irrespective of the extent to which other elements are formally organised. The collective objective for each team in

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58 The 2004-05 season results available at: http://www.lfp.es/LigaBBVA/Liga_BBVA_Clasificacion.aspx
60 For the use(fulness) of ‘theory’ in practices such as visual art, see Elizabeth Grosz, "Deleuze, Theory, and Space," Log, no. 1 (2003): 77-86.
any game of football therefore is to put the ball in the back of the net more times than their opponent. Consequently, the ball is inevitably the fundamental focus of every player whether the game played is at the professional level under a highly structured set of regulations, or on an uneven surface of parkland according to barebone rules.

While it appears straightforward enough to assume that the player is the subject of movement when they kick the ball, and the ball in turn the object of this movement, Massumi asserts a slight but profound adjustment to the notion of movement in the game of football. If, as he suggests, ‘subject’ is understood to denote ‘the point of unfolding of a tendential movement’, the player is no longer the subject of the play. Instead, the ball is.

The tendential movements in play are collective, they are team movements, and their point of application is the ball. The ball arrays the teams around itself. Where and how it bounces differentially potentializes and depotentializes the entire field, intensifying and deintensifying the exertions of the players and the movements of the team. The ball is the subject of the play. To be more precise, the subject of the play is the displacements of the ball and the continual modifications of the field of potential these displacements effect.\(^2\)

Under this conceptual framework, each team’s task is understood as a mobilisation of their collective body in order to affect the movement of the field of potential towards the opposite goal and away from their own. With this in mind, I will now return to discuss the film Zidane.

The focal point in the conventional broadcasting of a football match is naturally on the ball itself. In what Parreno calls ‘A 90-minute portrait,’ however, seventeen synchronized cameras follow only one of the game’s protagonists on the pitch, the Real Madrid player Zinedine Zidane.\(^3\) One of the most immediately noticeable aspects of the film, and for me the most significant, is the presence of the ball, or rather the lack thereof, on the screen. Only occasionally does Zidane come to any significant contact with the ball, as

\(^2\) Ibid, 73.
for the majority of time he is some distance away from the centre of the play. The off-screen presence of the ball and the cameras’ sole focus on Zidane in turn mean that the viewers of the film are watching one player’s part and his response alone in the game’s overall movement. In this sense, Gordon and Parreno make a sharp incision in my habitual watching of football, creating an opening through which I consider the bodily and thought movements of Zidane as the film’s main subject.64

The production crew of Zidane had to carefully consider the positioning of their seventeen cameras in order to frame and capture Zidane. They gaged his on-screen presence with a stand-in running on the pitch prior to the match itself. Similarly, I also need to carefully position the notion of abstraction, if I am to use it as a kind of framing device through which to consider Zidane’s movements. In order to engage with football and art practices in terms of abstraction, I need ‘another kind of theory, another picture of what it is to think “abstractly”’.65 In his writing on the work of artist Tomma Abts, writer and theorist Jan Verwoert discusses abstraction in terms of latency.

[Abstraction] proceeds at its own particular pace and sets its own temporal parameters. In one moment, abstract art or thinking might hurl itself forward in time towards the yet unrealized and unthought. In other moments, however, abstraction only works because its enunciations reverberate with latent memories of things once seen or ideas once thought and then forgotten. Abstraction therefore taps into the potentials of temporary latency in a twofold sense: it reaches out both to that which is not yet and to that which is no longer present in the mind’s eye.66

Footballers and artists both work very closely with the unfolding of abstraction, though in varying degrees, in radically different manners, and with vastly diverse outcomes. For philosopher Maurice Blanchot, for instance, the task for the artist is ‘to let the work

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64 As Victorien Vaney, the producer of Zidane, points out: ‘The first challenge for the film was how to explain this original concept, this new view of a player who is already very well-known, but about whom we will discover many interesting facets that we didn’t know before.’ ‘The Making of Zidane’ in Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait, Videodisc (DVD).
emerge on its own singular terms...[which is] less a matter of his or her technical skill, though that is also required, than of the intuiting the potential disclosive force of the work. While it is quite easy to extrapolate from this an allusion to the notion of artists as working towards ‘the epiphanies of insight that our stereotypes of artists often suggest,’ that would be entirely at odds with my own reading. Instead, I define the artist’s task as the testing of ‘an intuition as to what could be shown or said, the intuition that there was something to be shown or said.’ In footballing terms, such testing of intuition is carried out in a player’s movement that is made in anticipation, taking part in the not-yet-realised sequence of the team’s collective movement. As evident in the film, Zidane, highly skilled as he is as a footballer, rarely touches the ball over the course of a game. In the sport where every player’s focus is on the ball, this may sound rather surprising. Yet he spends the majority of time on the pitch running, walking and sprinting, all the while watching and looking. By ‘watching’, he is in effect engaged in an intuitive reading of the flow of the game, working with the unfolding of play as a constantly shifting scene of abstraction. His main task, in other words, is to ‘sense’ the potential points of intensification throughout the game, which may or may not culminate in a scoring of a goal. He therefore tirelessly, and repeatedly, makes an anticipatory dash, every one of which constitutes an occasion of his reaching out both to ‘that which is not yet and to that which is no longer present in the mind’s eye.’ As Massumi states, ‘With every sight we see imperceptible qualities, we abstractly see potential, we implicitly see a life dynamic, we virtually live relation.’ In this sense, Zidane’s run towards seemingly arbitrary points on the field is his embodying of the potentials he’s identified but not yet lived through.

68 Anne Ellegood, *All of This and Nothing* (Los Angeles: Hammer Museum, University of California, 2011), 32.
70 Here, ‘sense’ has a twofold meaning as alluded to by Colebrook: ‘Sense, for Deleuze, is the milieu or capacity for relations, the orientation or map, within which thought moves; in a very simple sense a basketball player does not just perceive the ball and then process this perception according to pre-given rules, for his entire body and way of thinking is oriented to his position on the court, the position of other players, the position of the net, and the temporal point of the game.’ Colebrook, *Deleuze*, 69.
72 Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 41.
In my studio practice too intuition plays an integral role. In the milieu of relations constituted by materials and processes, I see the potential point of intensification that is yet to be composed or played out in studio and gallery spaces. In many instances, these points first appear like a slight fraying on a large piece of fabric that only reaches to the fore of my perception through my looking with ‘soft eyes’ and ‘suspended attention.’ This act of noticing and seeing relations that are not yet concretely present but somehow tangible ‘uses aspects of consciousness that are not accessible to language.’ As theorist Gertrud Sandqvist affirms, ‘It [intuition] cannot say, but it can show.’ At the same time, intuition as a kind of silent knowledge also points to a particular approach to our practice, as artist Ane Hjort Guttu outlines intuition as:

… a kind of wordless knowledge – that is, knowledge that you have acquired through visual or felt experience, but to which you don’t have access through language. The artist [and footballer] reaches into her background experience and pulls up intuitions, and they can be assembled and combined in various ways. This presumably also means that intuition doesn’t necessarily have to be either creative or exciting. It’s necessary to develop a critical intuition, rather than to imagine that the intuitive always produces something genuine or true.

Intuition may be deployed on a day-to-day basis in studio and gallery alike but the background experience, the very source of silent knowledge of which it taps into, is built over time. To build on ‘a kind of wordless knowledge,’ to develop an immanent capacity that resides only in the background, we must resolutely engage in ‘a practice of active, open, demanding attention paid to the experience as we experience it’ even though ‘the work’ is not immediately recognisable. In this sense, intuition by its very nature demands a high degree of blind faith on our part.

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73 See Chapter 3 – NOTE ON ATTENTION, 27.
Like football and art, cooking is also an intuitive, abstracting practice\textsuperscript{77} that is based on the process of ‘an impure mixing and mixing up… [that results in] a reassemblage that moves toward an outside rather than a purification that turns up to essential Ideas or in toward the constitutive “forms” of a medium.’\textsuperscript{78} Practitioners of each become able to work intuitively, not through coming to know the exact science behind their practice (though highly implausible, it probably wouldn’t hurt either) but precisely because they are relentlessly committed to working in ‘an environment with a surfeit of information,’ which largely remains uncertain and unknowable.\textsuperscript{79} Stengers develops this idea further when she writes:

The relation between thinking and testing has its origin in alchemy and does not refer to a knowing subject, but to a concrete operation. Does this metal, which is presented as gold, resist the attack of aqua fortis? Will this idea resist the attack of time? When we say ‘time will tell’ we are not thinking with the Greeks, but with the alchemists. We are not referring to a set of transcendent criteria allowing judgement, but to an immanent process requiring the action of something which has the power to dissolve, to separate what resists its action from what does not.\textsuperscript{80}

Given this, it is highly pertinent that Zidane recounts:

Magic is sometimes very close to nothing at all. Nothing at all.\textsuperscript{81}

Intuition is of paramount importance to an abstracting, or perhaps ‘magical’ and ‘alchemical’ practice such as my own. Intuition may be creative, artistic or even magical in terms of outcomes that it helps produce, however, neither can such faculty be

\textsuperscript{77} Such practice positions the process of abstraction as sensing latent potential in both the maker and the made, the cook and the cooked. Importantly, an active participation of both the artist and materials to the mutually intensifying and transforming process of ‘the making’ that occurs in the studio must be acknowledged.

\textsuperscript{78} Rajchman, \textit{Constructions}, 56.


\textsuperscript{81} Sighvatsson, Vaney and Vaney, \textit{Zidane: A 21 Century Portrait}, DVD.
developed instantly nor the effects of one’s ‘work’ immediately recognisable. The fundamental significance of intuition to this project and my studio practice more generally, however, is found in a particular work ethic underpinning its basic working mechanism that it demands. Like a footballer repeatedly making a run toward seemingly arbitrary points on the field even though it may not culminate in a scoring of a goal, I too make my own movement again and again. Agnes Martin puts this so perfectly in the context of art practice:

An artist is one who can fail and fail and still go on.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{82} Martin, \textit{Writings = Schriften}, 93.
CONCLUDING REMARK THROUGH TWO STRUCTURES

STUDIO WITH NO WALLS

In an interview with curator Hans Ulrich-Obrist, artist Pierre Huyghe describes his ‘studio’ as existing ‘in a collection of experiences and exchanges,’ rather than as a physical workplace. With the rehabilitative exercises I undertook in order to rejuvenate and revitalise my studio practice, I overcame my state of crisis during the course of this project. It’s not that I have reached a point of complete resolution, rather this research project has prompted a radical dissolution of the walls around my own ‘studio’. As demonstrated, my studio production now draws inspiration and strength from a collection of experiences and exchanges, strategies and techniques, that is sustained by and shared with many other modes of production such as cooking, reading and writing to name but few. ‘Everyday’ and ‘art’ now co-inhabit in the hub of production and participate in the process of ‘an impure mixing and mixing up… [that results in] a reassemblage that moves toward an outside rather than a purification that turns up to essential Ideas or in toward the constitutive “forms” of a medium.’

83 ‘Maybe I'm an extreme example because I've never had a workplace. I have no workplace. I'm working right now. I'm here in my studio as I'm talking to you. I will be in my studio when I will read this book, when I will watch this film, when I will have a discussion with an artist friend. That's where my studio is. It isn't a place, or in a medium, or in a practical experience. It is in a collection of experiences and exchanges. That's really it - my studio is in exchanges.’ Pierre Huyghe in Ilene Kurtz-Kretzschmar, and Caroline Bourgeois, Point of View: An Anthology of The Moving Image, Pierre Huyghe, Directed by Hans-Ulrich Obrist, (New York, NY: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004), Videodisc (DVD).

84 Rajchman, Constructions, 56.
MOUNTAIN WITH AN UNREACHABLE TOP

All I want to do is make better sushi.
I do the same thing over and over, improving bit by bit.
There is always a yearning to achieve more.
I'll continue to climb, trying to reach the top, but no one knows where the top is.
Even at my age, after decades of work, I don't think I have achieved perfection.  

In the film *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*, Jiro Ono, the first sushi chef to receive three Michelin stars, speaks of ‘perfection’. Ono neither rejects nor dreads perfection, rather, he views it as a mountain with an unreachable top he must nonetheless resolutely continue to climb. The purpose of Ono’s insistent search for ‘perfection’ is therefore not ‘to go “beyond” usual experience but rather to transform it, to make what usually “goes without saying” matter.’ From undertaking this research project, I have since come to position myself alongside the climber in Ono’s pursuit of perfection. Whether in times of crisis or triumph, the most urgent task for my practice must always remain the most ordinary, that is, to simply to go on with care and thoughtfulness. I too must continue to climb, feeling in each and every step that my ‘making body’ takes ‘the making and the thinking [that] coax each other into being.’

There is a Japanese saying that my father used to tell me as a child, as if to instil a certain work ethic. The most literal English translation of this saying ‘継続は力なり’ (Keizoku wa chikara nari) would simply read as ‘to continue is power’ or ‘perseverance is strength.’ From the outset of this project, I was, ‘despite the urgency of the situation, … haunted by this question, one worthy of the Idiot: we [artists], what are we?’ By way of an answer, I again quote Agnes Martin: ‘An artist is one who can fail and fail and still go on.’

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87 Julia Dault quoted in Zoë Gray, “thinking amidst the exhibition,” 66.
88 Deleuze and Lapoujade, *Two Regimes of Madness*, 318.
89 Martin, *Writings = Schriften*, 93.
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