The background of the cover is a photograph of a forest stream. The water flows over a bed of dark, wet rocks. The surrounding trees are lush with green leaves, and the overall atmosphere is misty and serene. The text is overlaid on this image in a clean, sans-serif font.

Volume one: Thesis

*Valuing the intangible through portraiture:
An inquiry into how practice-based research can make visible
gentle, embodied and intrinsic value present in contemporary
creative practice*

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Abstract

Recent years have seen a growing interest in arts-based methods for capturing data that often escapes more traditional methods. Creative industry value and impact measurement frameworks have largely been designed to capture instrumental benefits, with organisations and institutions in mind. As a result, intrinsic benefits and intangible value is often missed, and the experience of individuals overlooked. As contemporary creative practitioners continue to navigate the changing landscape of the UK's creative and cultural industries, the need for approaches that forefront first-hand, individual experience of arts and culture increases. Current impact measurement frameworks are often shaped by policy attachment and competing agendas which can create tensions between organisational expectations and the values that underpin individual artistic practice. These pressures contribute to disparities, particularly when artists feel their intentions or ways of working are misaligned with expected instrumental benefits.

This project embodies a gentle approach to arts-based research, to explore gentleness within the context of contemporary creative practice. Through the ethnographic methodology of portraiture and using arts-based analysis, the experiences of six contemporary creative practitioners have been captured. A gentle approach has influenced the ethical grounding of the research, with care for the participants and the researcher prioritised throughout.

Participants took part in one-on-one studio visits and interviews. These took place in the participants' places of work, including studios and homes. Interviews took place during the studio visits, and audio, field notes and images were recorded. A thematic framework was developed to organise the data, and visual analysis was used to interpret the data. A final round of sense-checking took place once the research portraits had been returned to each participant, through a short feedback survey.

Findings from this project demonstrate that portraiture offers a promising alternative method for capturing gentle and intrinsic value within the creative and cultural sector, that places the individual practitioner experiences at the centre of inquiry.

Key words: Gentleness, Portraiture, Arts-Based, Intrinsic, Value, Impact Measurement

Mode of Submission

This is a by-project Master of Research, and my thesis is accompanied by a portfolio of practice.

My portfolio should be considered simultaneously as; a sketchbook, documenting the visual work I have developed during this study; and as visual analysis in action, documenting the process I undertook to interpret my participants gentle practices.

The portfolio can be experienced as a record in its own right, but should be referred to when you reach Chapter Five, my analysis and discussion chapter. I have visualised this order in the diagram below:

Volume One: Thesis	Volume Two: Portfolio of Practice
Chapter One: Introduction	Portfolio of Practice Explore alongside chapter five.
Chapter Two: Scope of Context	
Chapter Three: Methodology	
Chapter Four: Field work	
Chapter Five: Analysis and Discussion	
Chapter Six: Conclusion	

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Thank you for your practice and your time, for welcoming me into your studios and homes, and for sharing vulnerable and intimate moments of reflection with me.

Above all, thank you for your gentleness.

Declaration

I, Charlie Collins, declare that this thesis component of my by-project submission for the degree of Master of Research meets the regulations as stated in the course handbook. I declare that this submission is my own work and has not been submitted for any other academic award.

Charlie Anne Collins

The Glasgow School of Art

December 2025

Preface and Positionality

I am a white, working-class, neurodivergent woman. I have been on the waitlist for an autism diagnosis for three years now. I have struggled with anxiety for most of life, which I now believe is contributed to by undiagnosed Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) which significantly impacts my life. I have a gentle, introverted personality. Despite the challenges that have come with my lived experience, I have been both a volunteer and a working professional in the arts and culture sector since 2015.

I became fascinated with the idea of gentleness after a roundtable discussion I attended in May 2022 at Nottingham Poetry Festival, *'If Brave Spaces Make For Brave Poems, How Do We Get There?'*. The event was attended by a mix of facilitators working in disciplines across the creative industry. Our conversation centered on how we each delivered workshops that were 'safe spaces' for attendees, and for how we, as facilitators, can also feel safe and comfortable delivering the work. The word gentle was repeatedly mentioned, and it stuck with me. We discussed practicing in a 'gentle' way to create safe spaces for creative expression. We discussed the negative aspects of being an anxious, introverted or gentle practitioner. I thought about how participatory work felt more difficult for me, and how that may have already, and will continue to, impact my career as funding and opportunities increasingly request outputs with measurable impact and public engagement.

Attending that discussion was the true beginning of my inquiry. I started to pay close attention to the creative activities and events I attended, managed or facilitated. I paid close attention to the arts sector, to impact frameworks and where value is placed. I paid close attention to the aspects of my practice that feel significant to me, but are often immeasurable, overlooked or undervalued.

I began my Master of Research almost a year later in January 2023, at which point I started to unpack and explore my observations in an academic context.

Less than two months before I began my Masters, around the time I was offered an unconditional place at Glasgow School of Art, I was made redundant from my part time role as a Creative Producer. Throughout the duration of my Masters, I have struggled with job precarity and financial insecurity as a student, freelance artist and arts worker. This has had a significant effect on my life, and subsequently, on the shape of this research. My focus has shifted over the past two years, from an interest in defining and documenting gentle and embodied practice, to examining how the value of these practices can be captured, visualised and communicated. The fieldwork I engaged in became an exercise of sharing and trust. The artists I met with trusted me with their space, their time and their practice, allowing me to record and interpret the value made tangible through each studio visit. The following thesis, portfolio and publication is my attempt at sharing that.

Artist Statement

I have often struggled to identify and label my own practice. I began seeing myself as an artist at the age of fifteen. Over the last decade of working in the arts, my practice has shifted between socially engaged and commercial, visual and dialogical, facilitation and artistic creation. Although I have wanted to simplify and settle on one area, or one style, my practice remains a mixture of all of these things. Through my Master of Research Project, I have come closer to understanding these intersections, and how my positionality and personality affect my practice.

This is a description of my practice, as I currently understand it:

I am an artist and gentle practitioner. I work independently, but most often collaboratively, on artistic ideas, projects and programmes across the UK. My work spans artistic creation and illustration, curation, independent publishing and zine making, creative production, teaching, artistic research and creative writing. My practice developed in the Peak District, and I remain invested in supporting rural creative practice.

I am a director and co-founder of No Jobs in the Arts CIC, a social enterprise that alleviates access barriers and supports early-career creatives to develop professional practices. I am the co-founder of Milestone Studios and Gallery, a grassroots organisation in New Mills, Derbyshire. I am the founder of the Peak District Zine Library.

Although I often feel unable to describe my practice in a succinct manner, there have certainly been common elements and themes present in my work throughout the last decade. These include: Gentleness. Abundance. Analogue processes. Blank space. Layering. Dialogue. Nature. Existentialism.

Glossary

This glossary defines the various terms of ‘value’ used throughout my thesis. These terms are not interchangeable, so it’s important to acknowledge their distinct definitions.

Value/s

The perceived importance or worth of something or someone; or a principle or standard of behaviour. A value or set of values may represent the beliefs, criteria or guiding principles that influence or provide a foundation for behaviour. These beliefs can be about what a person considers right and wrong and give meaning to what they consider important in life.

Intrinsic Value

Intrinsic value refers to the inherent importance or worth of something or someone. This worth is independent of external factors; it has worth in and of itself. Intrinsic value is subjective and can be difficult to articulate or measure as it is often intangible (Matarasso, 1996).

Instrumental value

Instrumental value refers to something that’s worth is measured by the positive effects it has, when used to achieve a specific objective or agenda through art or culture. This kind of value is often easier to measure through impact studies, as there is usually a tangible output or outcome that can be documented.

Social Value/Impact

Social value or impact refers to the worth placed on something, as a result of the benefits it creates for people, communities and the planet. These benefits vary, and can include instrumental or intrinsic benefits, from raising awareness, to creating measurable, positive social change.

Economic Value/Impact

Economic value represents the worth of something in monetary terms. Economic impact refers to something’s ability to generate income or to the monetary benefits it provides to a stakeholder.

Artistic or Cultural Value

Artistic value is the worth attributed to artistic creation and practice. Cultural value is the worth attributed to engagement and participation in artistic and cultural activity. This type of value can have instrumental or intrinsic benefits. The instrumental benefits of artistic or cultural value are often measured by its social or economic outputs. The intrinsic benefits may be more difficult to measure, as they are often subjective, individual experiences. (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016)

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Chapter One



1. Introduction

My thesis begins with a preface, including a positionality and artist statement, detailing the moments that led me to this research topic and an overview of my current practice. The subject at hand, gentleness, is deeply personal and I have included these items to introduce myself to the reader and situate myself within the study, and to acknowledge my invested interest in the research context.

Following this, my Scope of Context draws together two key contexts: gentleness, and value measurement. In 2023 article, A new science of gentleness: conceptual analysis and measurement, Ryan Niemiec et al introduce gentleness as ‘largely neglected’ and ‘substantially underexplored’ particularly within psychological literature (2023), their literature review highlighted the most direct work on gentleness at that time was within care studies, but that there was generally evidence for declining interest. The article called for further research; ‘the empirical, theoretical, and practical work with gentleness is in its infancy. We call for researchers, educators, and practitioners to explore and advance this exciting new territory’. Within the disciplines of geography and art, a small number of scholars are exploring this new territory, with a growing interest in gentleness located as ‘part of a ‘virtue turn’ in and beyond human geography’ (Finn, M. & Jeffries, J.M. 2025) and as a newness within art practice, ‘characterised as value-in-method, or more broadly, as ethico-methodological’ (Mers, A. Quiroz, D.)

Moving on from gentleness, my scope explores value measurement and the effect these systems have on contemporary creative practice. The Industria’s 2023 report Structurally F-cked, findings indicate ‘a hierarchy by which artists’ labour devoted to artmaking is valued less than the labour they devote to these other activities [workshops, talks, and facilitation]’. Less visible work, such as studio practices, is easy to overlook, undervalue and under pay, which has an ongoing effect on the perceived value of artistic labour (Industria, 2023).

If art-making at large is overlooked, how can we make the case for the intangible and invisible aspects of practice, such as gentleness? A recommendation by Acme Artists Studios LTD proposes that policies and funding bodies should place less emphasis on the need for artists to generate impact and instead support artists ‘in their core objective to produce artwork’ (Acme Studios and UCL, 2023) So, if we are to move away from an emphasis on measurable and visible impact, how then do we measure the value of artistic work? The report continues:

‘Research that seeks to establish value should move beyond narrow conceptions of economic value to also focus on the broader values that can be difficult to quantify, including spatial, social, cultural, psychological and educational values. This requires a reorientation of methodologies to focus more on qualitative and ethnographic research.’ (ibid. Pg 37)

The following thesis documents my attempt to capture and quantify gentle aspects of creative practice through the qualitative, ethnographic methodology of portraiture, as outlined in my Methodology chapter. My aim is to demonstrate the significance of gentle and embodied values and present a case for capturing these often-overlooked aspects of creative practice.

My study has led to the development of multiple outcomes; a portfolio of arts-based visual analysis, developed through my studio practice; a series of six, collage-based research portraits; emergent findings and recommendations for future research.

Within the rest of this introduction chapter, I have presented my research questions, aims and objectives, and thesis structure.

1.1 Research Questions

My research study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How can practice-based research make visible the value of gentleness, and other embodied and intrinsic qualities, present in contemporary creative practice?
2. How might the practice of portraiture provide an alternative approach to challenge existing industry frameworks for analysing and evidencing artistic value?

1.2 Aims and Objectives

Aims

- To document contemporary creative practices of a small group of participants in an accurate, honest and gentle manner.
- To advocate for the significance of gentleness within contemporary creative practice and explore methods for understanding, analysing and representing it.
- To support practitioners to identify the intangible and embodied value within their work and propose a method for evidencing this.

Objectives

- To employ a gentle research approach (Pottinger, l. 2020) whilst using a practice-led, methodology of portraiture (Sara Lawrence Lightfoot. 1983) allowing my research process to evolve naturally, with care for participants, the work, and myself.
- To undertake studio-visits with six practitioners, create comprehensive and in-depth documentation of contemporary creative practices through interviews and observations, and undertake a design process resulting six research portraits that illustrate the intangible qualities present in each practice
- To demonstrate the need for broader impact measurement frameworks, that encompass and validate less visible value within creative practice.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This Master of Research project is by-project, and my submission includes two volumes; Volume One: Thesis; and Volume Two: Portfolio of practice.

My thesis is made up of six chapters.

Chapter one, my introduction, provides an overview of my thesis, Volume One.

Chapter two, my scope of context, provides an overview of the contextual landscape for my study. This includes an investigation into literature on gentleness, value measurement and contemporary creative practice.

Chapter three, my methodology, presents my research design and methodological approach. My approach is ethnographic, utilising the methodology of portraiture, complimented by arts-based methods of analysis.

Chapter four provides an overview of phase 2 of my fieldwork. Phase 2 included facilitating six studio visits with six participants, and is documented here through recollections, observations, quotes and description, gathered through my first-hand experience, fieldnotes and audio recording, and illustrated by polaroid photographs captured during each studio visit.

Chapter five (to be read alongside Volume Two) discusses the insights that emerged through my process of visual analysis, as well as the findings that emerged through phase 3 of my fieldwork

Chapter six provides a closing summary of my research, and presents my conclusions, shaped by the emerging insights and findings from my study.

Chapter Two



2. Scope of Context: Positioning Gentleness within Creative Practice and Research

This chapter provides the contextual background for my study. This scope has been undertaken to gain an understanding of gentleness and its position within academia and the creative industries, and to explore current methods for capturing intangible, embodied and artistic forms of value.

In the first two sections, Defining Gentleness and A New Gentleness, a foundational understanding has been built through an investigation into gentleness. I have explored work that seeks to broaden our understanding of gentleness. From its philosophical, religious and carnal origins and the power of gentleness (Dofourmantelle, A. 2018 [2013]) through to the newness of gentleness (Guattari, 2005) (Mers, 2021) ((Niemiec, Cangemi and McGrath, 2024) including gentle geographies, and gentle protest.

In subsequent sections, on Value Measurement I have investigated how value is quantified, with examples from across the creative and cultural sector and identified gaps in knowledge within these systems. These gaps not only limit how well organisations and institutions are able to communicate the value of their work, but also successful they are at including individual voices. Increased reliance on funding across the sector, at a time of precarity (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2025) and funding cuts, affects who can afford to have a creative practice, and who can afford to practice gently (Matos, 2022).

2.1 Defining Gentleness

'Life places gentleness within us originally.'

(Dofourmantelle, 2018 [2013])

Before undertaking this research, my understanding of gentleness was felt intrinsically, as tacit, ineffable knowledge. Something innate. The Cambridge Dictionary definition of gentleness is more straightforward. Noun: The quality of being calm, kind or soft; The quality of not being violent, severe or strong (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

Anne Dofourmantelle discusses gentleness as a verb, an action, state or occurrence that we perform or demonstrate (Dofourmantelle, 2018 [2013]). In *The Power of Gentleness*, she illuminates the paradoxes of gentleness from across the human experience, languages, religions, and cultures through 'painterly writing' (Malabou, 2018) in a collection of tableaux. Dofourmantelle describes Gentleness in many ways, as intrinsic, spiritual, sensual, as an 'emotion of which we have lost the name' (2013), and more sublimely as:

‘a force of secret life-giving transformation linked to what the ancients called “potentiality” [*puissance*]. Without it there is no possibility for life to advance in its becoming. I think that the power of life’s metamorphosis is sustained in gentleness’ (Dufourmantelle, 2018 [2013]).

2.2 A New Gentleness

‘There is then value to engage with the complexity of gentleness and virtue directly, and not only gentleness’s others.’

(Finn, M. & Jeffries, J.M. 2025)

Despite philosophical and religious significance, my scope is concerned with contemporary literature. This is limited. Gentleness has long been overlooked for detailed consideration (Finn & Jeffries, 2025).

In the following sections I have explored writing on a renewed interest in gentleness.

The Power of Gentleness

Gentleness is central to both ethics and politics (Dufourmantelle, 2018 [2013]). Roomer van Toorn proposes that Gentleness’s power exists beyond a politics of care, as a third approach. Within architecture, gentleness can offer micro-experiences of power and strength in our everyday lives. It is essential for us to ‘organise new micro-political and micro-social practices, new solidarities, a new gentleness’ to tackle the crisis that threatens our planet, through an approach that respects all living systems (Guattari, 2005).

Micro-politics of Gentleness

In ‘For a new GENTLENESS’ the 33rd issue of Centre for Sustainability in the Arts Quarterly, Adelheid Mers asks ‘how is it [gentleness] new?’ (Mers and Jiménez Quiroz, 2021).

The issue examines contemporary methods and practices of gentleness, with writing on indigenous knowledge; marginalised communities; tactility and human experience; protest and community art; ethics; and fermentation rituals. The newness can be ‘characterised as value-in-method, or more broadly, as ethico-methodological.’ (Mers and Jiménez Quiroz, 2021) Mers own instrument Micro-Practices for a New Gentleness is an example of an ethico-methodological practice. Co-design to facilitate a focused conversation, with mediated risk, creating an embodied, generous and gentle experience for those that participate (Mers, 2024. P 274).

Gentle Geographies

The Gentle Geographies project by Matt Finn and Jayne Jeffries, brought together five authors, prompted to problematise the notion of gentleness. Finn and Jeffries acknowledge new calls for gentleness as part of a wider virtue turn' (Finn & Jeffries, 2025). 'There is then value to engage with the complexity of gentleness and virtue directly, and not only gentleness's others' (Finn, M. & Jeffries, J.M. 2025. p.5) Centering gentleness is not a risk averse practice (Finn & Jeffries, 2025) (Dufourmantelle, 2018 [2013]) but supports active decision making and the limitation of our capacities to cause harm to others, ourselves, and our environment. (Finn & Jeffries, 2025)

Two of the Gentle Geographies articles resonated deeply with my context, and I have discussed them next.

Dr Laura Pottinger presents gentleness as a necessary dimension of research encounters and academic writing. She identifies three key elements to a gentle research approach; embodiment; slowness; and reciprocity. Gentle research should capture the mundane and emotional responses that are often excluding from academic work. Participant data should be handled carefully and rendered gently (Pottinger, 2020), creating "moments of 'taking care' within the research process (Mountz et al., 2015, p. 1251).

Pottinger defines gentleness as:

"an embodied relation to the self and others" (Pottinger. 2020)

Gentleness is implicit, purposeful, or tactical and its *complexities and contradictions require further attention (ibid)*. Pottinger's work on Gentleness is extensive, and I also explored Pottinger's methodological research in my Methodology chapter.

Pottinger's gentle research approach has proved useful for understanding quiet and gentle forms of activism and protest, which often go overlooked in favour of loud, confrontational and verbal forms of protest (Pottinger, 2017). Sarah Corbett, founder of the Craftivist Manifesto, coined the term 'gentle protest', to recognise these actions, often considered as mild or non-assertive, as active, thoughtful, considerate and careful (Corbett, 2017, p. 2). 'Craftivism' was coined by Betsy Greer, a self-identified craftivist, 'to some our work may seem unimportant, but to me, the small scale of craftivism is vital. It turns us, as well as our work, into vessels of change' (Greer, 2014)

In her 2014 Craftivism anthology Greer gathers examples of creative practitioners working in quiet, gentle ways. Sayraphim Lothian's practice of Guerilla Kindness sees private, modest (Horton, 2025) moments of happiness and magic (Lothian, 2014) create embodied, relational moments of reciprocity between artist and viewer. Inga Hamilton's ELEMENTALS Birds involved 100 creatives, asked to focus on 'unconditional peace and goodwill toward the viewer' whilst making a bird. The slow, changing and unpredictable nature of the project saw participants overrunning deadlines, refusing to follow instructions and adapting it to their interests. But when the birds were revealed alongside images of 9/11, 'one by one they made us gasp, and little by little the 9/11 images shrank in size', (Hamilton, 2014) because 'the gentle, nurturing act of craft reaches people in a non-threatening' (ibid).

In his Gentle Geographies article 'For diffident geographies and modest activism: Questioning the ANYTHING-BUT-GENTLE academy', he explores the idealization of impact and how ANYTHING-BUT-GENTLE ways of working are often valued more highly than gentleness.

Horton defines gentleness as:

'...a range of experiences, capacities, and dispositions which can seem undervalued and underrepresented within many spaces of contemporary academia. Specifically, gentleness encourages an ethics of considerate, generous humility...'

(Horton, 2020)

And the ANYTHING-BUT-GENTLE as:

'a placeholder to consider gentleness's other (which, ultimately, I see as ways of being which are effectively or intentionally thoughtless, self-serving, alpha, elitist, rude, unkind, overbearing, ruthless, vindictive, divisive, exclusionary, or oppressive'

(Horton, 2020)

Horton's idea of modesty and impact reflects on his previous research with young anti-austerity activists (Horton, 2016). Surprised by the presence of modesty within their campaigning, he proposed that an attunement to gentleness in academia and activism space could create a greater appreciation of the value within gentle qualities such as modesty (Horton 2020). This could tackle the perception that modest and quiet forms of activism are unimportant (ibid). Modest and quiet forms of activism are often perceived as unimportant, in comparison to ANYTHING-BUT-GENTLE alternatives, which are idealized and rewarded for evidencing impact (ibid). *I have expanded on this in my Value Measurement section.*

A new Science of Gentleness

Ryan M. Niemiec, Alyssa Cangemi and Robert McGrath bring gentleness to the foreground of psychology. Their 2024 study concludes that gentleness has been underexplored, despite being widely recognised by the public and meets the criteria for being a character strength, not a flaw.

Their study defines gentleness as:

'a humanity-oriented, positive trait that involves being soft, tender, and supportive to facilitate positive experiences.'

(Niemiec, Cangemi and McGrath, 2024)

The literature I have explored so far consistently proposes gentleness to be an active quality, and their study found this to be true. Gentleness is the choice to limit our capacities to affect, to place empathy over anger, being prosocial over aggressive, and creating connecting over confrontation (Niemiec, Cangemi and McGrath, 2024). Gentleness presents an exciting, new territory that is in its infancy (ibid). Niemiec et al recommend further research into; the causal effect of gentleness; gentleness' influence on other variables; intrapersonal application of gentleness; and how gentleness be cultivated.

The Future of Gentleness

‘We need gentleness-- to be gentle to each other, to be gentle to the ecologies that sustain us. A new gentleness, one that undermines and softly destroys the structures and legacies of colonialism, corrosively and quietly. A gentleness that is not in and of itself new, but built on the ancient, perpetual and essential gentleness of many Indigenous cultures and marginalized peoples.’

(Mers and Jiménez Quiroz, 2021)

Whilst an attunement to gentleness is a positive progression of accessible, inclusionary research, the effect must be considered. Foregrounding gentleness may foreground ‘spatial imaginaries that have traditionally feminised and located care, slower and quieter modes of (political) action within the domestic, private sphere (Hall, 2020; Williams, 2017). To that end, it’s important to consider what effect this foregrounding might have on the reception of research or practice, if entangled with a ‘feminized quality’ (Hall, S. M. 2020).

Ableist assumptions are prevalent on the physical capacities of researchers, and what kind of bodies are able (or expected) to act gently (Pottinger, 2020). There is a risk that ‘in choosing a gentle attention toward some bodies, others are made absent and potentially harmed’ (Hocknell, 2019, p. 2).

The future of gentleness is in acknowledging its complexity and discrepancies, to caution against and refuse to accept ‘binary renderings of gentleness’ (Finn & Jeffries, 2025).

2.3 Value Measurement

‘Much that doesn't get measured does get done – beautifully, gratefully, with vigour and pride.’

(Moriarty, 1997)

This next section considers how value is measured in the creative and cultural sector. With limited literature on measuring gentleness, I have broadened my scope to investigate how intrinsic, embodied and less visible value is measured.

The Rise of Impact Measurement

Impact measurement frameworks support the evaluation of projects, programmes and processes against specified objectives (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016). Although ‘research, evaluation and valuing are not the same activity’ (ibid), they’re often conflated. When valuing and evaluation are used interchangeably, it’s important to acknowledge the effects that this has across the creative and cultural sector, and particularly on individual practitioners.

Value and Policy Attachment

The 2022 Social Impact Framework Review indicates that social impact measurement is most commonly used by cultural organisations to communicate the value of their work (Llorenc O'Prey et al., 2022). Being able to communicate the value of our work is particularly important when the value of the work is less visible.

The value of cultural work is becoming increasingly tied to acquiring funding; delivering specific outputs; and evidencing impact to stakeholders. Funders are a principal driver of this. AHRC'S 2021 Cultural Value Project report calls for the wider application of evaluation rather than being carried out just for accountability purposes (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016). This accountability turn is a result of policy attachment (Gray, C. 2002) and has led to the proliferation of impact measurement frameworks. Policy attachment is the process whereby the arts have become linked with policy objectives other than those of the arts themselves, to achieve impacts that serve other policy agendas, including economic and social. This attachment can be argued to have led to a loss of the 'core meaning' for arts, although the extent of which is not fully understood (Gray, C. 2002. p. 88).

Instrumental and Intrinsic Value

Intrinsic benefits are more difficult to identify and measure effectively than instrumental benefits, although 'no less important in understanding the impact of the arts. They are often the underlying mechanisms within which all other benefits ... are derived' (Llorenc O'Prey et al., 2022). The legitimacy and value of intrinsic benefits should not be overlooked because they are difficult to measure using quantitative, conventional systems (Matarasso, 1996). Yet frameworks that prioritise conventional data collection and instrumental benefits seem designed to omit them. Systems that prioritise conventional data collection as the only rigorous method of evidence and validity should be cautioned against, 'much that doesn't get measured does get done – beautifully, gratefully, with vigour and pride.' (Moriarty, 1997).

The Centre of Cultural Value and The Audience Agency are developing the Cultural Indicator Suite for measuring holistic, everyday benefits. Findings from their interim report reinforce that conventional systems have a quantitative bias. This affects its ability to recognise the value of creativity that occurs in informal settings, and in intangible and relational ways, '*we know it's happening. You can see it when you're there, but there's no record. It disappears unless someone happens to write it down*' (Centre for Cultural Value, 2025).

In 2021 the UK's design council launched the Design Value Framework, which imbeds a contradictory stance, 'what gets measured, gets done' (Design Council, 2021). The goal of the framework is to 'make visible and help measure social, environmental and democratic impacts – in addition to clear financial ones' (ibid).

Recent years have seen growing interest in arts-based methods for 'capturing data and understanding which might escape more traditional methods' (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016).

'Instead of striving to understand and rationalize the value of the arts, we should instead aim to feel and experience it. During a process of deep hanging out, our participants revealed the limitations of language in capturing the value of the arts'

(Walmsley, B. 2018)

2.4 Contemporary Creative Practitioners

‘I think there are ways to escape this. an embodied and sincere practice...I would propose to free ourselves from work’

(Matos, 2022)

The creative and cultural sector has a self-employment rate of 32%, this is double the UK average. Despite this, impact measurement frameworks have largely been designed with organisations and institutions in mind. Not only do these frameworks struggle to capture intrinsic and intangible value (Llorenç O’Prey et al., 2022) but also the experiences of individuals. The AHRC’s Cultural Value Project report acknowledged this, and calls for first-hand, individual experience of arts and culture to be repositioned at the heart of enquiry into cultural value as too often individual experience takes second place to economic, place, infrastructure or health impact (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016).

The impact of measurement requirements being designed for organisations has also affected the role of the individual artist, forcing many to take on adjacent roles in order to receive vital funding to sustain their practice. Arts Council England (ACE), the UK’s national development agency for creativity and culture, require evaluation reports for all of their grant programmes, including those for individual artists. In an independent review of ACE, Baroness Margaret Hodge has critiqued the current project-to-project grant structure, as it has forced artists to take on managerial or organisational role, which creates a distraction from their core artistic practices. Various recommendations in the report are made to ACE to tackle this issue. Recommendation 4 proposes that ACE should replace their current strategy with something simpler and less prescriptive. A strategy like this should allow individuals to apply based to their own strengths and unique contributions, rather than adapting their practice (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2025) and values to meet the requirements of a funder.

‘As a result of these competing agendas, artists can experience disparities between commissioning opportunities and their own values, leading to mismatched expectations between the organisation commissioning a project and the values of an individual artist’s practice.’ (Ravetz and Wright, 2020)

Individual creative practitioners are significantly affected by the impacts of the sector’s policy attachment, competing agendas and financial precarity. In 2023 it was reported that creative industries contribute c.£124 billion to the UK economy. Despite this, the median annual income for self-employed visual artists in 2024 was only £12,500, 64% lower than the typical income of individual UK workers. The UK Visual Artists 2024 survey of earnings and contracts found that over 80% of artists describe their earnings as ‘unstable’ (Ehlinger et al., 2024).

The rising level of financial precarity raises important questions:

- Who can afford to have a creative practice, and more applicably, who can afford to practice outside of these systems?

- With rising pressure on artists to meet funding and policy requirements to earn an income, how can we justify the risks (Dufourmantelle, 2018 [2013]) (Finn & Jeffries, 2025) that come with practicing in gentle ways?
- How can the value of a practice that rejects the ANYTHING-BUT-GENTLE system be validated, if not through impact measurement or paid opportunities?

For individuals able to practice in ways that are not determined by economic agendas, there is a significant challenge in validating their value (Reeves, 2016). Although government supported funders and institutional commissioning bodies have confidence in their ability as validators (Ravetz and Wright, 2020), and none of the social practice artists interviewed Amanda Ravets and Lucy Wright in their Meshwork report identified funders as part of the validation process, beyond providing more support in terms of money (ibid). Their respondents also considered legacy an essential, but significantly unsupported aspect of their practice' (Ravetz and Wright, 2020.) If validation is not coming through policy or funders, what systems are in place to provide validation for the value of creative practitioners' work?

'Whilst self-validation — an artist's personal belief in their work — is essential to the development of an enduring, robust practice, external validation is also necessary to establish and maintain a professional career in the arts. In the art world this is often understood to take the form of critical reception by critics, peers, participants and audiences, access to sales and paid opportunities via commissioners and funders, and access to professional mentoring schemes and other forms of training and artist development' (Thornton, 2009).

Beyond critical, financial and social forms of validation, the artist studio can also have psychological, emotional and symbolic value for an artist, and 'choosing to work on one's practice in a dedicated space is... a form of self-validation and a way of acknowledging the value of the time and work put into their practice.' (Acme Studios and UCL, 2023. p. 29)

2.5 Scope of Context Conclusion

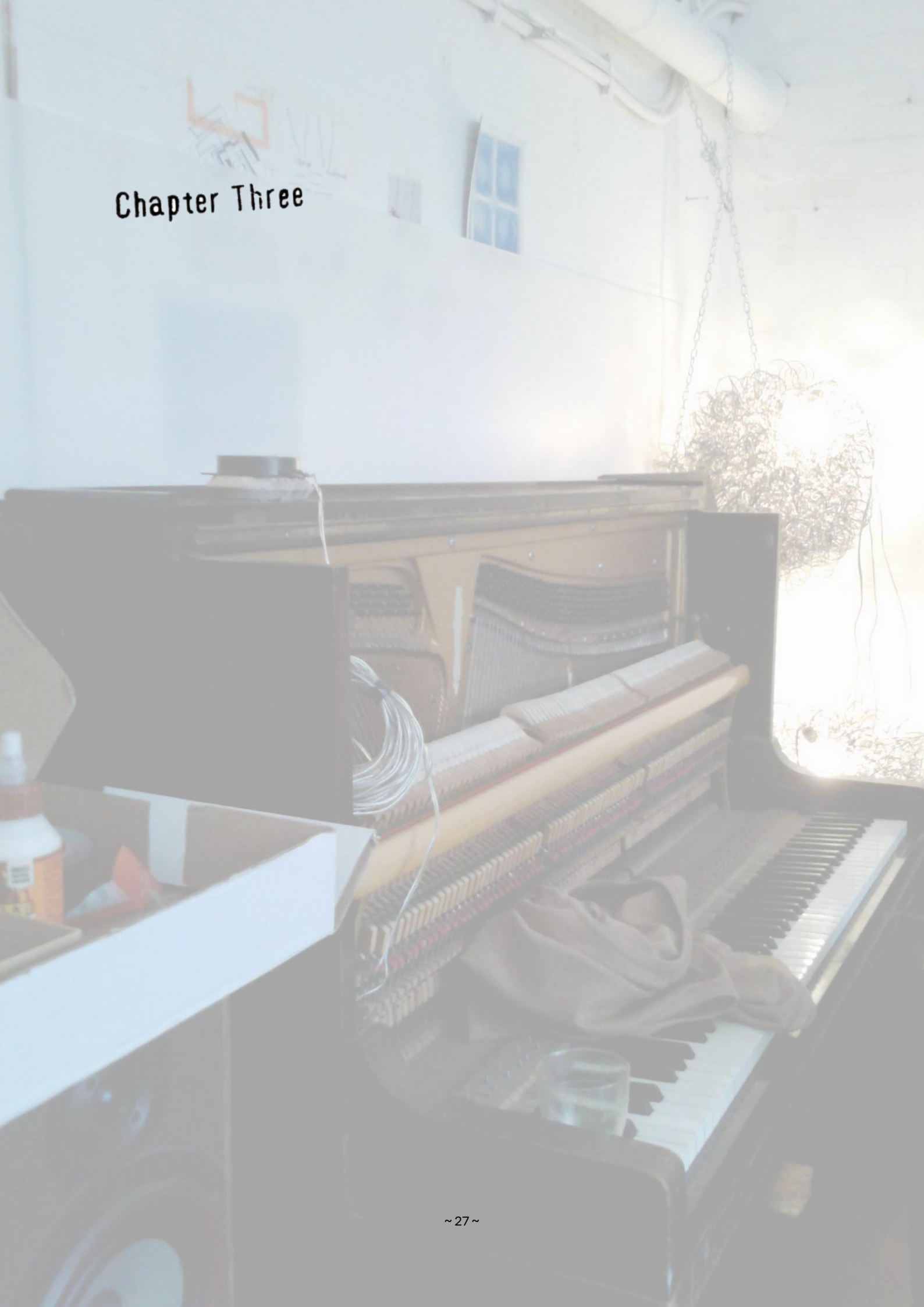
The literature I have reviewed positions gentleness as a complex, paradoxical value. Commonalities across the literature are:

- Gentleness is active and performative, with value found in the method or process of acting gently.
- Gentleness can support decision making. Although not risk averse, choosing to act gently can limit our capacities to cause harm, and instead, encourage positive actions that are caring, generous, empathetic, respectful. These positive actions can ultimately foster deeper connections and offer new possibilities.
- Gentleness is underrepresented as a strength in academic writing and systems for impact measurement.

When considering employing a gentle approach, to research or practice, considerations should be made on the capabilities that a gentle approach assumes of ourselves and others. A gentle approach may not always be accessible or inclusive, but where appropriate, gentleness offers great value.

The current creative and cultural sector is underscored by precarity, with growing demands on individual creative practitioner. Existing systems for capturing value and measuring impact favour instrumental benefits, often attached to non-arts based and economic policies. Precarity limits our capacity to value intrinsic benefits, as organisations and individual creative practitioners strive to meet the requirements of funding bodies and institutions. Arts-based, experimental and less-prescriptive systems for capturing and measuring impact offer future possibilities for a more equitable sector for everyone, but particularly for those with less visible practices.

Chapter Three



3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details the theoretical, ethical and methodological approaches that have shaped my research design. My primary aim was to craft a series of research portraits of contemporary, creative practitioners, that capture gentle and embodied values present in their practice. I have used the ethnographic methodology of Portraiture, concerned with the phenomenological aim of describing lived experience, to gather data during studio visits with each participant. My analysis of this data utilised my studio practice and arts-based methods.

3.2 Research Design



Fig 1 – Research Design Diagram, Source: Author

3.3 Ethico-onto-epistemology

My inquiry is influenced by my positionality and the context I share with my participants. My research design follows an interpretivist approach, allowing me to conduct research in a way that acknowledged my own lived experience and context, as well as that of my participants. An interpretivist approach acknowledges how these experiences shape our individual interpretations of knowledge, and how these experiences should not be separated or omitted from my research design. An Ethico-onto-epistemology points to this entanglement of ethics, ontology and epistemology when engaging in knowledge production and reveals how ethics, being, and knowing no longer can be separated (Barad, 2007, p. 392).

3.4 Portraiture: An Ethnographic Methodology

I designed my research around the methodology of portraiture. Portraiture is an empirical, hybrid, methodology pioneered by Sara Lawrence Lightfoot and further developed with Jessica Hoffman Davis. Portraiture is a qualitative approach to gathering empirical data, through careful observation and interviews, portraits are formed. Portraiture is focused on documenting embodied experience through aesthetic presentation of research data. It offers a gentle approach to researching the lived experience of participants, by focusing inquiry on “goodness” rather than what is wrong and needs to be resolved. This focus on ‘goodness’ counteracts an often dominant focus on identifying and documenting social problems (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Within my methodology I did not explicitly focus on ‘goodness’ but instead, centered the complexity of gentleness (Finn, M. & Jeffries, J.M. 2025.) over the ANYTHING-BUT-GENTLE (Horton, 2020).

Portraiture is rooted in Geertzian ethnographic tradition. Geertz describes the ethnographer’s work as an interpretive search for meaning, involving the researcher finding a path through a “dense thicket of interpretation” (Geertz, 1973). My interpretation of the data took place through visual analysis and will be represented as six research portraits. Ethnographic methods involve direct and sustained contact with participants within the context of their daily lives and cultures (O’Reilly, 2005, p.3). I met my participants where they practice and facilitate a discussion (interview) extended over the 2.5+ hours I spend with them. Ethnographic methodologies are always reflective (Beel, D. E. and Wallace, C. D. 2014) and my engagement evolved through several reflective phases of fieldwork.

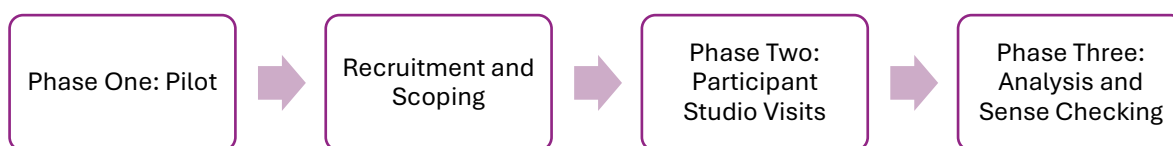
The arts-based methods I used were grounded in my studio practice. The ‘aesthetic whole’ (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997) of each portrait may vary, but when seen collectively, emergent themes may be present across all six. My intention was for all six portraits to have visual elements, they may include text, drawings or photographs, which together aim to illuminate a narrative of value and represent my participants’ practices.

3.5 The Role of Practice

This project was embedded in my creative practice, described in detail in my Artist Statement on page 10. Deep hanging out (Walmsley, B. 2018) during each studio visit, alongside semi-structured interviews, fostered an intimate, reflective dialogue between myself and my participants, in which we attempted to identify and communicate the intangible values present within their practices. It was then my responsibility to capture these interactions and translate them into portraits.

3.6 Fieldwork Design and Methods

This section details how I structured the phases of my fieldwork, briefly illustrated in the flow-chart below:



During phase two, data was gathered. Through each studio visit, my participants and I attempted to interpret their experiences and develop a shared understanding of the intangible value of their practice. This is a double-hermeneutic, in which both the participant and interviewer interpret in two hermeneutic cycles. Analysis followed by sense-checking created a third hermeneutic cycle.

This cycle is illustrated below:

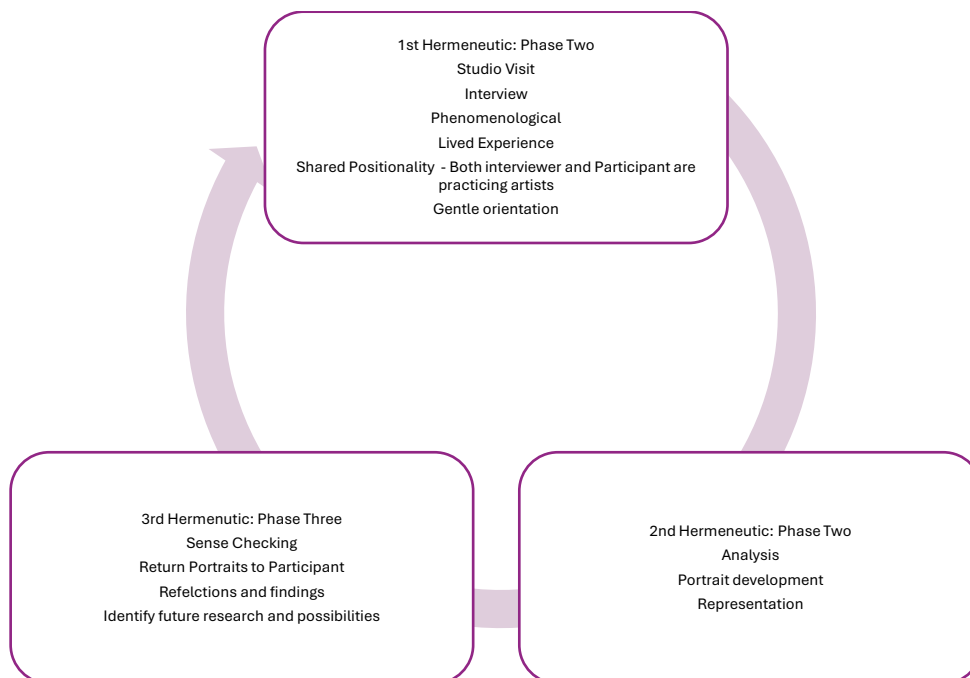


Fig 2 – Hermeneutic Cycle of Research Design, Source: Author

Phase One: Pilot

Phase one of my fieldwork involved designing and facilitating two pilot sessions. These allowed me to trial and develop my methods before engaging with my participants.

I facilitated a session for two members of my Master of Research cohort and one of my supervisors, where I trialled a set of interview questions. This happened online using Zoom. The questions I used in this session were informed by my scope of context and formed the first iteration of my semi-structured interview.

I then facilitated a studio visit with artist and researcher Kevin Boardman. Having previously collaborated, I was familiar with Kevins' practice, and he was familiar with my research through prior conversations. This provided good grounds to test and iterate my methods with a participant that understood the aims of my study.

Recruitment and Scoping

Before entering the field, I undertook a scope of context, to narrow my research focus and context. During this period, I began scoping conversation with potential participants

I chose to use snowballing, beginning with three participants from my network that I know and whose practices I was familiar with. I then asked each of my participants to recommend a practitioner whose practice they identified gentle and embodied qualities within. Snowballing meant not all of my participants were identified at the start of Phase Two, and not all scoping conversations with recommended participants did not lead to studio visits. As a result, identifying three additional participants took 2 months longer than expected.

Snowballing was also used to reduce my bias, so that participants were not invited solely from my own network and perceptions of their practices. This led to recruiting a varied group of practitioners, geographically all working across the Midlands region of the UK. Practitioners varied in age. The criteria given to my initial participants when recommending others was simple; they should identify as a contemporary creative practitioner, have experienced working part-time or full-time in the creative sector, and present qualities such as gentleness through their practice. I have reflected on my recruitment method within my discussion chapter.

Phase Two

Following my two pilot sessions, I collated my reflections, feedback and initial findings and used these to shape my studio visit and interview structure. I have detailed both Phase Two methods in this section.

Method 1: The Studio Visit

Each one-to-one participant studio lasted longer than a standard interview, up to three hours, embodying a sustained engagement approach similar to deep hanging out (Walmsley, B. 2018), alongside the use of visual research methods (VRM). Visual research methods (VRM) use visual materials as part of the process of generating evidence to explore research questions (Rose, 2013). Because VRM involve participants in the research process, they can support reflexivity and co-production, which will lead to richer data and deeper analysis.

During each studio visit, participants were invited to show me objects in their studio, photographs, works-in-progress and processes, and reflect on these through semi-structured interviews. I took a limited amount of polaroid photographs to document each studio visit. Taking photographs should be considered a collaborative process (Banks, 2001), and I was guided by the participants' suggestions and permission as to what to photograph and when.

During the visit I immersed myself in my participants practice, recording through photographs and field notes. Each participant was invited to go about their usual practice or share a hands-on demonstration of their practice with me.

These conversations naturally formed the beginnings of analysis as the participant is invited to introspect and interpret during the visit. I only audio recorded participant's answers to interview questions, rather than the full visit, to ensure the participant has opportunities to speak more openly and comfortably. I transcribed each recording by hand, to re-immense myself in the data, therefore it was not possible to transcribe 3 hours of audio from each studio visit.

Thematic Framework

To document each studio visit, I designed an iterative, thematic framework. This formed a structure for my fieldnotes, offering ease of organised notetaking during studio visits. Themes for my framework first emerged from my pilot studio visit with Kevin Boardman. After my first two studio visits, two additional themes were added.

Describe	Intentions	Challenges	Process
Communicate	Motivation	Barriers	Methods
Present	Influence	Accessibility	Aesthetics
Interpret	Connections	Constraints*	Discipline*
Quality	Value	Space	Embodied Knowledge
Attributes	Worth	Environment	Phenomena
Characteristics	Impact		Sense
Personality**	Outcome		Feeling

*Added after first studio visit.

** Added after second studio visit.

Method 2: Semi-structured Interview

The goal of each studio visit is to gently document the embodied value within my participant's practice. To structure my studio visits, I have developed a set of interview questions. These were iterated through my pilot sessions. These questions acted as prompts for our conversation, from which we participants are welcome to deviate. These prompts created a common structure for each studio visit, allowing for easier and more useful analysis.

The interview happened during the studio visit, questions were asked at intervals throughout the visit, and participant answers were audio recorded. Introspection and initial analysis by the participant may take place during the studio visit once the recording has stopped.

Final Interview Questions

To describe is to communicate what something is like or how it happens.

How do you describe your creative practice?

Intention is defined as the determination to act in a certain way.

What are the intentions that guide your creative practice?

A quality is a specific attribute or characteristic of a person or thing. Gentleness is a quality.

Do you associate gentleness with your creative practice, and do you feel that it brings value to your work?

What other qualities do you feel are present within your creative practice?

Phase Three

After collecting a variety of research data during Phase Two, a third and final phase took place.

Phase three further utilised Gillian Rose's Visual Research Methods (VRM). Rose argues that the meaning of an image is made across three different sites; the production of the image; the site of the image itself; and the audience (Rose, 2007). Working with this understanding, meaning was generated and analysis took place through the production of my six portraits and during a cycle of sense checking. I have detailed both stages in this section.

Stage 1: Visual Analysis

The visual analysis of my fieldwork took place through the lens of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA concerns how individuals make meaning of their subjective experiences, and is a process taken from phenomenology, 'the reflective study of the essence of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view' (Smith 2013, p. 1). This lens complements my methodology of portraiture, which is concerned with exploring and representing lived experience. (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, 1997).

I used my creative practice as a visual research method for interpreting and analysing the data I gathered, whilst also generating meaning through the production of each portrait.

Given that my project investigates gentle, embodied and intrinsic qualities, visual analysis offers a meaningful approach to developing a deep understanding of my participant's practice and how to represent them, since VRM generated images can make visible 'social identities, processes, practices, experiences, institutions and relations' (Rose, 2013). VRM can also reveal what is hidden, ordinary or taken for granted' (Knowles and Sweetman, 2004) and can allow participants to articulate thoughts and feelings that usually remain implicit (Rose, 2013).

The production of the portraits evolved into my own visual analysis process, crafted through my art practice, using various mediums to creatively explore the data. Through repeating this process for each portrait, it became a familiar, gentle and "multisensory interaction with the data', (Gerstenblatt, 2013. p. 299). My overall process and the resulting portraits most closely represent a series of collages. Although collage and portraiture are two distinct methods of analysis, combining collage with portraiture is not a new approach (Gerstenblatt, 2013) Similarly to other VRM and ABR, such as map-making (Powell, 2010) or graphic novels (Galman, 2009), or other methods of portraiture, such as poetic portraiture (Hill, 2005), collage portraiture has the potential to enliven interview data and produce new knowledge and interpretation (Gerstenblatt, 2013). Collage has become increasingly popular in visual and arts-based research, it can be particularly helpful in 'conceptualizing a phenomenon by fleshing out different facets in order to get a nuanced understanding of it' (Butler-Kisber and Poldma, 2010). Although not within the scope of my study to explore, Vaughan presents a variety of perspectives on collage as an exciting, 'transborder practice with epistemological implications' (Vaughan, 2005).

Below, I have briefly outlined the visual analysis process I developed and repeated to create each portrait. This process is explored in more detail in Volume Two: Portfolio of Practice. Through this process I will develop a deeper understanding of the data, and once presented back to my participant, sense checking will be used to further generate meaning from each portrait. These two stages will support my understanding of my research question.

My Portraiture-Collage Process: Step by Step

Here, I have detailed the step-by-step process I repeated to create each portrait. This process was developed through the creation of each portrait, and the steps, although loosely followed, were documented after the portraits were complete. As is often the case with practice-based research, 'the work itself secures its own voice and helps set the directions' (Eisner, 2002).

1. Revisit and transcribe interview recordings and my handwritten field notes.
2. Mark up transcriptions, identifying key quotes, repeated ideas and themes, speech patterns.
3. Intuitively create initial creative response to findings through my practice led arts-based methods.
4. Gather, arrange and collate my creative interpretations of the data.
5. Assemble creative interpretations into a single visualisation, the portrait.

Stage 2: Sense Checking

The final stage of my research process included a round of sense checking. I returned the portraits to my participant, along with a short survey to gather their reactions to seeing the portraits, and feedback on their experience of taking part in the research study. In the feedback survey I included 5 questions. These questions focus on two gaps in knowledge that were not explored in phase 2; participants' experience of my research methods; and possible future uses of the portraits. Participant feedback provided vital further insights that I have included in my discussion and analysis chapter. These insights have also informed my further research section. A copy of my feedback survey is included in my appendices.

3.7 Ethics

Prior to commencing my fieldwork, an ethics approval process was carried out through the GSA Research office. A stage one ethical approval form and risk assessment was completed in accordance with GSA's Research Ethics Code of Practice, included in my appendices. My participant information sheet and consent form were approved to gain informal consent during recruitment. These are included in my appendices.

At each phase of my fieldwork, I prioritised my participants' care and understanding during their involvement. My participant information sheet was sent to participants prior to their engagement and outlined involvement.

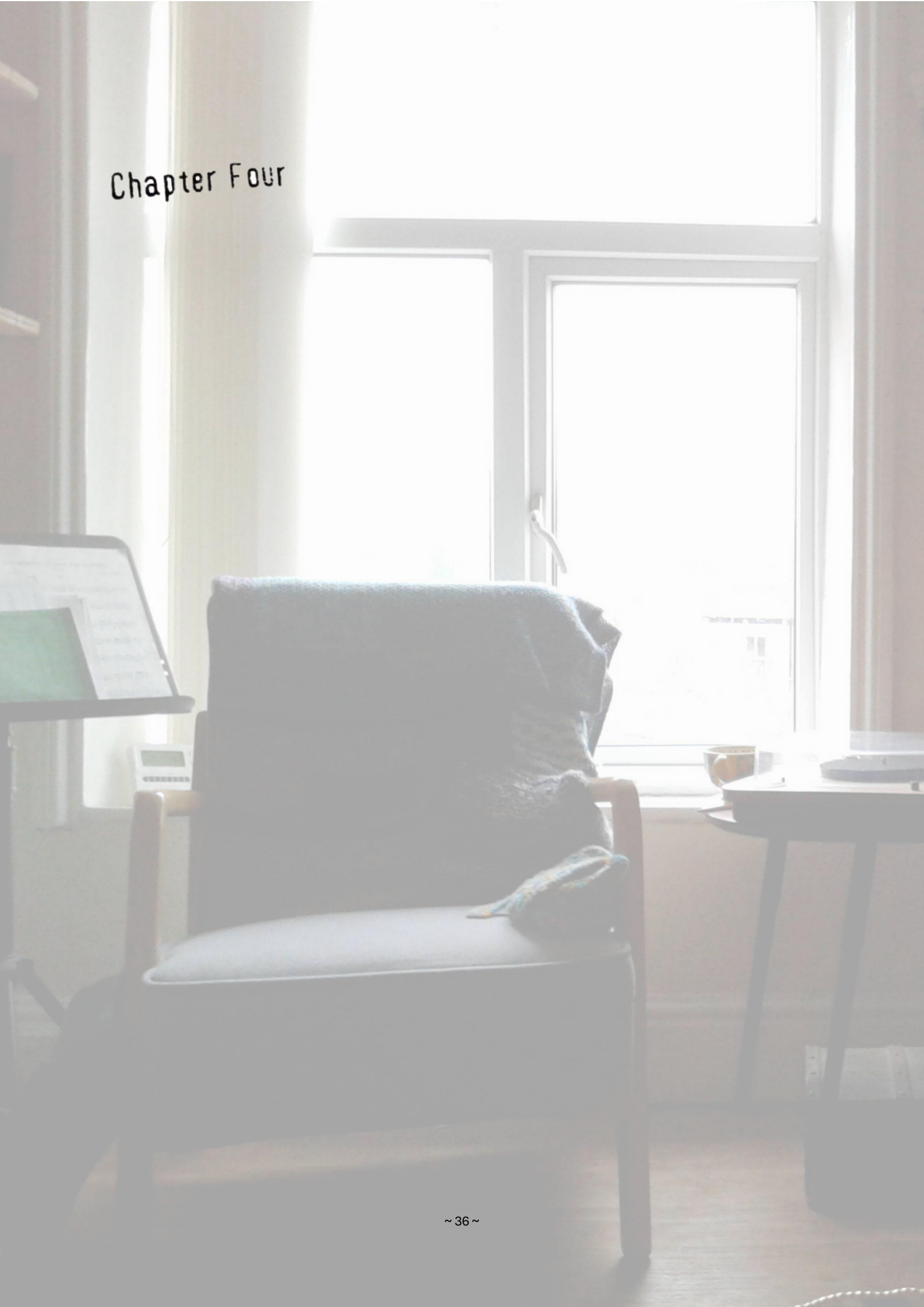
Since my project aims to represent the value of creative practice, I included the option for them to be named and credited for their contributions in this thesis. All participants signed that they would like to be named.

I have embedded sense checking into Phase Three of my engagement, offering participants an opportunity to express any concerns with their resulting portrait before publishing.

3.8 Ethico-Methodological

My research design was built around an Ethico-Methodological approach (Mers, 2024). To ensure my research ethics and methodology are entangled appropriately, I sought out an ethical approach that complimented my Methodology of Portraiture. Laura Pottinger's Gentle Methodologies offer a 'sensitive, collaborative and careful' approach to embedding ethics within my research, with a particular focus on a gentle orientation towards participants (*L. Pottinger, 2020*). I have embedded these points from Pottinger; Shape the research with the participants around how it can be of value to them; A slow pace, immerse myself. Get involved; Continual reflection on practical and ethical issues, check-ins, mutual understanding and respect; Observation. Notice emotional responses. Don't edit uncomfortable sensations and emotions; Work with participants on how the findings are shared. Analysis should happen throughout the study.

Chapter Four



4. Fieldwork

In this chapter I have presented my fieldwork in chronological order, with a brief description of what happened during recruitment and each phase two studio visit. Phases one and three are not included in this chapter. Transcripts and field notes from phases one and two can be found in my appendices, meanwhile phase three is detailed in my Analysis and Discussion chapter.

It was beyond the capacity of this thesis to detail everything that took place during my fieldwork. In this chapter I have included key moments and quotes from my field notes and audio recordings, selected based on their relevance to my research questions. Full transcripts and field notes have been included in the appendices.

4.1 Phase Two

During Phase Two of my research study, I facilitated studio visits and interviews with six participants over four and half months, between February 2025 to June 2025. I chose to recruit a small number of participants which enabled me to develop an in-depth understanding of their practice.

Studio visits took place in person. Locations varied, depending on where the participants considered their 'studio' to be. A flexible approach was necessary to meet participants' needs, accommodate caring responsibilities and work schedules.

Semi-structured interviews took place during each studio visit. With gentleness in mind, I wanted to ensure I remained present and mindful throughout each studio visit, with minimal distractions. I chose not to use a mobile phone to document these visits. Being gentle with regard to the climate, I utilised technology I already had access to. I recorded participants' responses using an analog micro tape recorder I was given at the age of seven. I documented the visit using a polaroid camera I have had for 10 years. Although the tape recorder and polaroid camera caused some technical issues, I felt that they worked in maintaining my presence. The camera, which prints on individual papers, limited the number of photos I could take, keeping me mindful of which moments I captured, these moments were discussed and chosen collaboratively with the participant. My tape recorder was mostly successful; I lost two recordings due to technological errors. I was aware of this risk, and in between audio recordings, I took notes on paper using my thematic framework.

My Participants

At this point, I would like to introduce the six contemporary creative practitioners that participated in my research study, Annie, Ryan, Sophie, Tom, Emma and Hannah. These should be referred to whenever necessary.



Annie Greatorex

Date of Studio Visit 17.02.2025

Practice: Textile artist, photographer, musician.

Location: New Mills



Ryan Boulton

Date of studio visit: 19.02.2025

Practice: Artist, Architect

Location: Nottingham

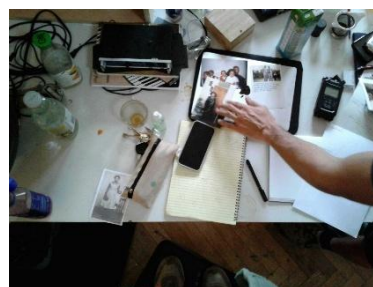


Sophie Cochrane Powell

Date of studio visit: 03.03.2025

Practice: Artist and Researcher

Location: Manchester

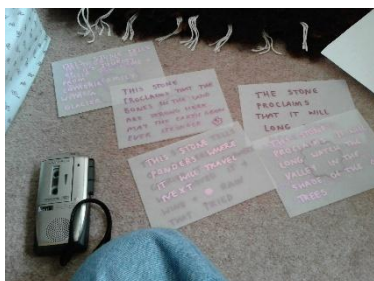


Tom Harris

Date of studio visit: 07.03.2025

Practice: Sound Artist, Musician

Location: Nottingham



Emma Plover

Date of studio visit: 14.04.2025

Practice: Artist, tarot and oracle reader

Location: Shrewsbury



Hanna Varga

Date of studio visit: 30.06.2025

Practice: Environmental artist, rope maker

Location: Edale

Photos 1-6 Polaroid photos of participant studios taken during studio visits, source: Author.

The Studio Visits

In the following section I have described what took place during each studio visit. During the studio visit I asked my participants four questions, first introduced in my methodology chapter, I will include them again here for ease of reference:

- To describe is to communicate what something is like or how it happens.
 - How do you describe your creative practice?
- Intention is defined as the determination to act in a certain way.
 - What are the intentions that guide your creative practice?
- A quality is a specific attribute or characteristic of a person or thing. Gentleness is a quality.
 - Do you associate gentleness with your creative practice, and do you feel that it brings value to your work?
 - What other qualities do you feel are present within your creative practice?

Annie Greatorex

Annie Greatorex was the first participant I recruited from my network. I've known Annie for almost 4 years; she practices from her home in New Mills in the High Peak. Her studio is a short walk from my own. Before the studio visit, I let Annie know I was walking over; she left the door unlocked for me. When I arrived, she put the kettle on for tea. We sat in armchairs in her front room, a space she regularly works in, and hosts other creatives in. Our conversation began informally. I then talked through how I intended the visit to go. Since I was already familiar with Annie's practice, I hadn't expected to learn as much as I did about her process, her personality and intentions.

The audio recording I took did not work for the first question I asked Annie, however, I had prepared myself to take notes during both the recorded parts of our conversation, as well as the non-recorded. The notes I took during this visit included some of my own thoughts and actual responses, as well as Annie's. I decided to not document myself during the studio visits after this, as it felt unnecessary and took away from my focus on my participant's experiences.



Photo 7, Annie's Living Room Polaroid Image, Source: Author.

Annie is a multidisciplinary artist, her practice spans music, textile and photography. Annie described joy as a foundational element of her practice, and with the intention of never having to live an ordinary life, she found herself moving into self-employment.

During the studio visit, Annie spoke to me about her work before self-employment, within the retail sector, where she found herself performing as a ‘*corporate white witch*’.

We spoke briefly about the town in which we both live and work, about the community of women artists here. She spoke about her own journey with confidence and competitiveness, and how gentleness has provided parameters for how she practices, how she approaches life and how she makes decisions.

‘I think gentleness does help you with that. It makes you think, am I approaching this in a way that I approve of? Do I approve of my own actions? And if I don’t maybe there’s a different way of doing this or approaching this. It helps keep yourself to account and to see yourself a bit more clearly.’

Annie also spoke about gentleness as a driving force, a force that, by creating limitations, has allowed for changes within her practice and her life, *‘weirdly I think by choosing to be a little bit more gentle, a little bit more careful and self-aware I’ve actually become more ambitious for myself’*



Photo 8, Annie’s Studio Polaroid Image, source: Author.

After I had asked Annie each question and our conversation came to a natural end, she showed me into the room where she usually works. There was a desk, a cork board with items that inspire her pinned up, a loom, chest of drawers, as well as her bed, and lots of fibers and threads.

Ryan Boulton

Ryan is a creative practitioner based in Nottingham. As I was travelling by train, he met me at the station and walked with me to his house, the place he views as his studio. Ryan was not currently living in the building; he and his partner were in the process of renovating.

During the studio visit I was given overalls to wear, and I was taken on a tour of the building. Ryan showed me the process he was currently undertaking to reclaim hundreds of floor tiles. I cleaned a couple with him, in between taking notes. The audio documentation of Ryan's response to my second question was not recorded due to a technical error and his answer was captured through fieldnotes instead.



Photo 9, Ryan's workbench Polaroid Image, source: Author.

I have known Ryan for almost seven years now, we began a collaborative zine making practice in 2019, which has evolved into our shared business, No Jobs in the Arts CIC. Despite sharing a creative practice, Ryan didn't mention our work during the studio visit, instead, he shared his current practice with me, renovating his first home with his partner in Nottingham. It was not suggested beforehand that Ryan should focus on this, his responses happened organically. Ryan spoke of the evolution of his practice, particularly since buying his house, I don't see myself painting again.'

For Ryan, the value of his practice comes from the history of it, the origins of something, the forgotten processes and the relationships we have with materials. When asked about gentleness, Ryan mentioned that gentleness for him guides his decision making, which materials he chooses to work with and how, 'if I wasn't being gentle in this particular moment with the tiles in particular or any material I work with, I probably wouldn't be working with it.'



Photo 10, Ryan arranging floor tiles Polaroid Image, source: Author.

At some point during the visit, in response to my second question, Ryan shared a mantra with me. He said it was an adage from his university days, *'trust the process, make sure that, even if you don't know where you're going or within something, material research exploration can take you to where you need to be. Going into the unknown and just trusting that things will work out in some way shape or form that kind of level of uncomfort is just the position you're in.'*

Sophie

Sophie works from home. When I arrived, she offered me a cup of tea. Sophie and her partner share a creative space in their flat. Their studio room was full of artwork, equipment, instruments, tools, objects and ephemeral. My tape recorder sat on Sophie's Adana during the studio visit. I met Sophie a year before the visit through a scoping conversation about my research at an event for female creatives. We have a shared interest in letterpress and printmaking, so our conversation began easily.

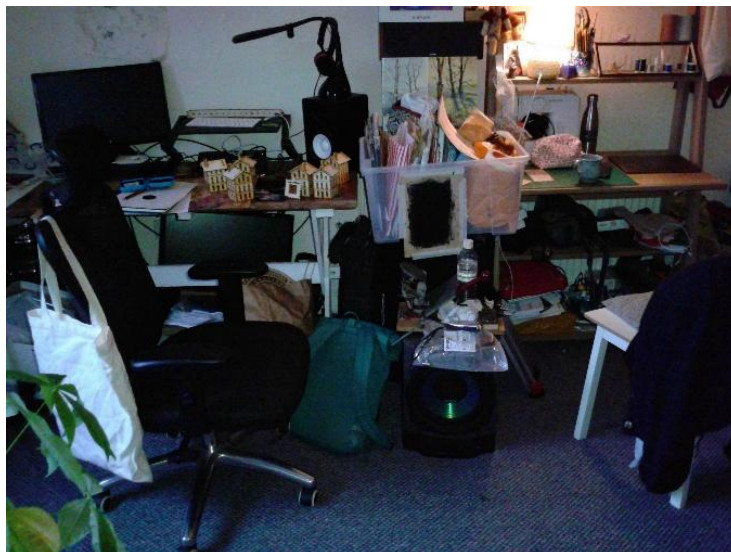


Photo 11, Sophie's studio, shared with her partner, Polaroid Image, source: Author.

She talked me through her journey from living very minimally and often throwing away work that didn't turn out how she had intended, to filling her space with objects that inspire her and honouring the work she makes, rather than moving on quickly to something else. Sophie's practice, amongst other qualities, is a caring practice, 'care for myself, in the way that I do things and do work... care in materials that I use I think there's a financial constraint in that as well but I do try to use sustainable materials... caring and being gentle in the things I depict as well... I think there's something very caring in taking away the idea of there being a final product'

Sophie also spoke to me about her experience of living with OCD. Sophie had been diagnosed with OCD a year and a half before the studio visit, around the same time that she began investing more time into her creative practice and set up her platform, Analogish. For Sophie, 'gentleness to me is like how I treat myself within what I do and the practice how I treat the materials I'm using. I think that I, someone with OCD, I have like intrusive thoughts about self-harm... so a year and half ago I started using the implements I find difficult working with, and I found that important to do in a gentle way'. In my field notes from the studio visit, I had made a note of something Sophie had said, that I hadn't recorded, 'I need to trust myself'.

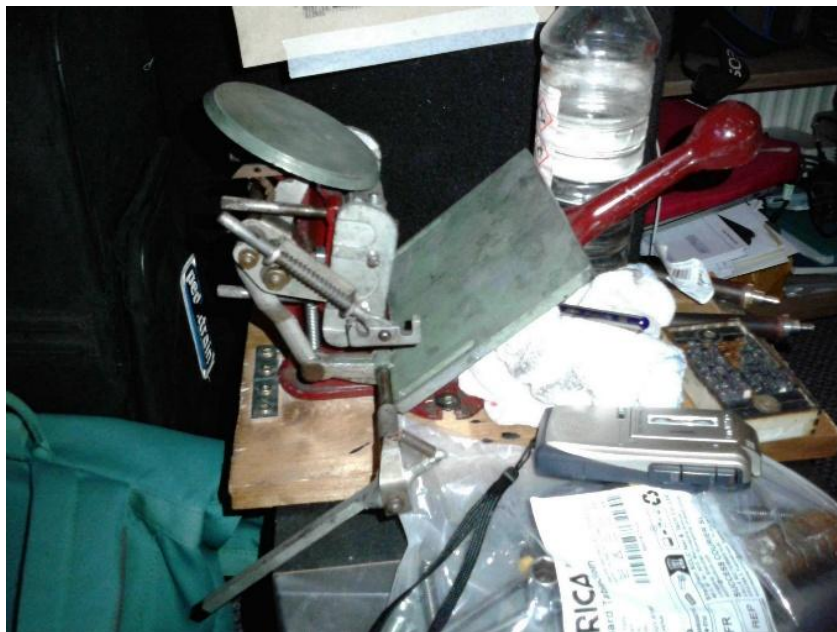


Photo 12, Sophie's adana printing press Polaroid Image, source: Author.

We spoke for around two and half hours, after which she gave me a brief tour of her desk, 'I keep things in my space that bring me joy or warmth.' Sophie showed me a plant, a painting, a leaf, and a book, 'it's a present for my mum, but I'll read it first.'

Tom Harris

Before I left my studio visit with Ryan Boutlbee, I asked him if he could recommended a creative practitioner, for whom gentleness was an important aspect of their work. He answered immediately, 'oh, well you have to talk to Tom'. Ryan passed on my details and Tom got in touch to book a date for us to meet. I knew straight away that the project had resonated with him. This was my first studio visit with a practitioner I had never met; I was nervous. I visited him at his

shared studio in Primary where Tom described the energy, rhythms and roots of his practice. Primary is an artist-led building in Nottingham, and a National Portfolio Organisation and home to over 50 artists.

On my arrival we ordered drinks from Primary's café, whilst waiting for his coffee and my tea we spoke about my research. We found common ground in a shared experience when I discovered Tom had also undertaken an MRES and the conversation began to flow easily.

From the Café we walked through the building to the studio Tom shares with two other creatives. The space was large, and he mentioned that the three of them rarely cross paths. His area was filled with equipment and materials, wooden and metal panels, wires and speakers, and a piano. We sat at his desk together and I asked Tom my questions. Tom checked in with me throughout our conversation, gauging whether we were on the same page. It came naturally to him, to ask if I knew what he meant. I did.

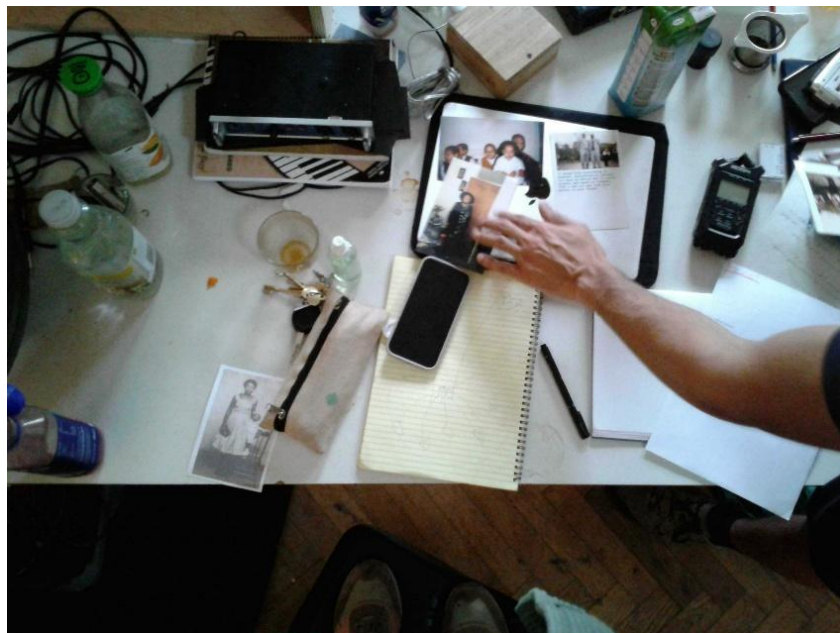


Photo 13, Tom's desk and family photo Polaroid Image, source: Author.

During the studio visit, our conversation spanned Tom's journey into the creative industry, from connecting to his ancestors, marginalisation and creative industry challenges, to work based injuries and hearing problems. Our conversation touched on the spiritual, energetic, embodied and rhythmic elements of his practice, and the challenges he has faced that have shifted his ways of working.

Tom described creativity as a source of positivity in his life, that grew into a profession. His practice is physical, 'it's wires, its cables, its big speakers, its big instruments', but also embodied, 'it's a nervous system thing'. For him, gentleness acts as a container. 'Once I've plugged everything in my brain and body will go into a certain frame of mind that is very loving. But in that lovingness, it's also prepared to be ferocious, be passionate, to be intense to be... whatever it needs to be, but that happens through the container of gentleness... when you've set up your base, then your contained to be whatever you need to be in that moment, all within the loving, compassionate container of that gentleness, you know?'

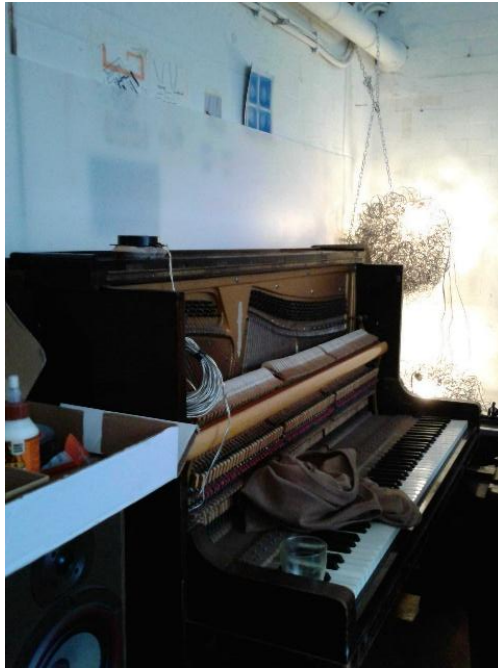


Photo 14, corner of Tom's studio with piano Polaroid Image, source: Author.

After speaking for some time, he showed me some photos, some printed and some on his laptop. He flicked through pictures until he found one that showed the feeling of pure 'joy' he had whilst performing, a concept Tom referred to multiple times throughout the visit.

Emma Plover

Prior to meeting Emma, I received two recommendations that she was a gentle person, and I had to speak to her about my research. Firstly, from Kevin Boardman, the participant for my pilot phase, and secondly from a lecturer at Staffordshire University whilst I was visiting as a guest lecturer. Kevin introduced us over email, and we arranged a phone call. Emma was due to leave a few days after our call to travel abroad, so a month passed before we could meet.

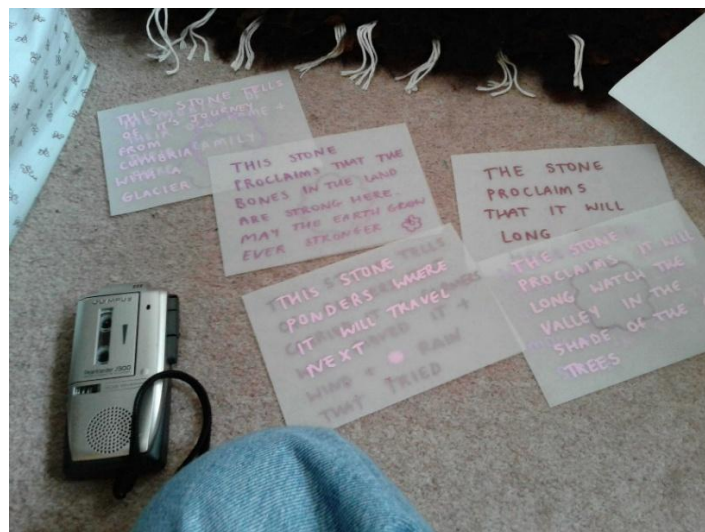


Photo 15, handwritten notes by Emma Polaroid Image, source: Author.

Emma met me at the train station; from there we travelled back to her home. She made us hot drinks, and we went upstairs to sit on the floor of her bedroom. Her room was full of found, made, gifted and collected objects and artworks. She had multiple boxes of tarot cards stacked by her desk; she offered to read mine. I agreed, my cards included multiple cards from the suit of wands. She asked me if I was a libra, I confirmed. I began the interview, and during our conversation she showed me various artworks that she had made.

For Emma, gentleness is a quality that she has found others have often seen in her or her work. Emma's practice has evolved over time, during and after university and the pandemic, from living in Manchester to moving back home to Shrewsbury. Our conversation spanned creative practice, roller derby, cow herding, confidence, identity, different perspectives and energies. Emma spoke about being gentle with herself, being courageous, and becoming brave enough to be her 'true, actual self'.

Emma spoke passionately about energy, in particular, the energy held by the materials she works with. She told me about a shawl she had made for a friend, which changed throughout the making process. *'There was a moment there like a moment of choice can I relinquish my idea of what I wanted to make and like make it so that this is what it wanted to be. I think as well when you work with natural materials it has its own energy in it and sometimes, you're just the guiding force like you're not necessarily the creative way your just sort of guiding the idea and I think that's really cool.'*



Photo 16, Emma with the tree behind her house Polaroid Image, source: Author.

After the interview we walked out into the fields behind her house to visit a tree Emma has a close relationship with. Before I left, we ate lunch together.

Hanna Varga

Hanna Varga was recommended to me by Annie, 'she also has a gentle practice and works in that area between craft and art.' I emailed Hanna, and sent messages, it took her a while to respond as she had been away on a pilgrimage. We arranged to meet at Edale Station, from which we would walk up to her studio. On the way there we stopped at a small chapel, Hanna took me inside and showed me a large textile artwork, made by herself and the local community.



Photo 17, Hanna's collected plant fibres Polaroid Image, source: Author

Hanna's studio is in a wooden barn near her home, the room was full of found fibres and foraged plants, she showed me some rope dragonflies she had been making with young people. The temperature this day was roughly 30 degrees and the barn was hot. We decided to find some shade by a river instead. Hanna held my tape recorder during moments we recorded, the river was loud, and a train ran over head occasionally. Hanna braided plant fibres the whole time we spoke. She had prepared them ready for our meeting, dried and then rehydrated ready for rope making.

Hanna spoke to me about how her practice has changed. Prior to 2019 Hanna was working with bronze, with exhibitions every month and features in publications, she had little time to reflect and rest. This contributed to burnout that led her to put a hold on everything, with some projects from 2019 still unfinished. This difficult time led Hanna to reassess her work life balance, and her understanding of success, for herself and for her child. At some point after, she moved to Edale and began ropemaking.

Hanna spoke to me in detail about her current rope making and foraging practice, she braided grass together whilst we spoke. She told me about a book that has inspired her practice, *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Within the book, 'the author writes about the native indigenous code of conduct it's called the honourable harvest to my knowledge that's the first time its been written down because it exists in oral practice'. The honourable harvest

contains instructions for foraging, 'never take the first, never take the last, ask permission before you take anything and um only take what you need and leave some for others'.

A word that Hanna had said had stuck with me, 'abundance'. Abundance is a word I have explored in my own personal practice, to mean too much, with a negative connotation. Hanna spoke of abundance with such hope, that there is always enough, as long as we don't take too much:

'this is the thing I can name definitely that reshaped my ideas around reciprocity and how I am being in this world and when I encounter plant fibres for example I collect a lot of what grows around here, I collect docs, I collect grasses, I collect sometimes bark of trees I collect rushes I collect ferns, brambles, I mean I can name so many things I collect around here. However, I never take all of everything I find, I always leave a lot'



Photo 18, Hanna braiding plant fibres Polaroid Image, source: Author.

Hanna had to leave early for a writing workshop, so my visit was cut short. I made my way back through fields and country roads, reflecting on our conversation.

4.2 Phase Three: Returning the Portraits

Once all portraits were complete, I considered how to return these to my participants. I undertook informal conversations with two of my participants and asked them how they would prefer to receive the portraits and give feedback on the portrait, and their wider involvement.

Time constraints meant additional visits wouldn't be possible within the scope of the study, and I didn't want to take up more of my participant's time that they had not initially signed up to offer. I decided to post the portraits to my participants, along with a letter and questionnaire. These can be seen in my appendices.

As feedback was given via questionnaire, and not during in-person fieldwork, I will reflect on this phase in greater detail in Chapter 5, Analysis and Discussion.

Chapter Five



5. Analysis and Discussion

My practice-based research study has evolved through artistic intuition, hands-on making and iteration. Through this exploration I have considered; first, whether my practice and methods have been successful at capturing gentle and embodied values; and second, how this approach could offer an alternative method for documenting and evidencing value.

This section explores the insights and findings that emerged through phases two and three of my study. As with any iterative process, my research evolved throughout each phase. Whilst undertaking my visual analysis, despite semantic and methodological insights emerging, it became clear that an element of my research was still missing. In response, I designed stage two of phase three, my feedback survey, as an opportunity for sense-checking with my participants, through which, contextual findings came to light. This has significantly shifted the weight of this chapter, and as such I have provided a brief overview of insights gained through phase two, visual analysis, and a longer discussion on my findings from Phase 3.

5.1 Phase Two Insights

During Phase 2 of my research study, I facilitated six studio visits and undertook.

Participants for my studio visits were recruited through snowballing, with three participants invited from my network, and three recommended to me by my participants. For this project, snowballing was an appropriate approach for recruitment. A broader recruitment method wouldn't have been possible within the timeframe of my project, having a smaller group of participants meant I could spend longer with each person, and greater attention when interpreting the data I gathered. Some research bias was inevitable when selecting participants from my own network, I accounted for this by using snowballing. To ensure I spoke to three participants whose work I was unfamiliar with, I asked my participants to recommend the next person I spoke to. This significantly reduced my bias as to what I considered a 'gentle practice' as my participants introduced me to artists that, before undertaking this study, I may not have considered having gentle practices based on my own preconceived ideas of gentleness.

A larger group of participants may have led to more data, and more rigorous insights. I did struggle to maintain participants engagement, however longitudinal engagement requires more time from participants, and as they were unpaid, there may have been less incentive or accessibility for people to offer more time to provide feedback. Phase 3 was added on after informal feedback with two participants; not all participants were expecting to have to offer a response on receiving their portrait. In reflection, this should have been built in from the start to set expectations.

Following recruitment and studio visits, I then undertook a process of visual analysis through portraiture making. I have mapped my process of visual analysis in Volume Two, my Portfolio of Practice. Please refer to Volume Two, before continuing with this section.

I will give you a moment to explore my portfolio before continuing.

Have you had a look? Let's carry on.

Through my visual analysis process, insights emerged and two findings have developed:

1. A gentle and interpretive method of analysis through portrait making
2. An emergent lexicon for gentleness and creative practice.

A gentle and interpretive method of analysis through portrait making

Through this study I have used my studio-based practice to develop my own method of visual analysis through portrait making. My step-by-step method has been detailed in plain text in my methodology and visually mapped out within my portfolio of practice.

Using this method, I produced six participant portraits. Following the completion of all six participant portraits, I applied my method of visual analysis to a more abstract concept, to understand if the same process could be applied to a project, as well as a person's practice. I successfully created a portrait of this research study, which can be seen in my portfolio of practice.

An emergent lexicon for gentleness and creative practice

An emergent lexicon for gentleness and creative practice has emerged through the process of iterating my thematic framework and undertaking visual analysis to interpret my participants practices and interview responses. This lexicon should not be considered exhaustive, due to the limited nature of my study, having worked with a group of only six participants. That being said, the value of individuals' voices and practices should not be disregarded, and the aim of my research was to render these experiences gently, made possible through extended time spent with each individual, that would not have been possible with a larger group.

Throughout the six studio visits, gentleness was considered within the context of; personal and artistic identity; the foundations, intentions and transformational moments that shape our practice and identity; the significance and complexity of gentleness in practice; the blurred line between creative practice and work, and the challenges and barriers this creates; community, collaboration and shared experiences.

Through these contextual lenses, I have identified a group of key terms associated with gentleness, used by my participants during studio visits:



Fig 3 key terms associated with gentleness used by participants during studio visits, source: Author.

These frequently used terms offer a representation of my participants collective understanding of gentleness. These terms may offer useful starting points for future research.

Beyond these key terms, through my analysis I also uncovered five common, more developed ideas on gentleness and how it exists within contemporary creative practice. I have summarised these below.

1. Choosing to practice gently is a deliberate, proactive choice.

Three of my participants, Annie, Ryan and Sophie, described gentleness as powerful and foundational. They described gentleness as either a choice, or something which guided their decision making. Annie described the choice to be gentle as a ‘definite’ and ‘deliberate’ choice.

2. Gentleness is a container for creative practice, through which decision making is supported. The questions we ask and the parameters we set for ourselves can guide and shape our creative work.

My participant Tom likened gentleness to a container, rather than a guiding force, through gentleness we are ‘contained to be whatever you need to be in that moment, all within the loving, compassionate container of that gentleness’. Ryan echoed a similar sentiment, if I wasn’t being gentle in this particular moment with the tiles in particular or any material I work with, I probably wouldn’t be working with it.’

3. Gentleness in terms of process, occurs when we allow outcomes to occur organically, in collaboration and with compassion for the materials we’re using or for who we’re working with.

My participants, Emma, Sophie and Ryan spoke about gentleness and process, and allowing our materials and collaborators to guide our practices. Emma described this process as an act of relinquishing control.

4. Being gentle with ourselves, with others or within our creative practice can allow for transformation to take place.

My participants, Hanna and Tom both mentioned moments in their practice where they had to stop and re-evaluate due to burnout to workplace injuries. Hanna shared with me the moment she hit burnout, 'I had to put a hold on them when I reached burnout. I felt I had to drop everything...It was very painful to do that, and very necessary... I feel I became much more aware and much more sensitive to my own needs and sensitive also to the needs of others and also what I wanted to model to others'.

5. A gentle approach to creative practice centres around trust; trust in oneself; trust in our process; and trust in our materials, particularly when the process or outcome is unclear or even uncomfortable.

Much of the data I gathered touched on trust. Ryan's practice in particular highlighted how important trust is for working gently with materials, 'trust the process, make sure that, even if you don't know where you're going or within something, material research exploration can take you to where you need to be. Sophie spoke about materials and trust from a different perspective, 'gentleness to me is like how I treat myself within what I do and the practice, how I treat the materials I'm using. I think that I, someone with OCD, I have like intrusive thoughts about self harm... so a year and half ago I started using the implements I find difficult working with, and I found that important to do in a gentle way'.

5.2 Phase Three Findings

Phase 3 was my opportunity to return the portraits and ask for feedback from my participants on their overall experience of engaging in my study. Three of my six participants completed and returned the feedback form. My other three participants thanked me for receiving their portrait but did not return the feedback form for various reasons, including needing time off from their practice. I acknowledge and want to reflect here that the time between engagement and sense-checking should have been shorter, which may have resulted in continuous engagement from more participants.

I have summarised the feedback responses below, highlighting either the most common or the most contextually significant answers. Each feedback form can be read in full in my appendices.

Questionnaire feedback summary

This summary pulls together questionnaire responses from three of my participants, Annie, Ryan and Sophie. Overall, participants described the process as enjoyable, comfortable, reflective and in-depth.

Being involved in this research study gave my participants an opportunity to focus on their practice, and how they communicate it. This created opportunities for reflection, offered unexpected moments of realisation and validation. On her questionnaire, Sophie described the

iterative process she was involved in as: Self-reflection > researcher interpretation > self-interpretation through researchers' interpretation. Participants described the portrait as a reminder of their involvement and remarked on the importance of talking about their practice, and how rare this opportunity can be. Sophie wrote that she felt I took the time to understand what she was saying, gave her enough time to think and reflect during our conversation.

Sophie described feeling 'confronted' by the portrait, but in a good way. She wrote that seeing the portrait was eye opening and described feeling 'emotional' after the studio visit and after receiving the portrait, she continued, 'I think I struggle with imposter syndrome sometimes, so it was really valuable to talk to Charlie about my work and to see her interpretation of it.' I was able to give Sophie her portrait in person and witnessed this emotional response. It felt rare to feel such connection with another artist, I felt honored to have captured something that resonated in this way. Annie shared these feelings, remarking that 'talking about my practice helped me to see how far I've come and to share thoughts with a fellow artist made me think more about the future'. Creating opportunities for practitioners to consider the future of their practice is essential (Ravetz & Wright 2020)

Sophie felt that without the portrait and the documentation she wouldn't have remembered she'd said anything like that, and Ryan remarked that it's 'rare to encounter a conversation with someone willing to question and explore your work and practice in such detail'. These are both significant issues highlighted within my scope of context. In-depth conversations may be taking place in informal settings, between creative peers, but they are less common in academia and evaluation. Those present can see it [practice/value/benefit], but unless captured, there is a risk this may disappear (*Centre for Cultural Value, 2025*). Annie also felt the portrait embodied an aspect of their practice that occasionally feels lost, which brings to mind the definition of gentleness Dofourmantelle presents, as an 'emotion of which we have lost the name' (Dofourmantelle 2013). Perhaps practices of 'gentle rendering' (Pottinger, 2020) would offer opportunities to capture this data that is often lost. This feedback also highlights how timely the issue of capturing intrinsic and embodied value is, these often-overlooked aspects of creative practice are at risk of being forgotten and lost. Defining value is essential, and that which remains undefined, unnamed or mis-named may be misconceived or overlooked (Matarasso. 1996).

Participants unanimously agreed that an exhibition would be a good way to present the portraits. When asked about how they would use the portraits themselves, Ryan said he will keep it for personal reflection, he felt that he couldn't share it as evidence of his practice as it was someone else's work, but he was interested in the methodological (Mers, 2024) offerings, in particular how this process could be expanded, could it be reversed, could two creative practitioners interview each other, could an artist develop their own self portrait through a similar reflective process. 'Personally, I am most interested in the ethnographic findings and learning more about how visual documentation supports research practice and how this could be mapped to other disciplines' – Ryan Boulbee, Research Participant.

Sophie responded that she would frame it and display it in her studio space at home. This is interesting in relation to Ryan's feedback, that it would be worth considering where the portraits should be exhibited. He questioned whether the portraits should be exhibited in the artists' studios, where they emerged. Overall, my participants feedback suggests the portraits became

quite a private object, they became a gift, and a keep sake. Annie was the only participant to respond that the portrait would become part of their artist statement, she felt it was ‘an accessible way of understanding my practice that doesn’t just rely on words.’

My participants’ feedback highlighted my methods’ success with drawing their attention to embodied and gentle aspects of their practice, aspects they wouldn’t have otherwise considered as having value. Annie also remarked that her involvement gave her a feeling of purpose, through reflecting on her process and philosophy, she came to the realisation that her practice has direction. The 2018 Cultural value scoping project report found that many people see evaluation ‘as a burden, rather than something which helps them to learn and improve. This is a missed opportunity, for both the arts and culture sector and the cultural value knowledge base’. My participants responses highlighted the enjoyable nature of their involvement in my study, which highlights questions around why current value and impact measurement systems are felt by many as a ‘burden’, when they can be opportunities of reflection and validation.

Key findings from phase 3

- My ethnographic methods of engagement, studio visits and semi-structured interviews offered participants:
 - A comfortable and enjoyable experience.
 - A space for self-reflection.
 - A structure through which to share their practice that felt in depth and unhurried.
 - A sense of validation and acknowledgement.
- Portraiture is a successful methodology for capturing gentle, intrinsic and embodied aspects of an individual’s creative practice. Once returned to the participants, the portraits served as a reminder of participants’ involvement in the process, and offered moments of revelation, confrontation and personal reflection.
- Opportunities for contemporary creative practitioners to talk about their practices offer important benefits to individuals but can be rare.
- Further research is needed on the role of the portrait and whether it could be a useful artefact for evidencing value to those outside of the study. Survey responses presented mixed opinions on whether participants would share the portrait for this purpose, but participants unanimously agreed that they would refer to it as a tool for self-reflection. A larger study with more participants could present alternative uses, as well as an opportunity to explore gentleness as a larger phenomena within creative practice.

Chapter Six



6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have addressed how successfully my research study has answered my research questions. I have also considered what further research my emerging insights and findings could contribute to.

6.1 Addressing my research questions

How can practice-based research make visible the value of gentleness, and other embodied and intrinsic qualities, present in contemporary creative practice?

Through this study I successfully created six participant portraits, plus an additional portrait of my research project. These portraits were created using a visual analysis process that I developed during phase two of my study. This process was informed by a methodology of portraiture, and visual analysis methods, detailed in my methodology chapter. My approach is non-metric and supports a reflective approach, through which individuals shared and acknowledged the intrinsic value of their practices. Feedback from my participants suggests that these portraits successfully made visible the value of intrinsic and embodied qualities, such as gentleness, within their practices. I have discussed findings from these feedback forms in more detail in section 5.2 of my thesis. A key finding, evidenced from feedback from my participant Annie, who felt her portrait embodied an aspect of their practice that has previously felt lost, aligns with Dofourmantelle's definition of gentleness, as an 'emotion of which we have lost the name'. This further demonstrates that research approaches which gently render (Pottinger, 2020) data offer opportunities to capture these qualities that are often lost.

Though small, with only six participants, my study gathered a vast amount of data on value, creative practice and gentleness. Participants were comfortable and studio visits and interviews worked well to support this gathering. I have completed this research having gained a deep understanding of how the six creative practitioners understood gentleness within their own practices. Unexpected revelations around gentleness' impact, intentions, and others were also made. Conversations during studio visits naturally deviated and offered practitioners a space to talk about their practices, space that is rare, but essential (Ravetz & Wright 2020). This led to various contextual insights on adjacent subjects to my topic, including accessibility, marginalisation, transformation.

Finally, my participants' responses highlighted the enjoyable nature of their involvement in my study. The portraits became a private object; a gift; and a keepsake. This raises questions around why current value and impact measurement systems are felt by many as a 'burden' (AHRC, 2018), when they can be positive opportunities of reflection and validation when undertaken gently and with care for the participant (Pottinger, 2020).

How might the practice of portraiture provide an alternative approach to challenge existing industry frameworks for analysing and evidencing artistic value?

With further development as an alternative approach for capturing intrinsic value, my portrait making process offers a method that successfully evidences and analyses a value that is difficult to measure (Llorenç O'Prey et al., 2022), and as a result, is often missed by existing industry frameworks (Centre for Cultural Value, 2025). Although I would not consider my method to be a replacement to existing industry frameworks, it may offer a pertinent, alternative approach.

My literature review highlighted that no single existing framework perfectly captures intrinsic, artistic or cultural value, and I believe a shift in how we value creative practice is needed urgently, to increase the inclusivity of our sector and reduce the precarity of practice highlighted in section 2.4 of my thesis. Narrative focused approaches may support this shift, by offering deeper insights into the work and lives of contemporary creative practitioners, insights which are often overlooked in favour of economic and social impacts (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016). My narrative focused approach offers an alternative to existing industry frameworks for value measurement, with a focus on storytelling over measurement, to reposition the individual at the heart of inquiry (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016).

Recent years have seen a growing interest in arts-based methods for 'capturing data and understanding which might escape more traditional methods' (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016)' and my findings offer insights into arts-based methods which require further research. My participant Ryan wrote on his feedback questionnaire that he was interested in learning more about 'how visual documentation supports research practice and how this could be mapped to other disciplines'. On her questionnaire, Sophie described the process as: Self-reflection > researcher interpretation > self-interpretation through researchers' interpretation. This iterative process is something I would like to develop further. I am particularly interested in how this method of portrait making and visual analysis could be used in other contexts, for example, capturing the experiences of those with lived experience of invisible illnesses. I have discussed areas for further research in the following section.

6.2 Further Research

Portraiture and visual analysis offer many opportunities for capturing value in the creative and cultural sector, but further research is needed. For my own method to be applied by others, further work is required which was beyond the scope of my thesis. I would like to apply my method to other contexts, to better understand how it can function as a narrative tool for capturing intrinsic value. I am interested in undertaking this work, and developing principles of application for my method, that could be understood more deeply and then followed by others.

My participant feedback evidenced that my approach created an opportunity for my participants to consider the future of their practices (Ravetz & Wright 2020) and provided validation for the work they were undertaking, 'as an artist, it is rare to encounter a conversation with someone willing to question and explore your work and practice in such detail', Ryan

Boulton. With this in mind, my portraiture method may be particularly useful as a tool for self-validation, if developed as a framework for self-portraiture. Within the feedback given in phase three, there were some tensions around the portrait being created by someone else. This raises the question of whether it would have been more useful if I had acted as a mediator, prompting my participants to draw out the gentle or embodied elements of their practice that may have been lost or overlooked. After which they could have been given the resources to develop a self-portrait. I would like to take this work forward and develop my method as a service I offer within my own creative practice.

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Appendices

Participant Information Sheet

About me and the project

My name is Charlie Collins, I am a student on the Master of Research programme at The Glasgow School of Art. I am undertaking a research project exploring the quality of gentleness, and its role within the practices of 8 professional, creative practitioners. This exploration aims to co-define gentleness and position it as a valued quality within contemporary creative practices.

Gentleness is a complex, multi-faceted value that may present differently across practices. I consider a gentle practice to be one that is built on deliberation, through slow and careful decision making, with principles such as empathy, humility and sensitivity at its core. Gentleness is a value I feel is present within many aspects of my own practice; in my responsive and collaborative ways of working as an artist, producer, zine-maker; in the adaptations I create for my access needs when delivering creative public activity; and my interest in low impact artmaking and use of sustainable materials and process.

Why have you been invited to take part and what are the benefits?

You have been invited to take part in this research study as you have; a professional creative practice; identified gentleness or other gentle qualities within your practice and; expressed an interest in reflecting on the values that underpin your practice and the intentions behind your ways of working. Participation in this research project is completely voluntary and participants can choose to leave the project at any point without having to give a reason. If you choose to withdraw from the project your data will be destroyed and will no longer be included in the study.

What will your participation involve and when will this take place?

For my research study I will be undertaking fieldwork, centring around one-to-one studio visits with each participant. This visit will be an opportunity for me to develop a deeper understanding of your practice, its values and qualities.

A studio visit can be arranged at a time of your convenience. During the visit, you are invited to participate in an interview and share a demonstration of your practice with me, through which we will explore aspects of your practice and reflect on the qualities and values that underpin your intentions, methods and ways of working.

I will record the interview using an audio recorder and with your permission, gather some visual documentation of your studio through photographs and drawings. A studio visit will last no

more than 2.5 hours. In advance of the studio visit, I will send you the interview topic guide and you will have the opportunity to discuss any participation preferences you may have.

Please also let me know of any concerns you have regarding your involvement in the study, or the studio visit prior to your participation. This will allow me to identify any additional risks that may arise during the project and mitigate these in advance. For example, I have identified that I will be conducting the 1-1 studio visit as a lone researcher, as such I have agreed to update my project supervisors on arrival and after leaving your studio.

Due to the introspective nature of the studio visit and interview, all participants of this study will benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their practice. If you choose to be identified in any published material, you will benefit from documentation of your practice being included in published material, and the possibility of developing new professional connections as a result of the study.

What will happen after the studio visit?

After each studio visit, I will transcribe the recordings before deleting the audio recordings. Each participant will then be given the opportunity to review their interview transcript prior to its inclusion within my research data set. This will give you an opportunity to amend or redact any details you choose.

What you choose to share with me during the studio visits may be used in my thesis. In the consent form you can express if you would like to be anonymized or remain identifiable in the research.

How will your data be stored?

All personal data and research data gathered in this research project will be securely stored in a password protected file on my computer, accessible only by myself and my supervisory team Marianne McAra and Cara Broadley. At the end of the research project personal data will be securely destroyed.

The research data is kept for a maximum of 10 years. This is to account for future publishing and for teaching purposes. This research project strictly adheres to GDPR and data protection policy. I will be gathering qualitative data during this research project, this will include observations, transcripts, photos, drawings and creative artefacts. This qualitative data will be used to uncover findings and support the positioning of gentleness within creative practice. This data may be presented as a publication or exhibited alongside being published as a thesis.

What are the next steps you need to take to join the research study?

- Take the time to read through this participant information sheet and ask any questions you may have about the study.

- Please also read through the consent form, complete and return it to me. Consent forms can either be completed digitally or printed out, completed and photographed.
- If you have access or participation requirements or preferences, please let me know. These can be shared informally via email or phone call or by using an access rider. See: <https://weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/creating-your-own-access-rider/>
- Following this, I will contact you to arrange a plan for your engagement in the research study.

Who should you contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me via: c.collins1@student.gsa.ac.uk

What if you have further questions, or if something goes wrong?

Please get in touch with my supervisor Dr Marianne McAra: m.mcara@gsa.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research. Please keep this sheet for future reference

Participant Consent Form

Research Consent Form



Research Project Title:
Positioning Gentleness within Contemporary Creative Practice: An exploration of intentions, qualities, methods and language.

Lead Researcher:
Charlie Collins

Contact Details:
C.Collins1@student.gsa.ac.uk
07903302955

*Please initial
boxes*

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet for the above study;
2. I have had an opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily;
3. I agree to being audio recorded for the research. I understand that recordings will be transcribed and then deleted, and that the transcription will be anonymised if I request this below;
4. I agree to the researcher taking photographs of me and my work environment, to inform their research; I understand that the images will be stored and managed securely and confidentially as research data;
5. I agree to photographs of me and my work environment being made publicly available in publications, presentations, reports, dissertation or thesis for the purposes of research and teaching, and to potentially be used to promote the research project (e.g. online); I understand that if I indicate that I wish to remain anonymous below, I will not be identifiable in any images which are made public;
6. I agree to take part in the above study;
7. I am happy to be contacted about any future studies and agree that my personal contact details can be retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018;
8. I agree and would like to be identified by name in any published outcomes or outputs from the study. I understand that if I leave this box blank, my contributions will be anonymised in any material that is made public, and that choosing to remain anonymous will not affect my eligibility to participate in this study.

*Complaints about the conduct of this research should be raised with: Marianne Mcara,
m.mcara@gsa.ac.uk*

Research Consent Form



_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

*Complaints about the conduct of this research should be raised with: Marianne Mcara,
m.mcara@gsa.ac.uk*

Pilot Transcript: Kevin Boardman

Speakers: **Charlie Collins**, **Kevin Boardman**

Question 1

Kevin Boardman:

Answering it to you maybe a lot more easier than like, answering that question for like, the white like a gallery space, for example, once the work is shown, describe the work, it'd be like, I find that quite difficult sometimes. But if you just said your practice in general, in conversational terms, I kind of kind of feel more comfortable explaining it. And it's not just because it's an easier thing. I just think people can not necessarily get it, but besides, it's a conversation. It can follow on to a series of questions, and those questions may help me describe the work, if that makes sense.

So, as I mentioned, with drawing like that, certain process of drawing, what you don't draw, what you do draw, you discover. Suppose there's an element of don't necessarily, don't do what you know, do what you discover, and you think you might need to do something you know, yes, but it's not like a clear cut conclusion. So, I don't start with an aim to go. I'm going to make this at the end of it, and then the process is more figuring out, figuring out how to do it to achieve that goal.

Usually, the process is to find out a goal with obviously certain loose aims. Maybe or even developing questions. But again, it goes back to, where's that from? It could be from a certain encounter, interaction, something I find interesting. And then it follows on, if that makes sense.

Charlie Collins:

I find it interesting that you haven't described anything visual.

Kevin Boardman:

Yeah, it's very hard. I find it very, very hard.

Charlie Collins:

Would you consider yourself a visual artist?

Kevin Boardman:

I guess so, yeah, because all the work is visual, yeah, so. But then not that you can't describe the visual stuff. It's a really interesting point. I suppose it deserves to be described, yes, but once you make like some sort of visual outcome, the visual communicates itself really. So then what's the layers under it again? It goes back to unpacking, exploring, and maybe I have more of an I've never realized that actually, so maybe there's more of an emphasis on that. I but that doesn't mean I don't like esthetics. I love aesthetics.

They feel important.

They're just sometimes nice to look at, nice as possible way. But then it goes back to why do you like that?

Who knows? It's a feeling

Charlie Collins:

For the record, Kevin shrugged

Kevin Boardman:

That's why I like Heidegger's view on like practical knowledge and tacit knowledge. That, again, that's helped me with trying to unpack, unpack. My practice is more where I find it very, very difficult sometimes to communicate, whether it's through words or conversation, sometimes the practice conversation is a little bit easier, partly because there's a back and forth and like the other person, sort of helps me clean my mind and develop some sort of dialog about the work.

But another thing also as well, with that is I still have an opportunity to take a break from talking about the work and ask someone else a question. No, I find that really healthy. I But yeah, like writing about the work. Yeah, I find that difficult. I suppose that stands into things like parts, proposals, like a barrier. Oh, yeah, definitely. Kind of feel one of the reasons it's more of the practice I have. There's some there's varied works, varied visual outcomes. Nothing wrong with that. I do know there's maybe. An issue with where it positions as a home, as a reference point, like there's which you're aware of slightly, some people are associated the practice to facilitation. I just don't really feel comfortable with that. That doesn't mean it doesn't have facilitation aspects. Of course it doesn't. It can be a method actually, to do stuff, and I have a pedagogical, pedagogical approach sometimes, but to say that is the center.

Maybe there is multiple centers, and I'm still trying to find out what it is.

Charlie Collins:

Is it important to be comfortable?

Kevin Boardman:

I haven't been comfortable, so I'm probably comfortable with not being comfortable.

Charlie Collins:

Do you think the home might be a feeling of comfort?

Kevin Boardman:

I think the home may be able to progress one or two things I, we'll see. Rather than it's more about my mind just sticking to, maybe to, like a project or two, in any other thing I find really interesting over like, every day I'll take a photograph and go I've got a new idea that's okay, but just maybe keep down a sketchbook for now.

Charlie Collins:

-inaudible-

Kevin Boardman:

Oh, way wide, definitely. Yeah, way wider. But, yeah, practice, yeah, I think a studio would help them. Working in a living room is not good, and then I'd have more time to make, instead of just going making for two hours at home in a living room and then spend another time, or go in a coffee shop doing an arts proposal Where's a space separate where I can make reflect, that would probably help a lot of this stuff as well.

So maybe there's two things, the home, from a practice point of view, and physically, a space to do work.

Maybe actually, the space would be more important.

Charlie Collins:

Actually, this isn't a question I had before that's making me wonder whether I want to ask people like what is important in that space for you to be able to practice?

Kevin Boardman:

It sounds like a silly answer, but walls so I can draw on them or put stuff up. Maybe be able to use the ceiling as well, actually, big enough to invite people so it develop like ideas develop, and not just necessarily, like a conventional feedback thing, like real, honest dialog, things I wouldn't consider, yeah, and I know people might say, Oh, you can do that in your living room. Probably could to a certain extent, but there's something about like a function of a studio where people do act differently, behave, sorry, not act, behave, yeah, and there's a lot of distractions within a living room. I don't be wrong. I get inspiration in other ways, in the living room, a studio, like, there's an energy, there's an energy, it's hard again, goes back to feeling and hard to explain it. You know?

University was really, really good for that. I was, I was just in there, sometimes not even working, just in there, because it was nice. And not nice in a comfortable way, but it was nice is the wrong word. It's a silly, easy word. It's it's stimulating, it's productive. And after it, you walk home, and then you think, and you've got a new idea. You've got something you feel again motivated by. Don't always like. Something in your soul is complete. No, it sounds a little bit mad, but it you feel you feel good, and I don't get that in the living room.

Question 2

Kevin Boardman:

that's really made me think about before. But then, was that different from motivation? Or explore my answer on that, non intended non, yeah, non intentional design as a thesis, I read interesting. I think it's by iter brands and that looks at how more from it, again, amateur perspective, amateur, meaning non professional designers, and how they maybe use objects in different ways. For example, clothes on top of a chair to dry the chair is not specifically designed for that, but it's there. So the intention is from the participant, you could say, or the the user, or whatever word you would I know some people have different definitions of that, but the team, individual company who designed the chair didn't intend for it for that. So it's more like the expansion of the intentions. So which I think I more allude to, I think like offering a new intention. So maybe, weirdly, offering a new intention is like a motivation for me to explore the

possibilities, but also maybe to unpack, unpack its original use, or its its relational esthetics, which I'm quite interested in.

I suppose that be a thing, my motivation? Yeah, that's an interesting thing. Because, like, when you have a motivation for do, for doing something, have you ever been in a situation where someone goes, well, why are you doing it? And you don't really have an answer, yeah. Do you class that as a motivation? Because a part of me kind of feels, I swear towards it, yes. What would someone tell you? No, you know, like you do something, you just don't know why you're doing it, but you okay. You could argue you're intending to do it, but it's like, yeah, that intention is done. Maybe that's the bit after the motivation. But the motivation prior is, like a feeling. Does that feel very inherent? Yeah, yeah. And then, but if you said, what's the feeling, I'll probably need then time to figure out what the feeling is, because maybe I don't have, like, a term to define that. So then you develop on and then you create some intentions.

So maybe you find out your motivation, weirdly, so it's like a circular you have to do the work to find out, yeah, weirdly, well I could say, because it feels right, that's really the answer. But then some people want a more defined or conclusive answer.

Charlie Collins:

That's interesting. What does the feeling of right feel like you had to describe the sensation?

Kevin Boardman:

Probably a little bit of a challenge, where I probably wouldn't have thought of that a couple of years ago, but, yeah, if one says, Oh, what do you mean by challenge? It's be doing something you don't necessarily know the answer to it yet, and that is a question maybe you ask so the question could vary depending on whatever it is, yeah, it could be that really,

Charlie Collins:

sorry. That's really made me think I also wanted to pick up on something you said a minute ago about you almost described, like the intention not being your own intentions, but the intention like the object requires. Do you think the intention is inherent to objects, like, is it built into it, how you're supposed to use things, or is that part of your practice?

Kevin Boardman:

It's probably beyond objects. It could be spaces. It could be that's why I'm quite intrigued with relational esthetics as a sort of unpacks that. But another thing that's really a step. Some of the practices not just like its use. It could be like two people engaging with each other. It just happens to be that fingers there as a tool, or even as just a bystander, you could say so it could be more of an emphasis on the interaction rather than the object. It just happens to be there. Yeah. So there could be several variables playing up on time.

Question 3

Kevin Boradman:

I'm a bit blank.

Charlie Collins:

Do you think it's you're blank because you've not thought about it before? Or

Kevin Boardman:

no, I'm trying to think of an actual quality

Charlie Collins:

has anyone ever described your work in a certain way that you'd agree with? Like as an example, I would describe my equality I would associate with my work is very slow.

Kevin Boardman:

Open? Maybe, why? Just varied things and discipline wise, it can be put in every type of learning, contemporary art or pedagogy or spatial practices, fashion and yeah,

Charlie Collins:

do you think openness gives it value?

Kevin Boardman:

When you say it gives it values of more value to me or to others? I suppose that's what I'm trying to figure out, is I can't see the value to others. Okay, your ability to be open in your practice has value to yourself. Guess I wouldn't. I wouldn't be doing it if it wasn't, I guess, but I'd probably be in a worse position in my life if it wasn't. So it's given me, what an education met new people who wouldn't have met if I didn't take this router. Yeah, I wouldn't be able to follow, like a normal academic route. I'd have to use, like, art and the practice to actually try and learn, try and read. Otherwise I wouldn't be living here, being like living where I was from, I guess. So it's expanded my I horizons, yeah, I guess quite a big thing.

Yeah, it's helped.

Definitely helped.

Charlie Collins:

I I think there's more quality open. Sorry, no, but that's, I suppose, part of the research is trying to understand why you find it so hard to attribute value to our practices.

Kevin Boardman:

Yeah, yeah, I don't show me work a lot to a lot of people as well, so probably doesn't help in terms of what other people have said than that. So maybe I should do it more. Yeah.

Charlie Collins:

Are there any physical qualities about your practice, rather than emotional or, I suppose, like temporal qualities?

Kevin Boardman:

So sorry I can't really think. No

Charlie Collins:

You talk a lot about reimagining, and I know that you use reusable surfaces, these re qualities to your work. Do you want to talk about that again?

Kevin Boardman:

It goes, probably that that goes back to feeling like you do a line. You draw on it. I got some nice line goes, you just think it's nice, and then you explore it further. But I know the reusable suppose it helps your mind, if your mind runs very fast, weirdly, working on the surface like that. It collaborates with speed very well.

Yeah, although answering this question, you think I've got no, like, no answer, which is true, but in terms of, in like a free thinking space, ideas just pop out randomly, And then the mind thinks, and the reusable surface facilitates thinking necessary in a certain way well, at least begins to map Out New Thought for me, not necessarily for others, but

Phase 2: Field Notes

Field Notes from Studio Visit with Annie Greatorex

Describe / communicate / present / interpret	Intention / motivation / influence / connections
<p>Annie</p> <p>The artist as performer? to attract 'patrons' - helps set ^{boundaries}</p> <p>'staring artist' 'holistic'</p> <p><u>the imperfect is best</u></p>	<p>Trying to find connections when your idea is discipline ↳ a theme helps</p> <p>Protect parts of me - don't give everything away</p> <p>legacy joy for people to love - ration</p> <p>"to share all the wondrous things I see"</p> <p>Expression making people laugh</p> <p>found value - foundations to practice</p>
<p>Discipline</p> <p>Deliberate - not a weakness</p> <p>Qualities / attributes / characteristics / personality</p> <p>comfort (not always good, need a resolve)</p> <p>one of the only members of my family that likes to go to parties</p> <p>assumptions - make characteristics</p> <p>I love a bold colour</p> <p>gentleness is one of seven virtues (choosing not to use violence)</p> <p>Don't like the word aesthetic</p> <p>Privilege = people make assumptions</p> <p>textile = soft</p> <p>in a corporate background it's seen as a weakness</p> <p>active choice to be gentle</p> <p><u>Joy</u></p>	<p>value / worth / impact / outcome</p> <p>weaving music - outcome is determined before you start ^{↳ linked to process}</p> <p>Photography, Technique informs outcome</p> <p>Textiles</p> <p>outcome changes! That's okay, like collaborating with other artist where process is more organic</p> <p>It's about connecting with the audience</p>

Challenges / Barriers / Access / constraints	Process / methods / Aesthetics
<p>Annie</p> <p>Only one loom working for myself - no schedule</p> <p>Anxiety only have 1 thing going at a time ← it's less helped</p> <p>Need discipline</p> <p>Big thing is paying the bills</p> <p>Don't lose it I can't see people connecting with myself, isolating</p>	<p>leads to outcome</p> <p>Peter to work to - brief</p> <p>Natural fibres - questions</p> <p>Second hand of ethics</p> <p>Sound/art mix - deadstock with natural</p> <p>Photography with a model - constraint. ^{↳ 600 days}</p> <p>Storytelling - story is in my head → needs to concept which informs retail ^{ethical / sustainable}</p> <p>linear process - preservation, helps focus ^{balance}</p> <p>Allow mind to run wild during concept phase</p> <p>working = focus</p> <p>Note 2 specific style</p>
<p>Space / Environment</p> <p>new Mills - community of female artists</p>	<p>Knowledge / phenomena / sense / feeling</p> <p>laughter, crying, joy</p> <p>unexpected response</p> <p>instinctive person, gut feeling</p> <p>immeasurable connections - reactions</p>

Field Notes from Studio Visit with Ryan Boulton

<p>Challenges / barriers / access / constraints</p> <p>Take months of research to develop work.</p> <p>Cost easy / want to use certain materials but I can't afford it → fuel poverty</p> <p>It will be an nightmare to lay plan - it will be an artwork itself - acceptance it will be bloody difficult - work in a slow or new way - I could have someone to do shop and bought tiles. Don't think about the labour, we just want and get the tiles, we will learn, we will fail.</p> <p>It's exciting. Hierarchy of needs - none of wire or true pressure. currently met.</p>	<p>Process / methods / aesthetics</p> <p>Reclaiming materials - floor tiles 1960's Repetition using materials Damage - was it because of my hands hands on labour - sustainability or time?</p> <p>Repetitive handmade locally sourced writing at a methodology Don't see myself printing any more.</p> <p>Repairing Exploration Revealing Lottery.</p>
<p>Space / environment</p> <p>Library - space here to research old knowledge I like a site to work from or in response to I like like the traditional idea of a studio I like a workshop. The house is an artwork, lab and space to sleep. I put and choose what will take along the side of art spaces occupy interesting buildings - I see myself fitting in here. The work is deconstructed space - something that repairs or cracks. Having space to collect materials is important - smaller library. Taking time and space can be difficult eg if you're in a bad accommodation.</p>	<p>Knowledge / phenomena / sense / feeling</p> <p>Therapeutic "getting into it"</p> <p>Knowledge has fallen out of practice - combining traditional methods with contemporary forgotten knowledge knowing when to not answer/something when you're using an inappropriate material</p>

<p>Describe / communicate / present / interpret</p> <p>Present creates a record</p> <p>Questioning - is this an artwork? After challenge him on this, if I put it in a frame it would be to gather in practice</p>	<p>Intention / motivation / influence / connections</p> <p>sustainability, process history, opening perception of the 'everyday' or 'looked craft' - creates shared experience.</p> <p>sketches</p>
<p>Qualities / attributes / characteristics / personality</p> <p>gentleness - keeping things in use forgotten</p> <p>slow sustainable playful Temporal - time</p> <p>Process adds dimension to the tile Durability of material vs contemporary</p> <p>privilege to be able to do this</p> <p>conceptions. It's a balance. This is where new creative practices could come from. Advice</p> <p>resistant. Research = slow. Doing = quiet collaborative voice - so it was in the middle works with it. Respect. Trust / trust the process, level of discomfort. I would specifically use the word gentleness</p>	<p>Value / worth / impact / outcome</p> <p>investment - my time</p> <p>investment - the material</p> <p>mentioned the 'death of the detail' do people care anymore</p> <p>losing richness of materials</p> <p>history is the value, the scarcity of material/process.</p>

Ryan took a call in the middle of the interview

I had a tour of the house, not on overall. Best everywhere! "Dead man overall" not cleaned since last wash

he makes he runs thought he would own a house.

we discussed what we didn't like about the exhibition we saw

working on a house is largest scale project I've done. implications are big. most important collaboration so far.

as for NJITA / teaching - people are the material someone to learn from / with

It's a collaboration

There's a skill/practice to working with people.

You're not plugging a drill in, but there's a whole skill set that you need to work with people

Field Notes from Studio Visit with Sophie Cochrane-Powell

<p>Challenges / barriers / access / constraints</p> <p>wanted to do more with video - to his through work. love to be more collaborative, find this difficult. Frustrated - challenge to spend more time on creative practice. ambition is hard. Trying to build a online presence even though I don't I feel time poor. * constantly needing to do things, be online, be relevant. pressure to produce. contact creator vs artist. it took something away from me. who does the heavy core from. I need to trust myself. can be avoidant of self-reflection, but it's useful to face this.</p>	<p>Process / methods / Aesthetics</p> <p>made with hands. My work + creative practice flow into each other collaboration with partners, in the ideas, less doing / creating. we build it up. learning from other people (work collages). A lot about colour. Thinking a lot about texture. Some work with text. When I use something natural I don't just take it. it's rather, it's gift etc. Personalizing ideas. Thinking about ideas, compared it to relationships, politics, but. intrinsically linked. How things are meant to flow. 2 organisms working together, really work to apart. Dialogue with ideas. lots of different ways to connect (cut, poetry). Starts with the self to then understand others. A while practice is about reflecting on ourselves. Don't go to art school - wet down a credit route after can art keeping a bag of scraps by desk. I will turn them into something I make numerous because I find them interesting. will pass - its a form of understanding</p>
<p>Space / Environment</p> <p>I need to claim space, not built for people to give it to me. keep things in my space that bring joy or work. root myself in these spaces as a painting, a plant, a book (present for someone that likes, but I'll read it first). Things that speak to me. have a diary. this is new, used to write myself on things to have with just the stuff on my desk. my this feels like a way with a space to put random shit that fits</p>	<p>Knowledge / phenomena / sense / feeling</p> <p>utilising what I find interesting, staying true as stories, for what health preservation. we are part of the natural world. comparison of society and nature. Poetry - stepping in and out of an experience</p>

<p>Describe / communicate / present / interpret</p> <p>creative research assistant - works for fabricating, creating a young people's well health intervention through art/culture. describe myself as a creator. what is a capital A artist. explains what activism is. Provides it as something presented to the people. activism as support, an autobiography.</p>	<p>Intention / motivation / influence / connections</p> <p>Diagnosed with OCD, practicing more since then. Teaching lots. where comes into it. Political environment around this. Process over product - its a struggle. its a conscious practice - going with my feelings meaning comes from reflection care, kindness, playfulness, curiosity. I got very involved in niche things get obsessed with them. If I sit down and I'm stressed, its the wrong time to make <u>good vs bad</u> - not good to think about care = for myself, sustainable, care for a plant I killed, interesting goals. Self development. I like useful provocations. how we relate things to others gentleness (care) in my approach. gentle way of approach. using imperials I struggle to use because of imposter complex. Helped me understand things. when to push yourself and when not to. It's to check in with yourself Intention is more important than fulfillment.</p>
<p>Qualities / attributes / characteristics / personality</p> <p>healing, escapism, reconnecting. Expression: made with my own hands "Analogy". Care, kindness, self-love, self-compassion, to own I really myself and reflecting that on you. 3D losses - playful, childish, evocative. something that feels good to do. Trying to get away from whether something is "good" or bad. Its just something like me. Self work, self development - reflects what you put out there. Depends on the meaning of gentleness. Taking the time. There's a part in gentleness. Peace + desire to be gentle trying to be socially / environmentally conscious in all aspects of my life. and now in my art, gentle = it's beautiful. Existential. Interest. Joy knowing the things you are doing, making a conscious effort to not interrupt your art or to be next thing. Essential qualities of work should be seen as your life</p>	<p>value / worth / impact / outcome</p> <p>Process over product. I get a lot of people's work even if it doesn't have a meaning / purpose. What if I had more loyal followers, website analytics. what of art is about things not working out - does value in that value in the time I invest in exploring, finding new ways of doing things value in working things out. But also imposter syndrome egg into cutting and late press. constant self, playful reflects off doing</p>

Field Notes from Studio Visit with Tom Harris

<p>Describe / communicate / present / interpret a profession. Described how he responds to being in the studio. A minor case to create one. A night for myself. Infinite possibilities. Potentially life giving stuff. My best work has come from joy, earned with the rest people. It's easy. Flow state (use on philosophy) - music is quickest way to get there - tips into Lyric system / sound etc. Feeling type of personality. Freedom. Creativity is being aware of what's available, creating something beautiful. Fidelity optimism + positivity. You might not even know what joy feels like, it's massive, that's where Gordon is. Nina Simone, I wish I knew what it feels like to be free.</p>	<p>Intention / motivation / influence / connections want those things settled. Slowed down gentle intention. Habit order. Rhythm (embodied words). Been on a journey to figure out what my intention (right) is. Heir to you, never been to Caribbean. responsibility Responsibility - those who are given a lot should give a lot. Communicating your story with high fidelity, honesty, recommendation. Spending time figuring out my story in order to make for word. Working through difficult things. Habit opens you up, transforming pain into joy - it's a challenge! Creativity is the place to do it.</p>
<p>Qualities / attributes / characteristics / personality all of me. A minor case to create one. A night for myself. Infinite possibilities. Potentially life giving stuff. My best work has come from joy, earned with the rest people. It's easy. Flow state (use on philosophy) - music is quickest way to get there - tips into Lyric system / sound etc. Feeling type of personality. Freedom. Creativity is being aware of what's available, creating something beautiful. Fidelity optimism + positivity. You might not even know what joy feels like, it's massive, that's where Gordon is. Nina Simone, I wish I knew what it feels like to be free.</p>	<p>Value / worth / impact / outcome loving, ferocious, intense, passionate, raw, joy. Happens through the capture of gentleness, (compassionate) calmness. It allows these things to come through. gentleness is critical. Collaboration changes it.</p>
<p>Challenges / obstacles / issues / constraints Bad practice led to an accident as a sound engineer. led to a loss of hearing. the thing I loved but re. Doing rational. I can't make music. I was encouraged not to be creative as a child, there's a difference to his who had exposure to arts. I was rebellious. I'm not, it comes out a bit tucked up in my head in a jazz musician transcending people. sense of illegitimacy - does it even matter. it's all institutional. I'll reverse a classical musician but I can still rock. my journey been round the world, dangerous but more interesting. misanthropic - I can't think that. got to get out of the situation.</p>	<p>Process / methods / aesthetics / discipline Habit, ritual, sensory, associations with feelings or want to feel. we are the architects. Physical practice being heavy practice, a container.</p>
<p>Space / Environment the place I've never been, feeling, working. last one Harris. connected to platonism. you can see it on google maps. Community at Primary. good and bad.</p>	<p>Knowledge / phenomena / sense / feeling Dream space. Dig through feeling. meditation, under space to win. something cosmic about creativity, spirituality. can change your perspective. sure often as meditation, religion. it's a dimension. loose yourself. fire yourself. child is a divided, instead of ault need take in control. never can be a recent Caribbean, but my body knows the rhythm. connect to it's through music. something in me; need to respect. respect creates a mirror and my own thing. it's like in your practice. my mind and body will go into less practice locked in. I don't have to try. Knowledge is the way to change (society, yourself). Better Reading.</p>

Field Notes from Studio Visit with Emma Plover

Theme 1: Describe / Communicate / Present / Interpret	Theme 2: Intentions / Guidance / Motivation / Influences / Connections	Theme 3: Quality / Attributes / Characteristics / Personality	Theme 4: Value / Worth / Impact / Outcome
<p>Question: What is my practice about? Communication with natural beings (talking to the trees). Collaborating with energies? Saturn in picies. Conduit, funnel. Distillation. Passageway. Creative practice is how I relate to others. Making > giving. Receiving. Graduated in 2019.</p>	<p>Different purposes. External intentions/perceptions - overwhelming creative urge. It has to be made. You are conduit for energy. Making shawl for friend. It wanted to be made in a different way. Relinquish control. Working with natural materials > you are the guiding source.</p>	<p>Sensory. Energetic. Sensitive. Textural. Seasonal. Resonating with others. Validation. Rememberin traditions/forgotten knowledge. How to navigate this in a modern way > through art. Hermit (look inwards, bring stuff back out). Anchor things into this reality - bring to wider population. e.g tallow use, then became a trend. Queerness, now everyone is talking about it. Used to be digital practice - now a physical practice. Gentle way of being in the world. A natural way of being. I relate to people who are gentle, seeing parts of myself in them. Give people permission to be there weird self bu being me. Important. Courage. The heart. Going into field with bulls. Joy.</p>	<p>Overwhelming to think about the benefit of the work for everyone, it will come. So hard to measure. Unquantifiable. Art>not touchable by writing, applications, reporting. This allianates so many artists. Artists > doing what you do, to share that is important.</p>

Theme 5: Challenges / Barriers / Accessibility/ Constraints	Theme 6: Process / Methods / Aesthetics / Discipline	Theme 7: Space / Environment	Theme 8: Embodied Knowledge / Phenomena / Sense / Feelings
<p>Courage to be myself in a way that makes other people feel comfortable. Need tto be brave not a chameleon. Since pandemic I have been myself. Came at it in an aggressive way or in a I feel good in myself way. Ebb+flow in practice. Commissions dried up, trying to apply for ACE. Writing application is hard. I love writing but it's not creative, taken the fun out of it. Don't necessarily know outcome, it's experimental - that doesn't align with funding.</p>	<p>Poetry. Collage (not so much anymore). Videos - document experience. Jewellery. Natural/found materials. Permission. Asked the tree if I could hug it. Gift > bones. Create something out of something else > reciprical. My work is contributing to practice. Navigating relationships. Different viewpoints. Good skill to have. Stones are important to me. Volunterring. Can't reach out into the world further than I can reach my hands. That work has inherrent value.</p>	<p>Not on social media as much. Practice changed after leaving Manchester. Tree in garden > guardian. Watched me grow up in our different seasons. We have a relationship. Bedroom free from external demands. Work > close to nature. Would romp around in waterproof and wellies forever if I could. Going from a visitor to a worker. Farm below striper stones.</p>	<p>Exploring world > Exploring me back. In tune with nature. Inherent connections. Exploration. Internal experience. Energy involved in natural objects. Tree = wild being. Different plants. Different essences. Curate/embody energy. Reminding people of the capacity to connect with nature. Connecting with things in the past. Snapshots/threads of energy resonances. Plait of energy. Weaving together objects. Protective charm for the door. Safety. Communication - work, cows sensitivity to body language. Learning to speak to them.</p>

Field Notes from Studio Visit with Hanna Varga

<p>Describe / Communicate / Present / Interpret</p> <p>Socially engaged environment of practice sustainability biodegradable manifests through repetitive intentional + unintentional knot - positive + negative</p> <p>knot - choreography, infinite variations. learn patterns consider this to be finest practice. what makes us want art 'fine art' permanence & illusion of permanence. i want away from this</p> <p>Had a successful career in bronze sculpture. Didn't want to keep making (it's - transition took a while (years of early works + grief:))</p> <p>Yarn - basic thread you combine in a pattern - a lie because its light. Surveys - not visible - similar gallery spaces</p>	<p>Intention / Motivation / Influence / Connections</p> <p>Rebel - tying the knot - infinity loop Materiality - intentional intentional world need more space for conversation, dialogue, process Advocacy for value of art is important + access to art, nothing to do with money - culture, education Helping people have connect with art. My role - responsibility - what do I do with my skills, imagination. Interaction - eliciting - attention - tension. Direction my aesthetic in a certain way. A needs point - how can i be, express myself, understand myself. contributes to the life of others & service like forms connections</p>
<p>Qualities / Attributes / Characteristics / Personality</p> <p>sensitive to needs. matter, Role model -> don't want burnt at vestige of me to be role model. No success, like joy, over working.</p> <p>Beginner is advised with beginner artist. Reciprocity - impact & benefit (braiding sustainability) living with enough, materialists in abundance. There is so much. Growing in abundance Give + take.</p> <p>Tenderness - tending (choreography) To live + work with tenderness. To tend to myself. Slowness, time. None of these qualities can be observed without sitting and listening sitting. present.</p>	<p>Value / Worth / Impact / Outcome</p> <p>Received ACE Funding Not many artworks - but funding commissions occasionally Trust your work has value even if no one financially invests. (van Gogh example) nothing - important - aspect / value of my life Decided i wanted to always make a living from my practice how long has it taken to make - 34 years SA Varga What containers do you have, your capacity to hold things.</p>

<p>Challenges / Barriers / Access / Constraints</p> <p>Pushing boundaries of 'fine art' - middle man in the galleries problematic. began to independently urge my art practice while other spaces - not national. 600 years of colonization - work seen as 'primitive' - derogatory ethnology. art superior to craft.</p> <p>Burnout at "peak" of career & spotlight on me, no time to process, to reflect. continuously being productive. Disservice to myself. painful, necessary to stop for 2 months. But art is far, it's destroying me. Making a living is not a measure of success. What allows artist to continue if its not being celebrated. receive success. Non request, wear away, interference makes problems</p>	<p>Process / Methods / Aesthetics</p> <p>Storytelling A journey. object can speak for themselves Plant fibres need to process. Takes time. Honorable harvest (braiding wet grass) - saves or multiplies so eggs with reciprocity - put on a bigger table. My actions have an impact on other life - non human. collect - never take all - always leave a lot a handful of rustles, doc leaves, grasses, bark i notice animal & birds use this for nesting.</p>
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<p>Space / Environment</p> <p>Travel for events, workshop grew up in Hungary, working from that - full time job whilst studying. Travelling back and forth from UK to Hungary. seeing in sculpture studio floor.</p>	<p>Knowledge / Phenomena / Sense / Feeling</p> <p>Take people out on long walks to notice things greenery, trees, what can i pick. leave no trace</p>
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Phase 2: Interview Transcripts

Annie Greatorex

Question 1

No recording – fault with tape recorder, field notes taken.

Question 2:

I think the most basic intention is that and I'm guessing the one that most creatives have at the bottom of their practice regardless of what it is and why they do what they do is the real intention of not to have to live an ordinary life. And I think there's the underlying intention with me was always to have some form of creative identity but I had no intention of working a 9 to 5 of being, not normal, but living that kind of very typical, expected life. I had no intention of being that. The people that I admired, I mean my parents probably didn't help themselves, because I grew up around people who were involved in music, drama, art and things like that. They had quite a few friends who didn't lead a normal life and to me they seemed like they were having so more fun than everyone else. I've never been a morning person so an ordinary days work is never good for me. Even when I was working normally I was working in retail for almost 20 years and that is really hard physical work, but everyday is completely different, you work with a different cast of characters every day, there's an element of performance in everything you do because there has to be because really you can't feign interest in cod liver oil for 10 years without putting some element of performance into it, I worked in Holland and Barrat, I used to refer to myself as a corporate white witch, I thought that was much more fun rather than assistant manager. So yeah there has always been an element, even in my ordinary jobs, if that, and all the jobs were trying to get out of, and it turns out it was just easier to make yourself ill and then start again. But yeah so now with that in mind my intention is to try and share that passion and enjoyment that I get from colour and sound and visuals and the tactile nature of textiles and to be able to share it with people and it sounds a bit grand to say that's it, but in some ways there's a certain amount of legacy leaving. But to share, to share what I see and all the good things that I see when I look at the world. And along the way if those performances or pieces help someone to find their own peace or joy or some sort of healing. That's a really grand aim but one that would be lovely, lovely to have that kind of affect on someone. I don't really want people to go 'oh yeah that was nice', I want people to have a reaction, and I don't mind if that's a negative reaction. But yeah my intention is to just share all of the wonderful things that I see on a daily basis in the world and try and kind of share that with other people and kind of encourage them to see a little bit of my world and find there own way of expressing themselves. But yeah, it's usually about joy.

Question 3:

I think the simple answer is yes, I think gentleness is a quality that... It doesn't just happen, you have to actively choose it. And so, it shows through in what you do. Because I work with textiles a lot, which is a very soft medium and asks to be touched, sometimes irritatingly so as an artist, when people go straight in with their hands, but you have to kind of build that in to your practice.

I think yeah it's a definite choice, it's a definite founding value. That's something I've just made up on the spot there. I think what I mean by that, you have foundations of your practice that doesn't matter what direction you go in those foundations are always there, the roots, and I think gentleness is one of those, approaching everything with a deliberate choice to be. Not non-confrontational, I don't think that necessarily is gentle, but in a way that doesn't terrify I suppose, that helps you connect. So I'd say, gentleness, joy, passion, all come together and form the foundation of what then becomes the practice. And I think, particularly in this day and age they're really important values to hold on to and for other people to experience given the current political climate and environmental crisis and if everything is hard and negative then people don't handle that very well, it hurts them. I never aim to hurt, even when dealing with something that is maybe a bit controversial, some people probably say I don't go far enough. I think you can only go as far as your comfortable going and as your experience allows you as well. I think that if you're choosing to be a gentle practitioner as well it makes you stop and think, maybe sometimes too much, maybe sometimes you choose not to do something because you're nervous you may have approached it wrong, or maybe you're too privileged to talk about something but it does make you stop and think and work this through. It doesn't mean that you lose any of the, it doesn't mean that you have to be quiet, it just means that you're not necessarily yelling negative thoughts. You do have to be careful as a human being if you want to not destroy. So I think gentleness does help you with that. It makes you think, am I approaching this in a way that I approve of? Do I approve of my own actions? And if I don't maybe there's a different way of doing this or approaching this. It helps keep your self to account and to see yourself a bit more clearly. By choosing to go down this path rather than another path it has encouraged me to do a lot of stuff I would never have done 10 years ago. Which in itself has been very healing, it's encouraged me to self-reflect, think how my brain works, to not ignore uncomfortable emotions, to work through them, because if I want to present something in a way that I approve of myself doing it then I can't be, I can be all over the place I usually am, but I need to be consistent in how I present that to the world. It has encouraged me, not to just slow down, but to be more confident in my own practice, and how I know myself and I know what's good, what's bad, and how far I can push myself. Which is good because you can push yourself that little bit extra every so often when you need to. I don't think you should exist entirely in your comfort zone but sometimes you try and push yourself to far out of your comfort zone in too many directions at any one time and so you gain the confidence if you know yourself a little bit better, you gain the confidence to take bigger leaps. And then you end up being able to call your self a self-employed artist and think oops what did I do oopsie there's no going back. I think also it's helped because I've got to the point in my practice I feel like I'm just starting in many ways I feel like I know what I'm doing and where I'm going now and that is in part because of the last sort of 6 to 8 years and dealing with what was going on in my head and handling that kind of thing but also because circumstances has for longer than I've ever stayed in one place as an adult and I've made these connections with people who also do the same thing and who, and I don't know if this is because they're a mainly female group, it would be interested to know what other people think about the gentleness and feminine thing, but certainly the connections I've made with people who do have gentle practices, or don't, or multidisciplinary practices, has really helped kind of establish what it is I kind of want to do and what I definitely don't want to do. And that is as important as what you want to do, more so in some respects, I think you have to know what you don't want in order to know what you do

want. Otherwise, there's too many options. Yeah, of and you spend your time trying to work out what you want and sometimes its easy to go right I'm not entirely sure what I want but I know what I don't want. How can I make sure I don't end up doing that. I've ended up being irritatingly multidisciplinary. And probably should of just, I've been told multiple times over the last few years to just focus on one thing and be really good at that and yeah I could be. But I could be really good at 3 things as well. Weirdly I think by choosing to be a little bit more gentle, a little bit more careful and self aware I've actually become more ambitious for myself and I think this is entirely probably through genuinely understand and not being scared of the parts of me because I know that if I'm attempting to approach my life in a gentle manner, the parts of me that are a little more negative, like competitiveness and ambition when unchecked can be a little bit, especially as I'm incredibly competitive, but by choosing to approach life in a gentle manner, I can still be competitive I can still be ambitious I can still want massive adventures because I know that if I follow my code of behaviors that I've created through my creative practice I'm never going to intentionally push it too far or intentionally hurt someone on the way, so actually its allowed me to be a little more, or lean into the dark side of my personality more and not be afraid of utilising it. Before I was terrified if I let my temper go or let my ambition out of hand I'm going to cause problems, but if you temper it with the other side then you have a more balanced approach. I do believe everyone has two sides of their nature, both sides can be equally toxic. You need to balance it out. I am incredibly competitive particularly around men, always have been, sometimes that's to your benefit, its never been particularly toxic, because I've never been tough enough person to really stick my nose in. and so it benefited me through school because I had people I competed with which would mean we probably both do well because we competed against each other and we did well at school. Healthy competition. And then there became a time in my life when it didn't seem so healthy because I was working in an environment where competition meant crushing the opponent not just winning. When I got ill and came back and needed to rebuild my life, those kind of ideas felt very scary to come anywhere near because those were the things that had been fun and then they weren't fun anymore and now they're fun again. I do belief healthy competition is an necessity in life which I know in some peoples heads will contradict the concept of gentleness but I do think that, whether its with yourself or someone else it's a good thing. Part of that maybe comes from the performance background where you're continually auditioning and your continually not getting the part and sometimes that's because someone's better than you, sometimes its nothing to do with that sometimes they just fit the part better. You kind of have to be okay with that you kind of have to have enough confidence in yourself and I used to have that and then I lost it and now I think I do again. Certainly in the last couple of months its felt like its back and I feel much more like myself and I put that down to being more deliberate in the way that I make choices now and picking out those values of gentleness and joy and competitiveness and those kinds of things and saying right this is as far as I want to go with them and this is what I definitely don't want to end up feeling like again means, yeah you do your values are connected to your practice. I don't think any artist would say they just put there tools away at the end of the day and become a completely different person. I think its always there within you.

Ryan Boulton

Question 1:

So my practice is generally about working with or working between art and architecture and within that I have noticed or reflected on the fact that my practice often revolves around finding or identifying material I want to work with and going through a process of play so exploring that material and exploring its uses and as I was saying earlier, repeating that process in some way, shape or form to generate an outcome so there's a period of research that is material exploration and either that's something that's new to me or as I was talking about with the tiles going back and researching how things would have been done in relation to the tiles in relation to the kind of that material methodology. Yep. I think that describes it.

Question 2:

No recording – fault with tape recorder, notes taken.

Question 3:

I suppose yes, I'd say gentleness is part of the practice. I think if I wasn't being gentle in this particular moment with the tiles in particular or any material I work with, I probably wouldn't be working with it. The equivalent material wouldn't be cherished, you'd be knocking through it or getting rid of it or starting kind of getting something perfect in every way with getting something manufactured is the word so it becomes gentleness in practice in terms of if I'm peeling away part of a wall to reveal something or if I'm cleaning up a tile or if I'm researching how a material might be used in a different way shape or form. And what other qualities do I think are a part of my work? I think there's a respect, there's a respect for the different materials, how they have been used, how they might be used, what processes have got before them um I think there's trust. I often remind myself of the adage from uni of just like trust the process, make sure that, even if you don't know where you're going or within something, material research exploration can take you to where you need to be. Going into the unknown and just trusting that things will work out in some way shape or form that kind of level of discomfort is just the position your in. So trust, respect, gentleness. I wouldn't use the word gentleness, not as a kind of um, a descriptor for my own practice but I would associate it with words or concepts which I think it embodies like we've talked about sustainability, like we've talked about slow practice, the idea of practice. So I wouldn't jump at the word gentleness to describe what I do but I think it embodies words and concepts that I would use to describe it. Just in a different way.

I think the value in terms of my practices comes from the history of it. In the same way you'd have an antique, the value of the antique comes from the fact that it's a historical item that it has an associate history and a scarcity so the value or the perceived value of what I do is revealed to people the histories of the materials that they have or they don't have a relationship with. Even if that material is quite a contemporary material it still has a history which perhaps they haven't quite thought about before or an origin or an um yeah a route which is, I'm looking at the insulation on the wall there which is glass insulation and in the 80s and 90s used to be bright pink and now the current thinking is to make it this weird off colour which is to make people think it looks more like sheep's wool, so they're using more natural colours and dyes to make people feel like it's a more natural product but its still exactly the same recycled glass. Its green washing. But in a material sense, there's a history to that material, but it's a dishonest history and its quite a nasty material because if you breathe it in it gets stuck in your lungs. It tried to emulate a material which it is not.

Sophie Cochrane-Powell

Question 1:

I think I do lots of different things and I've tried to pull them together or have an overarching theme I think that I've always done art in varying kind of capacities but in the last couple of years I've found it really healing to engage with, it was a kind of form of escapism or some form of reconnecting with my own thoughts. A way of both expressing myself but also and escaping the need to express myself. Um so, I am diagnosed with OCD, like a year and a half ago and that's the kind of time I started to actually like properly invest a lot more of my time in art and try and do something with it rather than it just being that really personal form, like I would just get rid of everything I ever did. And since then I've been working on a lot of different things. What I try to do is process art and use like use implements that I have historically found difficult to use or have had like intrusive thoughts about and um natures come into it and I which it kind of didn't at the start but I've been thinking a lot more about symbiosis, trees and lichen especially mushrooms and all about the (inaudible) and its just kind of organically developed I cant say like I think with process art I have found myself tending to think more about the product than the process and really trying to refocus that but its kind of I think a struggle. Yeah, I guess that kind of describes what I do. I set up Analogish again like a year and a half ago maybe which was yeah playing around with obviously art that I was making with my own hands and then thinking about its meaning afterwards and usually like digitally manipulating it and moving it about and figuring out what it meant to me and yeah I guess its still quite small still (inaudible)

Question 2:

Um yeah I mean I would say care and kindness, playfulness, um I'm not sure how I would describe it I think there is like a uh maybe like curiosity as well, um like I am someone that just gets very interested in things and a bit obsessed with them for a while and kind of run with that see where that takes me. I think like care, care for myself, in the way that I do things and do work and think if I'm trying to sit down at my desk like feeling stressed like I need to something but its not the right time to do anything (inaudible) um because I'll never produce anything because I'm in a mindset of this is good or this is not good and I'll then upset myself and the end result will just kind of be worse. So yeah I care I think care in materials that I use I think there's a financial constraint in that as well but I do try to use sustainable materials where I can um but yeah I guess what I do with materials and how I (inaudible) I think. This is plant that I killed and I was very upset that I killed this plant I'm trying to do something with it because I really like the roots their kind of in a circle um very nifty I'm just not sure what to do with it but im trying to care for it in a roundabout way. Um I think yeah, yeah I guess I mean kindness as well, self, self-development, its good to be curious and try and work things out as you go along but necessarily you're not going to maybe get the result that you're looking for or even the process might be quite frustrating um if you're doing something for the first time or if you're trying to work with a new thing um so I try to be yeah I try I mean I tend to just (inaudible) till I find something that works or I leave it either one. I try to keep things in my space that bring me joy and also I would also are things that I find like I kinda route myself in. So this is this one I did this is a painting, he's past away now I should think but um that was in the (inaudible) museum

Question 3:

Um yeah I do I think I know again it depends on the meaning of gentleness I think being gentle to me is taking the time um its also I guess there's something quite powerful in gentleness because it feels to me like a decision to be for me to be gentler within (inaudible) I'd say like you can be gentle within your practice but maybe what your depicting is maybe not gentle you know? In the vein of what I do gentleness comes in to how I approach what I do and what I'm thinking about throughout it I think like trigger content warning if that's alright to talk about some mental health stuff so like yeah gentleness to me is like how I treat myself within what I do and the practice how I treat the materials I'm using I think that I someone with OCD, I have like intrusive thoughts about self harm and things like that so I started this is like a year and half ago I started using the implements I find difficult working with and I found that important to do in a gentle in the way in which it was kind of quite useful to. Say with recovery recovery is not like a linear process but like it was useful in understanding myself understanding trigger points and think it was gentle to kind of understand when to do that and when to not do that, when to push yourself and when not to push yourself. I think gentleness again is about checking in with your self which sometimes we don't do, as much as possible I think gentleness in terms of material like using something that has come from like other areas of my life I try to be socially responsible and conscious as much as I can like try to shop in charity shops try to reuse try to recycle all those things but I think that care in the materials I use like anything that's an offcut like I think is important still valuable in the past I would have just screwed it up thrown it at the wall in and thought oh its not worked what I wanted not worked but I think there's something very caring in taking away the idea of there being a final final product of it being iterative. Like I have a big old bag of scraps I mean it will go brown when I do tr to make it into paper, if I dye it, like loads of them, like I like that but what am I going to do with it so I will make it into paper at some point. Yeah and I guess caring and being gentle in the things I depict as well I depict a lot of mushrooms cause I find them really interesting and I like them. Uh yeah like a I write poetry because its an expression of expressionist style yeah I think its also I think a lot of things are, poetry is a form of trying to understand conditions and the world around you, different ways. I think that its being able to step into that and being able to take a step back I'm trying to dig down into why I think (inaudible). I think I said like kindness and care The most important I think I do I jump from thing to thing I get very excited ooh my goodness there's this thing tiny house to tiny bookshop with tiny books I don't have the capacity for this don't think about it but I think it would be great. Maybe that's through gentle is something I've learnt mm what's the word, like honouring the thing you're doing at that time, I think I have a tendency to be like lets just do the next thing the next thing the next thing and I think I have tried to make a conscious effort to within my practice and art in the last few years yeah really honouring what I'm doing in that moment and not immediately being like this isn't working I'm moving on this is what ill do now great but um sticking with the subject that I have and the process that I have, yeah. Yeah being gentle in a way that I treat myself around artistic practice like its not just about when I'm making its also about my down time, what I do with myself the rest of the time is gonna its all about I think the essential qualities of your work should be the essential qualities that underpin your life as well um and I'm not saying necessarily (inaudible) all the time but um yeah I think its about trying to ... intention...

Tom Harris

Question 1:

Um therapeutic, cathartic, explosive, highly expressive. Often chaotic. Wild. Natural. I'd describe it as a response to my experience. I'd describe it as truth, there's lots of truth in it. You can see it, you can hear it. It's also a place for me to reflect, so like in art or when you create something you can't hide, all of you is in that. You know? Whether you like it or not. And so I think that can hold up a mirror. Hold up a mirror to ourselves. And you can see, over time, that mirror will show you yourself. But you might not want to see it in the moment when you've created it but maybe five years later you listen back and you, you see yourself because I'm in that but at the time it was hard to see that because of unconscious blinders or the mystery. I love that actually, I love that, feeling like I'm a mystery to myself. You know? That's like something that really excites me because I'm constantly amazed by um kind of the infinite possibilities of who you're able to be potentially in imagination in thought in feeling um something about dream space, space of the dream, spaces of. It's always positive as well. It's never like a negative thing to do it's always a positive thing. I think creativity for lots of people can just function like that, its always a source of positivity in their lives. I think for me its always been like that. It's kind of grown into a bit of a profession I guess. Which is a strange thing also to contend with. Something which kind of supports you emotionally then becomes something which pays you does change things a bit but that's happened in the last five years.

Question 2:

Theres a word I always come back to, 'hidden order', like an unconscious hidden border and it came through. Theres this researcher called Marilyn Charles she's like a psychoanalyst from America somewhere, she's written lots of books, she talks about how in the creative process unconscious hidden process mingles with intention. So, I think that's kind of what it is for me. I might have this intention to do one thing, but this unconscious hidden order is the one that will kind of lead the show so I'm always trying to listen in to that or I'm aware of this inner rhythm or inner order. Rhythm is a good way to think of it because it's an embodied word, um, kind of guides the process. And I guess mu process shas been about discovering that unconscious hidden order, what that is and what that looks like for me and what that means and actually that has been quite a revealing journey so yeah. I think what I've discovered about my heritage, my grandfathers from Monserrat, in the Caribbean and my grandmothers from Antigua, here she is, here's grandmother, that's my uncle, yep, and I feel like this unconscious order very much connects to these people who have been prominent in my life and understanding that rhythm. I've never been to Montserrat, I've never been to Antigua, the Caribbean, I don't know what it feels like to be there. But I sense somewhere in my body, my body knows the rhythm of Monserrat, knows the rhythm of those hills, of the paradise, of the nature, of the people,, of the sounds, the seasons, the energy that flows in these spaces, and it's a very , sort of , it is like, imagine that a place that you've never been to, never experienced, but somewhere in your soul you know. And one of the ways you can access that through an imaginative practice is through music, you know? You can connect to that directly, through the sensory nature of music. And for me its very rhythmic, its harmonic, its melodic, its hypnotic, but then there's also this kind of gap between fantasy and reality. As I said it's a place I've never been and it's a past as well, you know? It's a past rather than somewhere in the future, its also like a memory, um but yeah what I discovered about ancestry is there's a dance in Montserrat called the masquerade dance and every year on St Patrick's day, because there's lots of Irish people in Montserrat, every year on St Patrick's

day they do this carnival and its called masquerade dance and its like an improvised dance, an Irish dance, an Irish folk dance like on the toes combined with African music, African drums, it's a combination of Irish tradition with west African tradition and that's like a super long tradition its like 300 years old they've been doing this tradition every year and its like. Originally its like the reason that they created was to celebrate a failed slave rebellion, a slave rebelled, they tried to get out, kill their masters or whatever and it's like it didn't go well for them, you know? it failed, so they created this celebration to sort of remember and it's a 300 year old tradition and I think wow, so. My surname is Harris and in Monserrat there's a village called Harris, it's a plantation, so my ancestry is directly connected to this plantation and it's a very strange thing, it's a direct link, so on google maps you can find Harris and that's where my genes come from essentially and a long line of that so. Which goes back and probably didn't, has existed there for 300+ years in physical human form and now where here, 2025 in Nottingham writing the script. Architects of desire, architects of creativity and building a new vision with that, the spirit of that you know? That tradition in mind, do you know like, there's something in me which is deep and I have to respect about that and about the suffering which has happened and also the promise of today so that, that's where like where I tip into the spiritual, that's what I mean making sure I respect my ancestors, respect that, they make music right? But not in the way that I get to do it. I get to do it with these great instruments, I have lots of options, if I ask for something I get it, do you know what I mean? I've been given, I've been given a lot. So, it's like, those that have been given a lot, you have to give a lot. Do you know what I mean? That's how I feel anyway. It's a responsibility. The last thing I'll say, last thing (laughs), whenever I do make music, I do think of my grandparents, I used to live with them I grew up spent lots of time as a child around them and as an adult who failed I had to go back and live with my grandparents. Yeah, so they were like - the people I was around at that time, 23, 24. They would all tell me, black people, my friends, they would say, um, that we're marginalised. We're marginalised people, blah blah blah, we're having a marginalised experience. I remember sitting there in this room, with everyone talking about marginalised, I was like, I just can't let myself, I can't let myself think that about myself. If I think that, then, then, I'm not going to be able to get out of the situation, you know. It's like, I have to like narrow focus in order to be like this is the vision, we're gonna get the money that we need, we're gonna get the spaces that we need, we're gonna get the opportunities, we're gonna get out of this situation. That was the first step. Then we'll think about marginalised once we're out of it, you know? So, that was my experience. And for me to do that I have to put my blinkers down. I don't wanna think about how much of a victim I am or how much of a disadvantage I've got, because if I think about that, that's gonna put me at a more disadvantage, by just putting all my focus on ascending the situation individually, so that was the choice I made until 29. and I did, we made albums, I had successes, I got a studio here and that was all because of that focus. it wouldn't of happened without the focus. if id of been like, I'm marginalised blah blah blah we can't change this, can't change that, then nothing would've happened. it would've just been a big moan. then yeah, I got to 29 and met these, then realised yeah you need to become more conscious about these things, your race, your class or whatever and that was a journey to that. a deconstruction, because it's shocking. at first you know, I didn't wanna hear it, I didn't wanna hear it. I remember being in rooms full of again, these conversation, black music industry talks, listening and like yeah, we have disadvantage, we can't get into the industry, I remember sitting there in those kinda spaces thinking, I got in, I got in there's nothing stopping me. but maybe like 5 years later, now, I look at that conversation in a different way and say like, there are most definitely gaps or like you know challenges for different people to just to get into the industry. and yeah, me two, probably haven't been treated very well in certain jobs and certain situations hence, you know, hence like having hearing problems and stuff but, still I keep moving forward. You know what I mean? you find your own kind of resolve for these things.

Question 3:

Definitely, like I think it's a nervous system thing. I think when, once I've plugged everything in my brain and body will go into a certain frame of mind that is very loving. But in that lovingness, it's also prepared to be ferocious, be passionate, to be intense to be - sound cut out - whatever it needs to be but that happens through the container of gentleness and the container is when you plug everything in when you've done your ritual when you've set up your base then your contained to be whatever you need to be in that moment, all within the loving, compassionate container of that gentleness you know? So that gentleness allows for ferociousness for intensity for passion to come through however it comes through and to be expressed in its authenticity really. I think the key is container, that's it, these things exist like containers for us, just like a therapist would contain a client patient, it's the same thing. they are containing all of the transference that's happening, say the patient needs a villain, the therapist can see that, they will have the skill to see that, they can be that person. You need a villain; you need a bad guy. I'll be the bad guy for you until you're ready to hold that yourself or you can come to a different understanding of whatever your problem might be. so, something similar of like within the container of sound practice. it's very physical. it's wires, its cables, its big speakers, its big instruments, its things that are difficult to carry and things that need a lot of space really. so it does function like a container for your emotional experience to unravel and it is like consciousness unravelling. the previous question about that sort of self-deconstruction when we face new versions of ourselves or new chapters in our lives. it's the same sort of thing. your consciousness needs to unravel. I always think of it like, again, back to the dream in terms of sleep when you sleep it's like your body is able to repair, your ancestors are able to speak to you, you know what I mean? you're really able to go and heal in sleep so and then you unravel and you wake up and you feel like a different person because you're rested and you feel better and your mind is clearer and less foggy. So yeah, I think gentleness is massively valuable and critical. I don't think it would happen without gentleness. even though within the container there. it's not always gentle. sometimes it's very rigorous, when you jam with other musicians or bring other people into the process, that instantly changes it because they're bringing what they're bringing, where do you meet, how does that combine. I think I kinda said it, in the container, there's kind of everything there isn't much distinction, there isn't much limits, its all there, I think the unconscious hidden order is coughing it up a lot of stuff and like letting it go. do you know what I mean? it kinda comes up it's like capturing your consciousness on tape you know? It's like a recording a document of your existence, an archive of your timeline of your experience. you know? and that's a beautiful thing. I can go back to a recording from 10 years ago when I was a different person but still like that's like a log of all the people that you have been. it's like you're painting a painting ten years ago versus a painting you did now. but this sort of locks it into a very like selfish frame or like a just an individual frame like how do these things relate socially or how do they relate in a more broader context is perhaps a more interesting direction to go with these questions? So let's try to go to that um how does gentleness work with other people in like a gig space or a performance space or like an education space or like an interactive space where the public or local community are involved in practice and for me in my practice it's like workshops, going in to youth centre, art galleries, different institutions, to do workshops and engage with people you have to be the container then for others. you have to create your feeling of safety. transmits to other people and they can kind of sit in your container. I do work, especially last year, I do lots of work with children and young people and it's so weird they sit in your safety, and you'll notice they, because they're in your energy, they'll like pop-up

and like say things that are already in your mind. a kid did it to me last year, I was doing a writing exercise with him, he was like yeah something just came into my mind, and I said yeah please share it with me what come to your mind, and he said something like this, trying to be understood by people who don't understand themselves. and I was like I looked at him thinking it sounds like something I would say, you know what I mean? I felt like that's what I was working through in my own head, and I was he kind of intuited that, I didn't ask him. you know? an exchange happened. this is weird but I guess this is how it works. so strange. things are transmitted.

Emma Plover

Question 1: Mostly inaudible due to wind, notes taken.

I think it's about making sense of my experience of the world um I think there is there's a lot of like sensory energetic sensitive um like I feel like there's. It's like an exploration I feel like it's a constant exploration I guess it's kind of interesting. Sometimes it can be hard to put into words.

Question 2:

I think my intention, I think it varies, um I think, I think if I spend too much time sort of focusing on like my intentions, like what am I doing for other people its quite overwhelming. Um I have to be careful not to like sort of drift into too much of like how other people – inaudible – that is essentially there is a message at the core of that but like I know that people will benefit from my art even when I don't have that intention, just by like being -inaudible - like that people see that in my art and be like, so like one time I was at a screen festival and a woman sat down with me and said 'you have a beautiful soul' and like that's so sweet I loved that she felt she could tell me that. I don't know. I don't know what my intention was to have people compliment me and my beautiful soul um at like the start but its lovely that she had that reaction to what I was saying and doing. I think ultimately there's a creative urge sometime and it has to be be made I love that when that happens, its just like something is wanting to come through out and you're just a conduit for that kind of energy I love that so much. I made my friend recently a shawl out of sheep's fleece and I had the intention of making it one way but as I was making it it wanted to be made a different way so I was like either I can put my I can be like I don't know a controlling master and make it how I want to make it and but I didn't it wanted to come out this way and there was a moment there like a moment of choice can I relinquish my idea of what I wanted to make and like make it so that this is what it wanted to be. I think as well when you work with natural materials it has its own energy in it and sometimes you're just the guiding force like your not necessarily the creative way you're just sort of guiding the idea and I think that's really cool. And um she loves it. I initially had the idea it would be on her shoulder, but she actually quite likes wearing it across her chest and it's really interesting how she wears it versus how I thought she would. And I really like that and it looks really cool. It's also a colour I've not used before so it was really nice to see it on her, she got this beautiful curly hair it looks really cool. She needs like a big stick, a staff and just stand up on a mountain with hair blowing everywhere.

Question 3:

I think it's a nice word to be associated with. I think it like comes through because I have a gentle way of being in the world I'm reminded on when we were in new Zealand we were on a horse ride and the horse was called jane and my boyfriend was like is jane taking advantage of your gentle nature because jane was not wanting to go where I'd asked her to go. I think other people see gentleness in me I don't necessarily think of gentleness but I think that I have it like it's a very natural way of being um and I think sometimes that can make me more relatable and like I dunno I think I relate to people who are gentle. I think that's really important I remember when I was in Manchester I used to do train with the roller derby team, I didn't ever get in to the roller derby team because it was too brutal for me but I remember starting and I was like id done it in Shrewsbury and I was really really nervous but then my confidence grew and there was someone else there that was young and nervous and I felt like by being welcoming to her it was like it was almost like a previous part of myself I could see in this other person and she really loved that I was gentle to her an di think that really important and I think in a way, the way, I think in a way I kind of give people permission to embrace their like weird and sometimes a bit strange kind of side and I hope that just by being my true essence of myself that people can see that and be like wow I can be like her that's cool. Um and that's realy important to me even if I don't do it intentionally, its kind of in there.

I think courage is one that I have in me I really like the word courage because its about the heart and I think that's really lovely. The other day when I was going to the field, at work we've got 4 bulls, and they're like big bulls, and like as I was going in there I was like 'courage' because like cows can hear your heartbeat. How insane? They can hear each other's heartbeat and they can hear your heart beat. So like they know if your heart is beating out of your chest, they can hear it. So I need to have courage if I'm going in to the field with the bulls because I need to make sure they're safe make sure that they have enough water and they're gonna go in the field with the cows eventually when they go into season and I need to be able to do that so like that was really scary but I have done it and its okay. I think having courage to be yourself that's a big thing that I've like battled navigated throughout my life I have spent a lot of time not being myself and being myself in a way that made other people feel comfortable and to be able to accept me. And I think that chameleon part of me is a way of protecting myself, maybe I was never brave enough to be my true self. And then like I think, especially since the pandemic, I've been my actual true self and it takes a lot of courage to be your actual true self and like basically just like some people. If they're not interested just fuck em. You can come at it in an aggressive way or you can come at it in a I don't need to be like that because I feel good in my self and I don't need to sort of express it in a fuck you if you don't like me kind of way because I don't feel we don't have to get on with everyone. But its also nice to get on with other people and I like getting on with other people. And like I think especially with moving back to the country side its interesting because you have to navigate relationships with people that are older than you, younger than you people that have different political opinions than you but you can still be friends with people you don't see eye to eye on. I think when you are navigating the world and interacting with people with varying ages I cant remember where I was going with this and varying views you have to be sensitive how you navigate relationships with people and I think that's a really

valuable skill to have you have to be very emotionally mature to do that and hold different viewpoints and not end relationships over it and I really like that to be able to do that I think it's a really cool skill to have because in the past I would have been like 'no fuck you we don't believe the same thing I only want to be friends with people who believe the same thing'. And I think like that has value in some ways and also when your creating a community you have to be able to be in spaces with people who don't necessarily agree.. is that do do with my creative practice? I don't know

Hanna Varga

Question 1

Well uh I describe my creative practice as um a socially engaged, environmental art practice that is currently centered around sustainability and working with entirely by biodegradable materials uh foraged plant fibers and it manifests through cordage, rope and knot work. At the moment I am studying knot work, and I just received Arts Council Funding two months ago to spend a year studying knot work so um yes. I lead smaller and larger scale community projects for all ages. I travel a lot to festivals and symposia, I collaborate with other artists, I don't have a lot of products or objects as a result necessarily of my work currently, perhaps the only thing I have is the hand fastening rope that I told you a bit about earlier. Which is only for commissions, I work on maybe 3 or 4 of those every year. It's not a big part of my work right now, I um, however I do like working on hand fastening ropes every now and then because I love the ritual of union, I love all of the stories of where it originates from how a knot can symbolize connections and even in the language tying the knot comes from this ritual this pre-Christian, Celtic origins. Its an infinity loop two people tie over their hands and as the story goes so long as the knot is tied the marriage is in tact but its just the materiality of creating that intentional entanglement with another person in a piece of rope so. I think storytelling is somehow also a part of my work but perhaps less less in the realm of words and more in materiality. Does this answer your first question? Okay.

Question 2

So, intention, is um. Thank you. Interesting when you said the word intention, the first word that came immediately is um, I really love etymology the word intention and how that relates to attention and tension. Like both of those they are the same family of words and um. So an intention for me is slightly different to this definition you gave, maybe direction my attention in a certain way and I um, I'm interested in um. How well maybe this meeting point. How I can make and be in this world in ways that um that expresses what I need to care about but also helps me to understand my self-better as a human being and also something that contributes to the lives of others. (train went past). So that's the service part, but its going both ways in a way, that I feel I, I'm also trying to be sensitive to, I had a burn out a few years ago while I was still in London that last year, my work with bronze whilst still living in London in 2019 from the outside anyone would look at it and say oh that is one of the peaks of my art practice so far because I had exhibitions every month I was in so many different publications and interviews and there was just a lot of aten a lot of light, spotlight on me. And at the same time I ended up being

completely burnt out and feeling that I didn't have enough time to process what was happening I didn't have enough time to reflect back on the various travels and shows I was involved in, I was just continuously being productive but I had little time to process and reflect on what I was doing. In a way I felt I was doing a disservice to myself and to the art I was working on, in fact there are still projects from 2019 that I'm still tying up now. Because I had to put a hold on them when I reached burnout. I felt I had to drop everything from one day to the next because I was so unable to continue anything I just couldn't think I couldn't sleep so I had to stop everything. For about 2 months I was just sleeping, sleeping and eating and going out for a walk just lived a very humble existence. It was very painful to do that, and very necessary. I feel I became I became much more aware and much more sensitive to my own needs and sensitive also to the needs of others and also what I wanted to model to others in this world I didn't want to be a person that, also as a mother, I have a child. And he was 7 years old at the time, and I was thinking, this is not how I want him to develop his ideas of what a successful person is, constantly working, never having time for anything, never eating, never sleeping like, that's not who I wanted to be, that's not how I wanted to be successful. In fact, there was no success in it, there was so much tension and so much overworking, I found little joy in it, and it made me completely reassess everything really. And also, what art is for, if it destroys me? That was the other and how can it be more than just like beyond making a living out of it? For me that is no longer a measure of success. I feel um I remember then remember Van Gogh that I studied in art history in art school years before, how he never sold a single painting throughout his entire life and the kind of gentleness he was living with. Also trusting in himself and trusting what he was doing had value despite no one exchanging financial like no one financially apart from his brother has financially invested in his work to reaffirm his value throughout his life time and I found it always very touching and very sad how posthumously he celebrated and his artworks are amongst the most expensive artworks, paintings, in the world. And yet throughout his lifetime he was not considered also he was amateur artists, as in he didn't have professional training at an art school, and um but it also made me consider what it is that allows an artist to continue working and to continue to seek meaning that it's not just whether your celebrated by others or not or not even um yes redefining the entire ideas of success and worth and value. And it continues to be a journey. It's I don't think it's finished my work or questions with this I think um any time I meet someone, and they ask questions it allows me to articulate and reconsider.

Question 3

So, another quality that's important to me that comes from the process of how I gather the fibers and how I work with them and also relates to everything I said up until this point and that's reciprocity. As a quality I became conscious and sensitive to in recent years. There's a wonderful book I don't know if you know, braiding sweet grass, have you come across, yes, oh, its brilliant I would highly recommend to everyone its written by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Who is um an ecologist based in the US and she's part European, descendant of European colonizers, part native indigenous and in braiding sweetgrass its an incredible book where she writes about her understanding of ecology and interconnectedness informed both by her native indigenous routes and also from the perspective of those who came to settle and how we relate to the natural world. The book begins just the very beginning is incredible, she begins telling the story

of Sky Woman which is how turtle island was created according to native north American myth. And uh and how she arrives and creates the earth and creates turtle island and how all the other species contribute and coming with seeds in her pockets pregnant from the sky, sky woman, and how different it is to another creation myth, Adam and eve, who are being punished and you know banished from the garden of Eden and being cursed to work with hard labour and sweat I don't know how the bible puts it in English, like there is a curse that you will need to work with your sweat. The earth or toil or something like that. Anyway, she contrasts, that's where the book begins, its very beautiful, I think it's very good storytelling it includes some mythologies, spiritualities, native indigenous wisdom, but also because she's an ecologist, she studies moss, mosses. So also, she brings a lot of that scientific in parallel, and the braiding sweetgrass the entire book is like braiding various these strands and is very beautiful and that left a big impact on me and contributed a lot to reciprocity and how I understand it. There is something in it I read out loud to people, so sometimes I lead foraging walks before we start rope making because, even though we don't use the materials straight away because they need processing and that's time so we cant do that in a few hours. Most plant fibers can't be used fresh, they're very fragile and brittle they need drying out and rehydrating and sometimes the drying process can be weeks depending on what fibers you collect um an however I take people out on foraging walks because I would love for them to appreciate the time it takes to to walk in a landscape with open eyes to observe the environment and to see what is there in abundance around us because they are different things depending if we are in a city then you notice things in the cracks between the pavements on the verges in hedgerows in front gardens in little edges of parks, its entirely different to where we are here right now surrounded by so much greenery. But even amongst the greenery what is that I can pick what is that not going to be missed if I take it with me what is that I am allowed to take and in braiding sweetgrass the author writes about the native indigenous code of conduct it's called the honourable harvest to my knowledge that's the first time it's been written down because it exists in oral practice, but she wrote It down and she even said that she only ever heard these instructions being given, spoken, it's never been written down however I read this out loud to people and I only know the beginning by heart but it begins by um uh greet the ones to whom you arrive. So acknowledge that you are arriving to a space where other species are present where you come, don't just arrive somewhere without that. So it goes, never take the first, never take the last, ask permission before you take anything and um only take what you need and leave some for others. And there are many beautiful instructions in this honourable harvest, it's a series of invitations to engage with um the modern human world in reciprocity to engage as if I was part of a bigger whole and as if with the awareness and intention that my actions my steps anything I'm taking has an impact on other life around me other life forms, plants, and animals, and um yes that was it had a huge impact as well as other things, this is the thing I can name definitely that reshaped my ideas around reciprocity and how I am being in this world and when I encounter plant fibers for example I collect a lot of what grows around here, I collect docs, I collect grasses, I collect sometimes bark of trees I collect rushes I collect ferns, brambles, I mean I can name so many things I collect around here. However, I never take all of everything I find, I always leave a lot I have, um I mean it's not always an exact percentage what I take but maybe a handful of any given place like I would never take all of the rushes from any one patch I find, and the more I'm doing this the more I noticing little insects and butterflies and you know nesting birds that use that as a nesting material or they place their nest amongst the dense

rushes or the reeds. Also, fungi and many other life forms how they all connect to each other, it's not all for me. However I also feel we are being abundantly, um, these are also qualities that have been a journey for me to reframe not living with scarcity and not having enough but living with that there is enough and there is materials in abundance that's when I wake up in the morning and I go out that's what I feel when I look around. There is so much. I normally tell people in my village that if there was another 10 rope makers living here we would have enough material for all the 10 of us and there would still be enough, no one would notice, yes, yes. 10 people could comfortably make rope here full time and no one would notice if anything was taken like there is so much growing in abundance and yes the giving and taking and considering what role I am playing in it um I maybe I use also tenderness as quality as something that guides. In tenderness also the tending, the word, what does that mean to be tending to myself and to something else, to live with tenderness, and to work with tenderness. Sometimes I also feel that human I think interacting with other living beings around us, I don't have an experience that it is a problem, however interfering is a problem and I think the interfering comes from the exploitation and that non-regard for any other than my own or creating a hierarchy that I'm more important or my needs are more important. Yes, I think these are the most important. And of course, slowness and time comes into this, all of these that none of these qualities can be observed without slowing down and really listening, and also sitting a lot, just like we are doing right now. I very often go out and sit in places. To be present is something just um yes what's taking place around me, just listening. Sometimes when people ask me how long it took to make something, my most recent answer is 34 years because that's how old I am. And actually, everything I've done throughout my life has contributed, it's taken 34 years to make it. Because if you remove anything I wouldn't be able to make or do what I do right now and um.

Phase 3: Letter to participants

Dear (Name),

Thank you for participating in my research study, 'Positioning Gentleness within Contemporary Creative Practice: An exploration of intentions, qualities, methods and language'.

During this study I have facilitated studio visits with six creative practitioners, including yourself, and I have produced a research portrait from each visit. The aim of these portraits was to represent the intangible, the gentle, and the embodied qualities, of creative practice, that are often unseen, undocumented and undervalued.

The portrait I have created of your practice is a gift.

It is now yours, to do with as you wish.

All six portraits, along with the interviews, have contributed to research findings which I will soon be sharing through my thesis and a creative output. Enclosed are 6 questions for you which will help shape that output; it's purpose; it's format; it's audience. They include a range of short form written answers and multiple choice.

Before answering, please spend some time with your portrait, and consider how you feel about it, and your overall participation in the study.

Please answer as many as you can, feel free to contact me if you need clarification on a question. The questions should take between 5 and 30 minutes to answer, depending on how much you'd like to write – short answers are fine! Once you have completed your answers, please return to me, either physically or as a photograph or scanned image. Your answers will be documented and included in my thesis in line with the consent form you signed prior to our studio visit.

I wish you all the best with your creative practice going forward.

All the best,

Charlie Collins

Phase 3: Questionnaire

- 1. Firstly, how have you found your involvement in this study?** *Please share a brief comment about your experience, how you felt during the studio visit, and how you feel receiving this portrait.*

- 2. Do you feel the studio visit successfully allowed you to share your creative practice with me?** *Choose one.*

- 1 – No
- 2 – Not quite
- 3 – Not sure
- 4 – To an extent
- 5 – Yes

Optional – Please share a brief comment about your choice:

- 3. How well do you feel the portrait visually represents the gentle and embodied qualities within your creative practice?** *Choose one.*

- 1 – Not at all
- 2 – Slightly
- 3 – Moderately
- 4 – Very well
- 5 – Extremely well

Optional – Please share a brief comment about your choice:

4. If you choose to, how do you envisage using this portrait in the future? *This is not an exhaustive list, select multiple, or other if you have different ideas.*

- 1 - On a portfolio or website
- 2 - Within an application for a job, commission, funding or other
- 3 - On social media
- 4 - In an exhibition or publication
- 5 - For personal reflection
- 6 - Other - please specify:

5. Did your involvement in this study reveal anything new to you, about your practice or otherwise?

- 1 - Yes
- 2 - No

Optional – Please share a brief comment about your choice:

6. In what format do you think the portraits and findings from this research project should be shared? *An output could be; a zine offering recommendations on how embodied value can be captured; a digital report; an exhibition of portraits, exploring how we can visualise embodied value; a toolkit, etc. Please share your thoughts:*

Phase 3: Responses

Participant Feedback Questionnaire

Annie

1. Firstly, how have you found your involvement in this study? Please share a brief comment about your experience, how you felt during the studio visit, and how you feel receiving this portrait.

I've really enjoyed the process. Talking about my practice helped me to see how far I've come and to share thoughts with a fellow artist made me think more about the future. The portrait is beautiful and ^{to see through another's eyes} fascinating.

2. Do you feel the studio visit successfully allowed you to share your creative practice with me? Choose one.

- 1 - No
- 2 - Not quite
- 3 - Not sure
- 4 - To an extent
- 5 - Yes

Optional - Please share a brief comment about your choice:

3. How well do you feel the portrait visually represents the gentle and embodied qualities within your creative practice? Choose one.

- 1 - Not at all
- 2 - Slightly
- 3 - Moderately
- 4 - Very well
- 5 - Extremely well

Optional - Please share a brief comment about your choice:

I think it embodies a side of my practice that can sometimes feel lost in the day to day - a visual reminder of why I do what I do!

Participant Feedback Questionnaire

4. If you choose to, how do you envisage using this portrait in the future? This is not an exhaustive list, select multiple, or other if you have different ideas.

- 1 - On a portfolio or website
- 2 - Within an application for a job, commission, funding or other
- 3 - On social media
- 4 - In an exhibition or publication
- 5 - For personal reflection
- 6 - Other - please specify:

I think it's going to become part of my artist statement - an accessible way of understanding my practice that doesn't just rely on words.

5. Did your involvement in this study reveal anything new to you, about your practice or otherwise?

- 1 - Yes
- 2 - No

Optional - Please share a brief comment about your choice:

Because I'm self-taught I sometimes feel that I rather stumbled into being ~~to be~~ taking part in the study and thinking about my artistic philosophy/process made me realise I did have a direction.

6. In what format do you think the portraits and findings from this research project should be shared? An output could be; a zine offering recommendations on how embodied value can be captured; a digital report; an exhibition of portraits, exploring how we can visualise embodied value; a toolkit, etc. Please share your thoughts:

I love the idea of an exhibition of portraits without faces - maybe alongside a self-portrait in a similar vein from the artists and a zine alongside it.

1.

I enjoyed the process and the indepth interview. Not so much my damp, cold, and unheated 'studio', however hats off to the interviewer for jumping into my way of working and associated mess. Thank you for the portrait to serve as a reminder of the experience. It is a lovely collage of creative materials and styles.

2. 5 (Yes), felt in depth and linked to practice

3. 5 (Extremely Well), focus on the tile as a material and the gentle nature of restoration, conversation and repair of a historical object felt important, and therefore understandable that it is the focal point of the portrait.

4. 5 (For personal reflection). I don't think I would think of sharing the portrait as it is the work of another creative, however I would be happy for the author to share via any of the listed options. As mentioned, I feel the portrait serves as a good reminder of the day, and without it serving as a frame of reference, I think my responses to these questions would be much more limited.

5. 1 (Yes). I think the technique of deep hanging out, or similar, is innately reflective, and yielded great personal reflection on my end. As an artist, it is rare to encounter a conversation with someone willing to question and explore your work and practice in such detail.

6. Open to anything regarding presentation. Perhaps reversing the researcher and research subject relationship could be fun, displaying the portraits in the working environment in which they were made. Alternatively, I would question what environment they belong/fit in. Would something like the portraits sit well in an online academic journal format, or a contemporary exhibition gallery-type scenario? Personally, I am most interested in the ethnographic findings and learning more about how visual documentation supports research practice and how this could be mapped to other disciplines.