

Reframing, embodying, and in-betweening:

A conversation about experiences of *doing* practice-based research and research-creation

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Abstract: This article presents a conversation between one professor and two students in the PhD program at The Creative School, Toronto Metropolitan University, the first in Canada to offer a dedicated practice-based PhD opportunity to candidates from all creative disciplines. The discussion covers our own experiences of practice-based research and research-creation, and describes how this can be an extraordinarily powerful way to explore issues of identity, community, exclusion and inclusion, creativity, and human existence. We each share our individual pathways to practice-based research through the lens of garment-making, performance, and music-making, and how we have each found a place in the university to explore ideas and research through these mediums. We consider our experiences of making, doing and thinking about practice, and what this means as an impactful and transformational source of knowledge.

The Creative School at Toronto Metropolitan University is home to nine departments covering everything from performance and film-making to journalism and fashion and videogames. Our practice-based PhD program, Media and Design Innovation, launched in 2021, and at the time of writing – October 2023 – has just welcomed its third cohort. Other PhD programs in Canada had previously offered a ‘research-creation’ pathway, typically in the fine arts. (Broadly speaking, ‘research-creation’ is the Canadian term for practice-based research, as discussed below). Our

program was the first in Canada to offer a dedicated practice-based PhD opportunity to candidates from all creative disciplines, where practice – as both a research process and as creative work – is centred from the point of admission right through to the final PhD assessment.

In this conversation we wanted to talk about our own experiences of practice-based research and research-creation, and to articulate what makes this approach to research not merely ‘acceptable’ as a form of knowledge production, but as an extraordinarily powerful and meaningful way to explore issues of identity, community, exclusion and inclusion, creativity, and ... all of human existence. David Gauntlett teaches and supervises on the program, Justine Woods is a student in the first cohort, and Francisco-Fernando Granados is a student in the second cohort, but we are all here to talk about our experiences of making and doing and thinking about practice, and what this means as an impactful and transformational source of knowledge.

David Gauntlett: We could begin by saying a bit about our work and our practice. Justine, would you like to go first?

Justine Woods: Sure, David! It’s funny because when I am asked about my practice and *what I do*, I often pause for a moment and ask myself “*Justine, what do you do?*” I’ve noticed the reason I ask myself this is not because I don’t know what my practice is, or I am not confident in my work, but more because I see my practice as an expansive and complex embodiment of knowing and being that exists outside of the categories, borders and boundaries that much of ‘design’ has been defined by. It’s not something I can sum up in a single word or even a single phrase, and therefore I need that moment of pause to push outside of these confinements and fully acknowledge my practice from a place of care as one that exists beyond those borders.

I recently read Danah Abdulla’s (2021) chapter in *Design Struggles: Intersecting Histories, Pedagogies and Perspectives* where she unpacks these borders that exist within design and around design disciplines and specializations. Informed by Gloria Anzaldúa’s (2012) writing on existing in the borderlands, she proposes a “decolonial concept of border-thinking *within* design as a method of disciplinary disobedience for moving design towards more collective approaches” (Abdulla 2021: 228). Approaching design from this perspective supports and challenges designers to see their practice as one that is expansive beyond conventional confines and spills into interdisciplinary – in-between – spaces; spaces that rethink the fundamentals of Eurocentric categorizations and design specializations. It was comforting to read this chapter and find language, such as the term *border-thinking*, that has helped me process how I define my practice in a way that feels truly whole.



Figure 1: Justine Woods, our bodies are stitched with 193 years of diasporic love (back view), 2021. © Justine Woods.

That being said, I have come to the view (one that is open for continual evolution as I move through my career) that I am a creative scholar who centres garment-making as their primary method of research inquiry. In my work I re-frame methods of pattern drafting, stitching techniques, and construction methods within decolonial and relation-based contexts that support my body in thinking through and *feeling through* the role that garments play in resisting settler-colonial displacement of Indigenous ontology and bodies to place. I theorize my work through a concept called *re-stitching* (Woods 2021) and situate this concept as both theory and method as a means of exploring Indigenous body sovereignty in relation to land, to our ways of knowing and being, and to the individual and collective responsibilities we carry as members of our respective communities.

I am also a designer and garment artist. The garments I design, make and create are contextually rich, technically sound, and functionally considered. They are grounded in story, informed by place and identity, and worn with love. They are meant to be activated in relation to the land and to be adorned in return by their wear and function. They are not meant for the runway, nor will they ever be reproduced in a ready-to-wear context. This does not mean they are not a part of the fashion system. They exist as part of an alternative fashion discourse, one that operates outside of modernity/coloniality and parallel to the Western phenomenon of fashion. Slade and Jansen (2020) have defined and theorized this delinking as ‘decolonial fashion discourse.’ Decolonial fashion discourse acknowledges other ways of fashioning the body and “is about humbling contemporary fashion epistemology, to re-orient it through alternative trajectories of hope, alternative relations to earth, to community, to language, to bodies, to ourselves; through alternative forms of worlding the world” (832). It is within these alternative forms of worlding the world where my work lives and exists.

Francisco-Fernando Granados: I am a visual artist who has worked a lot with my body. For the first ten years, I focused on making performances as a way to understand my process of becoming a citizen after coming to Canada as a refugee claimant. I appreciate Justine’s mention of the in-between spaces, as it echoes Vinh Nguyen’s proposition of the refugee as a figure that “occupies the space of in-between, an ontology of interstitiality.” Making work during that period of transition was intense: pressing up against architectures for hours as I continuously drew the outline of my profile or performing the movements required of a person detained during a standard strip search procedure in order to turn a study of movement into a readymade. I was young and developing a practice by rolling with the punches: trying to figure out what happens when you are allowed to stay in the country, to have the opportunity to go to university, and become an artist. My refugee experience was not explicit in the work, but more of a trace that carried forward as a critical intuition.



Figure 2: Francisco-Fernando Granados, spatial profiling... Durational performance and site-specific drawing. Installation view, 'Standard Forms' at the Berrie Center for Performing & Visual Arts – Ramapo College, New Jersey, USA, 2017. © Francisco-Fernando Granados.

I existed between very different worlds: working in community as a peer support worker for other newcomer youth, becoming involved in the artist-run performance community, training in fine arts once I was able to access post-secondary education, and studying feminist and queer theory. Writing also developed as a parallel practice to making art that helped me understand the relationship between my politics and my aesthetics.

About eight years ago, things in my life changed and the ways of working I was used to were no longer available to me. Drawing emerged as the thing I could still do when I was no longer capable or interested in pushing my body to its limits. Something of that durational way of working perhaps did carry over to the process of making lots of quick digital sketches of abstract compositions on my phone.

Before I fully understood what I was doing, I began to accumulate an archive of drawings. As the opportunity to make projects for different sites came up, I began to translate select drawings into site-specific installations, prints, and books. Eventually, I started working on a tablet using more sophisticated software. This more studio-based aspect of my practice happens alongside contextual work: trying to figure out how to materialize the compositions as site-specific installations, creating a dialogue between the work and the histories that it speaks to, and finding ways for the work to move within the communities where it's being presented. This work requires just as much commitment but a different, more grounded energy than the work I started out doing. I can now see that a lot of that early work was a response to circumstances that I felt had been imposed on me, whereas in the work I am doing now I feel like I am able to propose more, to meet my context halfway rather than simply react to it.

DG: Thank you for those wonderful introductory sketches. For me, I completed a PhD and got an academic job 26 years ago. Since then I've done lots of things including writing, drawing and events, websites and digital stuff, and worked with LEGO – the company – for many years as part of my work to create 'platforms for creativity', which is my term for anything – workshops, toys, things, technologies, events – which *invite* people to step into a world of creativity that otherwise they would not have been part of.

To answer the question today, in terms of what I make: I write books, which is a very solo activity in the doing of it; and I try to create spaces or experiences or platforms for others, which is not solo and is not meant to be about me. In thinking about creative practice these days, though, I especially think about music and music-making. And again, for me, the creation of that is largely solo. I make electronic music which is organic and electronic sounding, and making music fascinates me the most, with the time-consuming careful crafting of it, and partly because of the way it does and does not take up space.

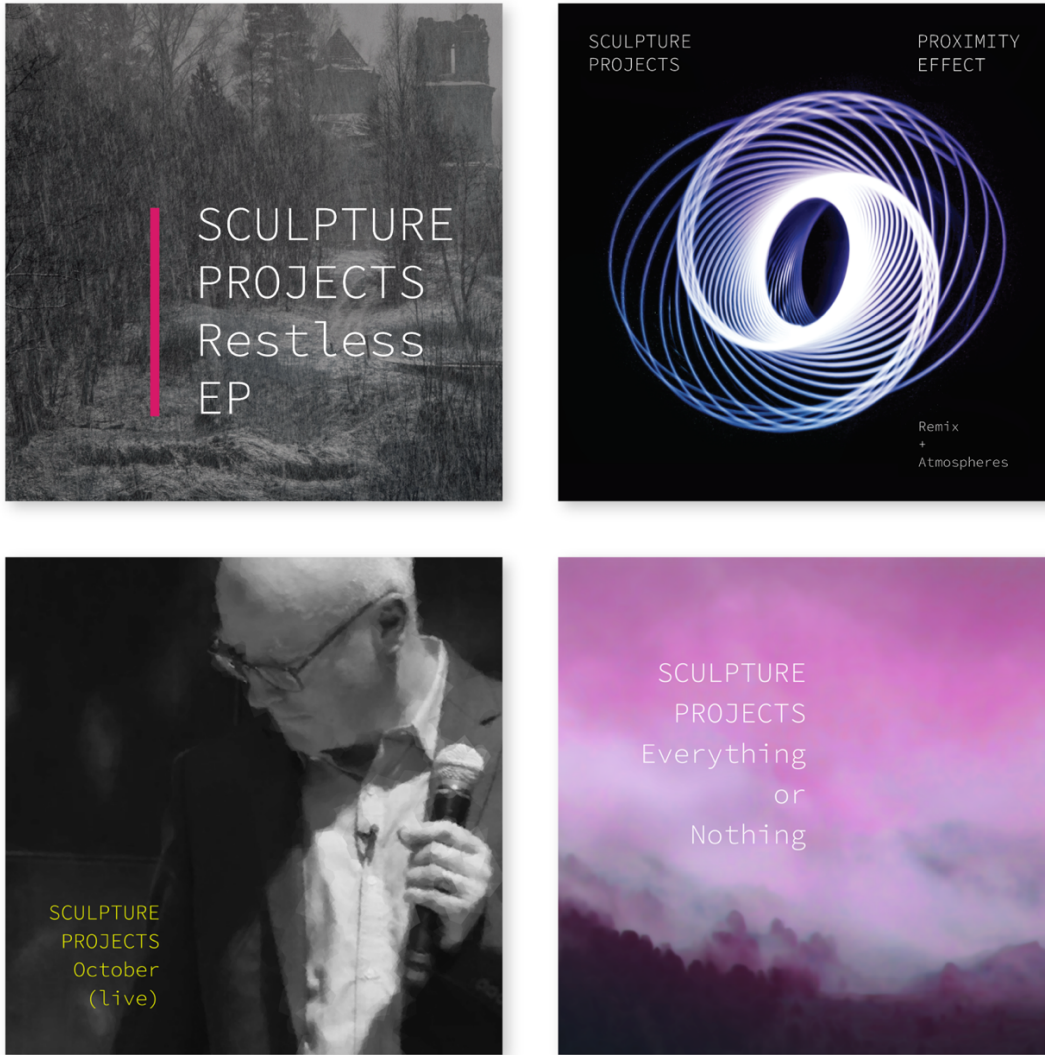


Figure 3: David Gauntlett, sleeve designs from four Sculpture Projects music releases, 2022–23. © David Gauntlett.

Recorded music seems different to everything else because it is invisible, and is only present if someone has caused it to be played, and if you are attending to it. If I'm asking you to attend to it, that's kind of demanding, because you have to listen to it for 5 or 10 minutes or whatever. But you don't have to. And it's not taking up physical space. I'd like to make a show of visual art, but space is so limited that if I leaned on some of the opportunities available to a white male professor to have an exhibition, I'd be taking up space that I believe should be going to young, black or Indigenous people or people of colour, and/or queer artists, people who are not me and who deserve those spaces. At least music doesn't take up spaces.

Music, of course, has the opposite problem — an infinite amount of virtual space where tens of thousands of people are making perfectly wonderful music that would be worth a listen, probably, but nobody has got the time. Trying to get people to listen to your music is like turning up with a basket of lovely cakes, but on a planet that's already made of delicious cakes. There's nothing wrong with your cakes, but that's not the problem. There are just too many cakes.

My writing and other creative online things have typically had a decent audience, and it was not unreasonable to think that I was providing things that people might want. But a thing I find quite engaging about the whole music making-and-sharing process – to my surprise – is that I'm ok with people not especially liking my music. Music is very personal anyway – we already know that different people like different things. Nobody has really asked for it, everybody would be fine without it, but I'm going to do it anyway. I say 'to my surprise' because I would think that that lack of interest in the world would be upsetting. But it's an interesting tension to engage with.

FFG: I resonate with the idea of making things that take up no space and that can come with you anywhere you are. The question of 'who asked for this' feels important if I am working within a framework like a museum or regional gallery. Public institutions need to make an argument for how the work they present relates to the lives of the people they serve. It is an important curatorial question. As an artist, it's a question I think about if I am approached by an institution or when I am applying for a public grant.

I wouldn't be able to think about it when I'm in-studio drawing though. There, it is more like I am giving into an untranslatable drive. I need that space of creative making in my life, regardless of whether anybody will want to see it or show it. I come back to the work to revise it, edit it, or recombine it when I am thinking of how a viewer might encounter the work. I think of that as the public aspect of my role as an artist. The more private aspect of my practice builds an archive that I can draw from when I have the opportunity to make something public.

JW: When it comes to my work, my audience is first and foremost my community. They are the ones who I am doing this work for. Therefore, throughout my process, it is important for me to ensure I am creating, positioning, and disseminating my work in ways that are accessible, especially when my work is positioned in tandem or adjacent to academia.

As I have fallen into academic spaces more and more over the years, it has been important to me to navigate these spaces with care and with agency. I have found comfort in Audra Simpson's

(2014) theory of ethnographic refusal and Leanne Simpson's theory of generative refusal that "inherently creates Indigenous bodies more connected to each other and the land, and that act out, through relationality, Indigenous thought." (Simpson 2017: 178). Both of these theories refuse settler colonialism and generate alternatives where Indigenous sovereignty and liberation thrive. Theories of refusal have also been explored and translated creatively through the work of Indigenous artists such as Laura Grier and Rebecca Belmore.

My own exploration of refusal culminated in the design and construction of a jacket containing beaded text that wrapped around the outside of the jacket sleeves, as well as on the lining on the inside sleeves. The beaded text reads fragments from a letter my late grandmother wrote in 1979 documenting family memories of herself, my father, my grandfather, and my great-grandfather travelling up to the Moon River (Ontario) to visit the Métis settlement where my great-grandfather was born. Honouring the structure and cylindrical shape of the sleeves allowed me to bead certain parts of the text I wished to present to the outside world – the audience – and which parts I wished to keep for only myself and my family. This gesture of refusal, of choosing to reveal parts of the text and keep other parts hidden is a radical gesture that gifts Indigenous agency and dismantles the settler colonial and academic gaze and desire over Indigenous, knowledge, bodies and land. Refusal also gifts me with the comfort of knowing that we, as Indigenous artists and creatives in academia, don't have to give all of ourselves to the Institution that we are studying or working in.

DG: I assume – tell me if I'm wrong – that we all started as people who like to make things, but then over time we have each found a place for it in an academic, university context. Can you say something about the transition – if you have experienced it as a transition, or maybe some other word – from creativity as part of general life, to creativity positioned within a university?

JW: For me, David, you are correct. My mother was the one who first taught me how to sew when I was six years old. I come from a long line of seamstresses and sewers in my family, therefore sewing and textile-related craft has always felt very natural to me. Growing up, I found myself expressing creativity in two spaces: one was sitting at my sewing machine doing garment-based and textile-based explorations, and the other was out on the land.

It's interesting because looking back at my upbringing I have come to understand the ways in which these two spaces have come together to inform my practice today. It's also interesting to think about the colonial dichotomy that has been placed on these spaces, for example positioning sewing and textiles as domestic, household crafts and positioning practices such as hunting and

fishing as part of the construction of “Canadian” rurality, while simultaneously displacing Indigenous agency and autonomy in relation to the land. Engaging in both of these spaces creatively from a young age has allowed me to blur the binary and bring these two spaces together in ways that my ancestors have always done because our artistic and creative practices have always been deeply informed by an embodied relation to the land.

Moving my creative practice into the Institution, I felt quite a bit of disconnection at first. Although I gained an abundance of technical skill and knowledge that has informed the quality of the work I produce today, I was missing a connection to the land, to community, and to the type of knowledge I grew up with, that was not a part of the curriculum at that time. I am grateful this has now changed and evolved, and I have the privilege to teach Indigenous fashion and craft courses in the same program I was once an undergraduate student in, supporting the remembering (Smith, 1999) of Indigenous bodies (and non-Indigenous bodies) to understandings of fashion that exist outside of the Eurocentric realm. It wasn't until I started my Master of Design at OCAD University where I started to feel that re-connection while learning and further developing my creative practice in an academic space. During those two years of my master's degree, I feel like I landed in my practice and found the theory that I was looking for to support how I wanted to go about my work in a way that was truly, authentically, me – and in a way that honoured my family, my community, and those two spaces that play such an important role in how I exist and create in the world. However, at this point I still did not see myself doing a PhD.

I am grateful for the amazing folks I met at OCAD such as Jason Baerg, Peter Morin, and Michael Prokopow, my critical theory professor at the time and the one to say that I needed to do a PhD. That is when I realized this path could be a possibility and that it was a responsibility of mine to continue making it accessible for the next generation of Indigenous thinkers, and makers, and dreamers, like me.

FFG: I have been drawing for as long as I can remember, and I took musical theatre classes when we lived in Guatemala, but I didn't have full consciousness about wanting to be an artist until we had to come to Canada. What happened for me was that I fell in love with art as a form of discourse just as I fell in love with critical thinking. I was really hungry for a language that could help me make sense of what had happened to me and my family, and all the people I met who were refugees and immigrants. There was also a feeling of doubt in the narratives of Canadian benevolence that refugees are supposed to accept when we are allowed to stay, and the academic context was a place that gave me the tools to describe and name some of these intuitions. Once I was able to attend post-secondary, I knew it was a privilege. I wanted to soak

in as much as I could. I had really good teachers, like Lynn Ruscheinsky at Langara College, who taught the first Cultural Studies course I ever took. She handed our second-year class texts by bell hooks, Judith Butler, Edward Said, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. I was 21 and struggled to fully understand them, of course, but the in-class discussions always unpacked the ideas a little further, and always left me curious.

At the same time, I was learning technique from visual artists like Lesley Finlayson and Gordon Trick in the basement of that college. Soon after, I started doing performances outside of school in artist-run spaces. It felt like thinking and doing were closely connected, and that I could make art that went deeper and was more satisfying if I had the opportunity to reflect critically on what I was making. I was excited to find echoes in other artists, near or far, and to figure out how my work was related to those practices, but also how it was different. I think that's an aspect of research I still engage in to this day.

There were a number of conceptual artists in Vancouver at the time who came from racialized/Indigenous, migrant, queer, and feminist backgrounds: Ikbal Singh, Manolo Lugo, Margaret Dragu, Kristina Lee Podesva, Abbas Akhavan, Rebecca Belmore, Skeena Reece, Golboo Amani, Randy Lee Cutler, Susan Stewart, Amy Zion, Patrick and Francis Cruz, Kika Thorne. Some were teachers, some were classmates, others just people in the community whose work I admired. What everyone had in common was a sense that process and a critical perspective had an important place in art-making. Randy Lee Cutler co-taught an incredible seminar for undergrads at Emily Carr University in 2008 that was called "Theory Is My Co-Pilot." And that is true for me.

The mainstream of Vancouver art at the time had a strong interest in theory and philosophy, but not as much interest in the politics of gender, race, class, or migration. Our community was small but engaging enough that I felt nurtured and compelled to continue claiming the academic context as a space where I could work out the relationship between thinking and making as I moved to Toronto to do my Masters. I understand that the Masters/PhD pathway is not for everybody, and I think we need to respect and validate knowledge that doesn't come from academic sources. In my case, academia has been a framework that has supported me intellectually and allowed me to continue being engaged as an artist.

DG: And for me, on the question of 'creativity positioned within a university' ... well I always just wanted to do things that were interesting for me, and which some other people might therefore find interesting too.

I'm not from an academic family and I found it really hard to see why you would want to produce academic journal articles that people in the everyday world never had any contact with whatsoever. There was also the idea that you would do journal articles because it was 'good for your CV', which did not seem like a very convincing or authentic reason to do something – or for anyone else to care. And it reinforced the impression that academic journals are just not really things designed to be *read* by anyone.

So I always wanted to do things which were not that, and I wanted to explore if, by doing so, we could change the shape of what's acceptable or accepted in a university – and then also the boundaries of *who* is acceptable or accepted in these institutions.

I liked books, and I know what books are, so I wrote books, in accessible language, and alongside that I made a website full of enthusiastic stuff about queer theory and gender identity and other things that were exciting me – and this was the late 1990s, when there were not so many of those, so it got quite well-known. To make the website more engaging and inclusive, and more pleasurable to create, I included things like fun quizzes and mini art projects, and I made a set of theory trading cards, which people enjoyed free online, and which also later became a published set of actual cards. There were various things like that. And my drawing project, *A Drawing A Day*, which ran to 857 drawings. And so on. This wasn't "practice-based research" though – or if it was, I was not aware of it.

Meanwhile, I had developed a way of doing sociological research, which we called 'creative research methods', in which people were invited to *make* something – and then talk about it – as part of the process (Gauntlett, 1997, 2007). I did it where people made videos, or drawings, or collage, and then that led into the collaboration with the LEGO Group, where we developed a workshop process where people would be building metaphors of their identities or experiences, in LEGO. That was a powerful method, but again – as it happens – it wasn't actually "practice-based research", partly because I was asking research *participants* to exercise their creativity. The person-of-interest who was making things and talking about their meanings was, quite deliberately, not me. To my younger self, that just sounded entirely wrong and self-indulgent. I had running battles with the academics in the subfield of 'visual sociology', who took photographs themselves, because I thought it was obvious that you should hand the camera over to the people you claim to be interested in. I couldn't believe that they wanted to keep the camera to themselves, and argued, essentially, that they were doing sociology wrong.

But all of these things were ways to bring creative activity into my university life. And later still, when my specialism became creativity itself (Gauntlett, 2018, 2022), it seemed obvious that I should have ongoing creative practices of my own, as part of this work, so that I could recognise the feelings and frustrations of the creative process as I sought to develop creativity in others.

And *then*, much more recently, I was writing a blog post outlining practice-based research, because I wanted a concise explanation that I could give to students (Gauntlett 2021a), and I immediately wanted to write a follow-on one called “So do *I* do practice-based research?” (Gauntlett, 2021b), purely for my own curiosity – and because it seemed a reasonable way to test the definitions of practice-based research. I had always *liked* practice-based research but I didn’t claim to be doing it. But I was genuinely surprised to find that many of the things I had been doing fitted squarely within the frames of practice-based research. And so, since then, I have more straightforwardly embraced it. So these days I make music as practice-based research, and the thing being explored is the creative process, which is probably the most self-indulgent mode of practice-based research. It couldn’t *all* be practice about practice, could it? But it makes sense for me, because my academic work is anyway about the necessity of creativity, so I’ve got a strong excuse.

Following on from that: there are several existing definitions of practice-based research and research-creation (e.g. Loveless, 2019, Gauntlett 2021a). But can you say what this kind of approach means to you, and why it is especially meaningful for you?

JW: I was a creative before I was an academic. Therefore, falling into academia as someone who has always centered creating and making as a way to understand the world and critically think, it only felt natural to centre making when it comes to my research process. Practice-based research is meaningful to me because it opens a space where I can utilize my craft to think through research questions in a more embodied and tactile way. I appreciate the ways in which practice-based research prioritizes experiential knowledge production and mobilization and embodied knowing as valid forms of research inquiry. I also appreciate the ways in which theory has the ability to be expanded and pushed further through practice-based research inquiry, leading to new and alternative theoretical understandings that arise outside of text-based research inquiry.

A key example of this can be found in Sampson’s (2018) research on walking and wearing (shoes) as a research methodology, where she explores wearing as a tool for practice-based research. Sampson highlights how “knowledge produced in fashion practice-based research is not always articulated or articulable in text” (Sampson 2018: 58). To understand how we come to

know garments, she prioritizes the embodied experience of clothing and the act of wearing as a wear-based research method to “open up new avenues in fashion and textile knowledge, producing different perspectives on the spaces and situations where body, cloth and psyche meet” (56).

It is also important to acknowledge that practice-based research and this concept of *thinking-through-making* or *thinking-through-doing* is not a new method of knowledge production and mobilization. There is a section from the first chapter of Simpson’s (2017) *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* where she writes:

No matter what we were doing together, those Elders always carried their Ancestors with them. They were in constant communication with them as they went about their daily lives engaged in practices that continually communicated to the spiritual world that they were Nishnaabeg. I didn’t understand this. I kept asking them about governance, and they would talk about trapping. I would ask them about treaties, and they would take me fishing. I’d ask them what we should do about the mess of colonialism, and they would tell me stories about how well they used to live on the land. I loved all of it, but I didn’t think they were answering my questions. I could see only practice. I couldn’t see their theory until decades later. (18)

I remember this paragraph resonating deeply as I read this chapter for the first time. Indigenous ways of knowing and being are centred around a reciprocal relationship with both practice *and* theory. One cannot be fully understood without the other. This concept of practice-based research is a relatively recent method of research inquiry within the Western Institution that is gradually being accepted as a valid form of research inquiry, however, it is important to acknowledge that coming to know through embodied practice and theory has always been at the core of Indigenous intelligence systems (Simpson 2017). We need to honour this.

FFG: It feels key that those of us who are settlers acknowledge and honour your point, Justine, in ways that do not simply appropriate and extract from these Indigenous embodied ways of knowing. I’ve had the chance to see Rebecca Belmore do a number of performances including *Making Always War* (2008), *Facing the Monumental* (2012) where I had the honour of being an assistant, and *Clay on Stone* (2016). Her embodied approach to process, site, duration, and history helped me understand how art could indeed be, as you say, a means of refusal. In my own body and practice, this refusal existed in relation to practices of assimilation into narratives of nationhood that justify settler colonialism (Granados, 2015). An earlier, very formative

experience was holding a boom mic during an interview with Alanis Obomsawin when I was part of a participatory action research project for immigrant and refugee teenagers facilitated by filmmaker Joah Lui around 2003-4. When we asked her about her approach to working with communities as she makes her films, she talked to us about the importance of listening; that she didn't go in with a camera first, trying to extract something, but that it was a process of understanding the stories of the people she works with. Her generosity in sharing this with us, a group of then-recently arrived youth, moves and humbles me to this day. Because of the privilege of experiences like this, the notion that thinking and making are deeply linked makes perfect sense.

I could connect these experiences with the concept of 'research-based practice' when it was introduced during my undergraduate education in Randy Lee Cutler's classroom. I understood research-based practice as a way of allowing ideas and histories to give shape to intuitions as one makes art. Research-based practice gave me a means to cite my sources, find artistic genealogies, and work towards undoing fantasies of 'genius' that are often still found in the visual arts.

In my current practice, drawing is the key driver for practice-based research. The ongoing series of digital drawings I have been working on since 2018, called *letters*, now has more than 500 compositions. Over the years, I have realized that rather than making discrete artworks with a defined beginning and an end, my work operates through extended actions that create archives of compositions, gestures, and intuitions that are then materialized or staged in specific contexts for presentation. The PhD is allowing me to continue with this studio practice while building in time to read and write, going deeper into discourses that have informed my work. It is also giving me the chance to experiment with new practices like dramatic writing. My hope is that these bodies of work can evolve together and inform one another, seep into each other, in ways I cannot yet know, or expect.

DG: Yes, thank you for these wonderful answers. For me too, it's about the unity of making and thinking, or creating and discovering – not that one thing leads to the other, but that they are *just one thing*. I don't want to appropriate Indigenous ways of knowing, or pretend that my way of moving towards knowledge is 'just the same' as that very deep and integrated approach, but it seems only reasonable to admit that Indigenous communities had it right all along. And meanwhile the strict quantitative and statistical research methods – as used by, for instance, scholars in Psychology departments studying creativity – just seem like absolute archetypes of colonialism, as well as being strikingly *alienated* from actual living things – people, feelings and experiences.

So practice-based research means we can shake up what academic research looks like, and how it can be shared, and who might be doing it, in more equitable and inclusive ways – and also, we are getting a kind of research which is *all about* being oriented towards deep, meaningful and rich insights. So it's better in all ways, and much superior to the traditional Western methods that positively tremble with insecurity and lack of conviction as they try to impose readymade, deliberately simplistic frames of 'science' on complex and multifaceted phenomena that they refuse to properly engage with.

Finally I want to ask – we've highlighted the centrality of the *process* of making *things*. The 'things' might be garments, or performances, or music, or drawings, or whatever. And those *things* are a crucial part of how we tell our stories, or share discoveries. So, do we still need text?

JW: I think text is still important and should hold hands with the creative work that has been made. My dear friend and Tahltan performance artist, Peter Morin, once said to me that the ways in which we write about our artwork, should be just as much of a work of art as the artwork itself. This has influenced me and given me the courage to write in ways that exist outside of conventional academic writing, such as narrative writing or poetry. I am still able to achieve the same level of contextual rigor when explaining my theoretical and methodological choices and intentions – I just do so creatively.

FFG: In my case, texts are one of the *things* that I make as a part of my practice. When I sit down to write, the only way I can get anything done is by approaching it in a similar way to my drawings: outlining the main gestures or directions, often in an intuitive way; then slowly crafting the specific contours of each section of the *thing*, building it up in layers, and finding resonances or tensions within the different parts using a more analytical approach... Whether these texts end up fitting within established academic protocols for publication is a different issue; some do and some do not. At the level of making, the only way I can write is by treating it the same way I was taught to approach a picture plane, or the same way I give shape to an action; but this is very particular to my practice. I think writing can be a part of the range of practices involved in practice-based research, but it needs to be de-centred.

DG: Yes. Sometimes people say, you have a *practice*-based PhD program, so why do the students still have to do *writing*? An obvious answer might be to say that of course we want to know what the practitioner intended – what they did and why they did it. So then you have, first

and foremost, some creative output, and, secondarily, some writing ‘about’ that output. But that’s not quite right either.

What we actually want is a *unity* of practice and reflection-on-practice, and therefore I wouldn't say it's practice first and writing/reflection second: I'd say it's a combination of the two, interwoven. The creative works probably also stand on their own, as artistic or innovative things, that can be admired, and which – like all artworks – may have a range of different meanings for all the different people who encounter them. You don't *have* to read pages of text to appreciate them. But in the context of a PhD, or other academic work, which is a research journey towards new understandings and new ways of being, then I don't feel apologetic that some of this will need to be reflected in a bunch of writing and maybe diagrams, photos, video, social media posts, and anything else that helps people to understand your insights.

I've really enjoyed this conversation, and I always learn a great deal from speaking and creating with you, and all of our practice-based PhD students. Thank you so much.

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