CO-WORKING
How furnished spaces
WITH
contribute to
THINGS
the emergence of artworks

Doctoral Thesis Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Abstract

In recent years, a significant amount of attention has been given to the relationship between art and labour, to the nature of artistic labour, and to the feminist critique of Marxist thought on reproduction. Yet in different ways, these analyses have been based on a hylomorphic model of creation, in that they take for granted the domination of form over inert matter, and characterise the labour of maintenance as repetitive toil, which is counterpoised to the inventive creative work of the artist.

This practice-based doctoral project asks how furnished spaces such as the studio, workshop and home contribute to the processes from which art works emerge. The project examines the ‘reproductive’ work involved in furnishing working spaces and maintaining them, through engaging in a series of practice-based approaches (painting, drawing and print-making). It initiated from an exploration of the constraints and opportunities of domestic arrangements for the production of art works through the work Vertical Studio (2010 onwards), which furnishes a domestic space as a working home studio, and went on to explore existing furnished spaces such as the print-making workshop, testing their affordances with a set of rule-based procedures.

For the physicist Karen Barad, apparatuses of production are labourers that make unpredictable and irreplaceable contributions to the processes that they facilitate. Drawing on Barad’s work I demonstrate that rather than merely containing furniture, materials, tools and machines, furnished spaces are also labourers that do some of the work involved in the emergence of art works. However, there are no ‘raw’ materials in the studio, the workshop, or the home: and I draw on the philosopher Gilbert Simondon to argue that all matter is ‘worked’ matter, and that materials are produced and prepared. Drawing on Simondon’s critique of the separation of form and matter in hylomorphism, and his re-evaluation of maintenance, I re-examine the productivity of the work of setting up and maintaining furnished spaces. There is a double-sidedness that connects the work that things do to the work of making things work: by defining both the home and studio as furnished spaces that work, the project suggests a new way of advancing beyond the distinction between productive and reproductive labour, and reveals reproductive labour as a set of practices the productivity of which is concealed and underplayed in current understandings of artistic labour.
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10 · Introduction
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Introduction
1. Project outline

This practice-based research project investigates the role of spatial arrangements of things, such as the workshop, studio, and home, in the emergence of artworks. Rather than thinking of these furnished spaces as merely containers for furniture, materials, tools and machines, the project seeks to establish how they play a part in the activities they facilitate, and do some of the work involved. Taking into account the productivity of things arranged as furnished spaces allows us to uncover the productivity of the work of setting up and maintaining furnished spaces: the two are revealed as two inseparable sides of the same line of inquiry. What is traditionally defined as “maintenance”, “reproductive labour”, or “housework” is revealed as a set of practices that includes, together with the humdrum of repetitive activities, constant observation and moments of invention. The intimate and reciprocal relationship with things that these activities foster creates the spaces of possibility for new artworks, and life, to be sustained.

In a 1947 essay artist Anni Albers wrote that ‘if we sit at our desk designing... we are excluding the material as our co-worker, as the directive force in our planning.’ This striking expression of ‘co-working with materials’ echoes Russian Constructivist Alexandr Rodchencko’s 1925 call for ‘our things in our hands to be equals, comrades’. ‘Co-working with things’, to borrow Anni Albers’s expression, is intended to evoke the double-sidedness which is at the centre of the project: things and people work side by side in

2. The concept of co-working with things appears for the first time in Russian art critic Boris Arvatov’s 1925’s essay ‘Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing’ (translated by Kiaer 1997: 124)
3. Quoted in art historian Christina Kiaer’s essay ‘Rodchenko in Paris’ (1996: 3)
furnished spaces, and if one takes seriously the work that things do, the
labour of ‘reproduction’ also has to be re-examined and revalued. ‘Work’ is a
contested term with a complex history, which this project addresses directly
through a range of theoretical approaches, but also importantly through the
sustained engagement with practice in the home, studio and workshop.4

As a practice-based project, this research was shaped by a direct engage-
ment with an array of activities, machines, tools, materials and people in
different ‘furnished spaces’. The project began with the making of an art-
work, *Vertical Studio* (2010-ongoing), which exploited the constraints and
opportunities of creating a studio environment inside a domestic space by
making a series of paintings which could be exhibited as a free-standing
modular structure (fig.1-2). The encounter with Loughborough University’s
Printmaking workshop, facilitated by printmaking tutor Pete Dobson, led to
two further bodies of work designed to engage with some of the equipment
available there. A series of solo and group exhibitions allowed me to ex-
plain the consequences of taking the things I was making out of their spac-
es of emergence and let them be shaped by new contexts. Co-organising
an exhibition by artist Anna Barham afforded an analysis of her practice in
terms of constructing furnished spaces as ‘apparatuses of production’. Two
conversations with practitioners, Barham and Dobson, provided evidence
of the double-sidedness of co-working with things within their practices.5

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4. For an examination of work see Part 1 section 5 and Part 2 section 3.
5. See the Appendix for a detailed record of exhibitions and for transcripts of the
two conversations.
The development of this research project unfolded through an engagement with a variety of theoretical and artistic material and with a number of furnished spaces, some of which I made and some of which I found. As a practice-based project, the theoretical and artistic encounters that marked its development had a direct influence on the practice activities, but also, the practice dictated the orientation of the research and offered practical answers to theoretical questions, sometimes in the guise of machinic breakdowns and practical impossibilities.

The practice-based methodology I experimented with over the course of the project was structured by the initial decision to examine the particular, contingent constraints of space, time and resources I found myself entangled in, through working methods, such as the use of layers in painting and a practice of automatic drawings, which had sedimented as my artistic identity over the years. The encounters with people and furnished spaces that structured the research are not anecdotal in this context: they represent the constraints and opportunities that made the project what it is, especially as the practice based strategies sought to engage and dramatise these encounters directly.

At the beginning the project was organised around questioning production, labour and productivity, terms routinely applied to art works and artistic activities. A critique of these terms was attempted, based on a hypothesis that they failed to express the active role of materiality within actual artistic processes, while also misrepresenting the non-productive character of aspects of artistic activities. Trying to find out more about how processes of making are understood, led to the study of production and productivity in Marxist thought, through an interest in theories of post-Fordism and ‘immaterial’ labour which, although they illuminated aspects of my lived experiences of labour as an intern in commercial galleries, public institutions and magazines.
in the contemporary art world of the late 2000, ultimately seemed only to function in a context where the contribution of things was concealed. The Carrot Workers Collective and the Precarious Workers Brigade, active from 2010 helped me question my experiences of precarious labour. Autonomist feminists such as Silvia Federici, encountered through the work of feminist writers Kathi Weeks and Marina Vishmidt, provided the tools with which to take into account the materiality of the everyday and the hidden hierarchies and gendered oppression onto which the current wage regime is built. This led to organising a symposium, ‘Making Something From Nothing’, at Radar, Loughborough, in 2013, where issues of artistic labour, value and ‘female’ craft were explored with artists Andrea Buettner, Maria Pask, Ciara Phillips, Jenny Richards (Manual Labours), and writers Marina Vishmidt and Jess Baines.

In the meantime, from following the flourishing of a feminist New Materialism a specific interest in the work of physicist Karen Barad’s emerged, especially her proposal for a new understanding of causality stemming from an exploration of the scientific laboratory from the inside, in its material incarnation. Slowly the focus of the project moved from trying to test the activeness of singular objects, through Object Oriented and Speculative Realist approaches, to conceiving of arrangements of things, and Baradian apparatuses of production, as ensembles that should be examined as porous wholes, because they function in specific ways and defy classic philosophical understandings of causality, behaving as more than the sum of their parts. This is where the concept of furnished space originated, as a concept that could do justice to the knowledge emerging from co-working with things as complex arrangements in the studio and workshop.

6. In the period from 2008 to 2011 I worked as an intern for David Risley Gallery, Monika Sprueth Philomene Magers, Galerie Yvon Lambert (briefly), The Drawing Room, Auto Italia South east, The Serpentine Gallery, Frieze. I was also the director’s assistant at Arcade, London, and subsequently a P.A. for artist Annie Ratti.
The work on skilled practices of anthropologist Tim Ingold was introduced through discussions with the members of of c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e , the Brussels project space that exhibited this practice based research project in 2014 as a solo exhibition, A Record of Unaddressed Activity (fig. 52). This provided the essential connection with Gilbert Simondon’s philosophical of technology, and his critique of the hylomorphic model of creation, which represents an antidote to the supposed passivity of matter within Marxist understandings of productive labour. C-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e also gave me the opportunity to co-organise an exhibition of the work of artist Anna Barham in 2015 (fig. 5), which offered insights into the exhibition as a furnished space, and art making as a set of strategies to invite collaborations with both people and machines.

Many explorations and intellectual adventures were abandoned, such as for example, the psychoanalytical study of desire economies which had oriented me towards Lyotard, Baudrillard, Lacan, at the very beginning of the project, and the subsequent curiosity towards philosophies which reevaluate the productivity of nature, such as Ian Hamilton Grant’s and Quentin Meillasoux’s. Withdrawn, non-relational objects such as Graham Harman’s simply did not speak to the interactions this project examines. For a long period during the development of the project there was a focus on the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde, through the interpretations of his work made by Bruno Latour and Maurizio Lazzarato. In Tarde’s visionary writing, everything is a society, and entities are composed of smaller and smaller parts, each an active agent in the world. I found Tarde’s writing provocative and inspiring in highlighting the activeness of things, but ultimately I could not use it because it didn’t help me make an account of different, concealed contribu-
tions to the activity and endurance of things, such as reproductive labour or maintenance. Making inhabiting furnished spaces and maintaining them, the focus of the project, meant it was impossible to ignore the reciprocal, entangled, complex and unequal relationships entailed in forms of artistic and reproductive labour that things, such as artworks, depend on to emerge and endure. However these explorations were still fruitful, as they pointed to sources which more directly engaged with the matter at hand. Ultimately it was through the experience of motherhood that all the different elements in this exploration of the spaces where art and life happen, and the work it takes to make them work, found their place in their current arrangement.

3. Research questions

The question that emerged from the entanglement of encounters, reading and practices through which the project unfolded is the following:

How do furnished spaces contribute to the emergence of artworks?

This main question is broken down into two sub-questions:

Do furnished spaces do some of the work involved in the emergence of artworks?

What work is it for artists to set up and maintain furnished spaces?

The research question is double sided: on one side it asks if things, arranged as furnished spaces, do some of the work involved in the emergence of artworks; on the flipside, if things do do some of the work, the question also points to how they do it: they do it also thanks to the work of artists setting up and maintaining furnished spaces. The hypothesis that I set out to investigate in this practice-based research project revolves around this double sidedness: I propose that by uncovering the contribution of things arranged as furnished spaces in the emergence of artworks, the importance of the ‘reproductive’ labour of setting up and maintaining apparatuses of production is also revealed. There is no direct linear chain of causation between the work of setting up and maintaining furnished spaces, and the work that things so arranged do. Even if artists construct their studio, or exhibition, as a furnished space that carefully choreographs the co-working relationships
between people and things, the outcomes are still undetermined. The contribution of things as co-workers is both unpredictable and irreplaceable. There are no ‘raw’ materials in the studio, the workshop, or the home: all matter is worked matter, materials are produced and prepared (Simondon 1958; Duchamp 1961: 142). Apparatuses of production are labourers and the productivity of the work of setting them up and maintaining them is directly connected to their unpredictable and irreplaceable contribution (Barad 2007).

The hypothesis I am testing with the first sub-question is that a furnished space works. It does so by affording certain processes and not others, its furnishings present a sedimentation of opportunities and constraints, and play an unpredictable and irreplaceable role in the processes of emergence of artworks. Emergence here is used in the sense defined by feminist physicist Karen Barad: to describe processes where new things arise within apparatuses of production with porous boundaries, without being connected by linear causal chains (Barad 2007). Furnished space is both a space for work and performs some of the work. If furnished spaces do some work, of course they do so alongside artists. In the second sub-question I examine how artists co-work with things, and make things work, through setting up and maintaining furnished spaces. The ‘how’ within the question signals that an examination of furnished spaces and their activity cannot be complete if it does not take into account the work that artists make things do.

The following four sections of this introduction - “Furnished Space”, “The Critique of the Hylomorphic Model of Making”, “The House as a Machine”, and “The Re-evaluation of ‘Reproductive Labour’” - develop the key arguments around the concept of furnished space and, in doing so, draw on the work of Barad and Simondon, amongst many others, and the conversations with Dobson and Barham. Within the following brief outlines of these four themes I present the background context to the research, and introduce the key terms explored through the thesis, while also pointing to the gap in knowledge that I have identified and which I am attempting to address. I will relate these theoretical interventions back to my own experiences of the studio and artistic production throughout the Introduction.

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7. I am using work here in the sense of ‘to labour’, rather than ‘to function correctly’ although the semantic ambiguity of this phrase is interesting in the context of this project.

8. For a transcript of the conversations see Appendix, p. 94-116
4. Key Concepts

4.1 Furnished space

In exploring how furnished spaces contribute to the emergence of art works – my main research question – the first key task is to understand what furnished spaces are and what underpins them conceptually in this investigation. The concept of “furnished space” is developed in order to provide an account of how things, arranged in particular ways, contribute to the emergence of new things. Homes, scientific labs, artists studios, and factories are all furnished spaces. They feature arrangements of things: devices, materials, furniture, distributed in a particular way and sedimented with the residues of past action.  

Furnished space builds on the work of Barad and Simondon, who note that space is not an empty, abstract, geometric form, but is always-already ‘worked over’ by people or things (Barad, 2007: 223; Simondon, 2013). Here, ‘worked over’ means ‘energised’, and should not be confused with the zombie leftover of past human action as in the Marxist concept of dead labour and the Sartrean ‘practico-inert’.  

9. I use the word ‘thing’ as opposed to ‘object’ because as a category it is more inclusive and does not presume a subject-object divide. The particular way I use the term ‘thing’ makes reference to anthropologist Tim Ingold’s definition of thing contained in his essay ‘Textilities of Making’ (2010): ‘the thing about things, if you will, is that far from standing before us as a fait accompli, complete in itself, each is a ‘going on’—or better, a place where several goings on become entwined.’ Humans are also things, as argued in Webmore and Witmoor’s article “Things Are Us! A Commentary on Human/Things Relations under the Banner of a ‘Social’ Archaeology” (2008). ‘Thing’ is also the term preferred in Arvatov’s 1925 text ‘Everyday Life and the Culture of the Thing’ (Kiaer 1997) to designate objects and materials beyond the commodity, and the capitalist mode of production.
The space we have available as artists has to do with an entanglement of things that connects us tightly and directly to economic, political, historical contexts in their material and discursive aspects.

The idea of ‘furnished space’ draws on insights from, amongst others, anthropologist Tim Ingold’s work on dwelling (2000) and psychologist J.J. Gibson’s seminal work on the concept of affordances of the environment (1986). Gibson uses the term ‘affordance’ to describe the properties of ‘objects’ as relational, rather than being defined once and for all. For example, a body of water, which only affords swimming to humans, affords ‘walking’ to bugs (Gibson 1986: 127). Affordance allows us to think of things as offering different constraints and opportunities to whatever encounters them, rather than as having pre-given qualities of ‘usefulness’ which immediately frame them within a subject-object hierarchy.

Gibson describes furniture as that which makes a space liveable and consequently, sees the earth itself as ‘furnished’ (Gibson 1986: 78). Moving away from Gibson’s use of objects, Ingold sees

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10. A discussion of the concepts of dead labour and of the practico-inert can be found in Part 2 section 2.

11. Gibson has his own understanding of tools (Gibson 1986: 41) as things that are sometimes attached to the body, but can return to be part of the environment. Gibson claims that considering the affordances of things allows us to escape the duality between objective and subjective. Tools have been theorised within one of the most famous and important philosophical projects of the last century, Martin Heidegger’s. I am not engaging with Heidegger and phenomenology within this project as I have chosen to focus on drawing a relationship between feminist new materialism, and in particular Barad’s work, and theories of artistic and reproductive labour.
the environment as filled with things, which are ‘going-ons’ rather than inert objects with well-defined boundaries (2010). The entanglements of things (Ingold 2010) as different as tools materials and machines - arranged within furnished spaces as sedimentations of affordances - allows me to complicate Gibson’s concept of affordance with an openness to the unexpected and unpredictable workings of machinic apparatuses and natural forces (Barad 2007: 171, 232).

A piece of furniture, more precisely a freestanding bookshelf, and furnishing a domestic studio space was at the very origin of this project. In 2010, I moved from a large open plan live-in studio in Clapham Common to a small flat in Stockwell. I used to make large figurative paintings using watery acrylic paints and a technique of layering transparent washes and building up my images through a long and slow process of sedimentation (fig.7). It was important to work on a flat surface, which initially was a large area on the floor, so that the fluid paints could pool and dry flat, rather than run down the surface of the canvas. But already when I was living at the studio in Clapham, I had to sub-let my work area because I could not afford the rent, so I ended up making smaller paintings, working on 20 or 30 at the time on a large table (fig.8). When I finally moved to the flat, there was no space for the large tables so I adopted a freestanding bookshelf as studio space that would allow me to generate an ongoing artwork based on simple rules involving a simplification of my existing painting technique (fig.2). Vertical Studio emerged from finding myself limited to a domestic space without having the opportunity to have a studio. I made the stretchers from scratch so that they would fit the shelves (fig.6) and I stretched canvas over both the front and the back, so that they could be double-sided and freestanding (fig.9). The series can be exhibited as a modular structure (fig.4). The series can be transported inside a couple of large suitcases (fig.10).
Since I first saw an exhibition of Anna Barham’s work, READATGLIMPSEEN IN 2008 (fig.11), I have been struck by how she approaches exhibition-making by furnishing a space: turning it into a productive space where machines are nestled within free-standing structures, tables, benches, platforms, which work by precisely choreographing the actions afforded. Working with Barham on her exhibition skw in 2015 (fig.5), I was able to observe the way she exploited the specific constraints of a particular spatial layout, to set up a space that worked both as an exhibition and as a space of production for her ongoing Live Production Reading Groups.  

Back in her studio, Barham gave me insights into how the affordances of her two different successive home-studios had shaped her practice, and shared her reflections on the demands that artworks make in terms of storage and maintenance.

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12. See <http://www.c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e.com/anna-barham/>

13. See Appendix, p. 94-104 for the transcript of my conversation with Barham.
The key theoretical text that helped me understand furnished spaces and what they do, meanwhile, is physicist Karen Barad’s book *Meeting the Universe Half-Way. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007). Barad’s conceptualisation of scientific apparatus sees it not as a simple device where one pushes a button and takes notes of the results, but as a ‘material discursive entanglement’ that labours, and is active in the process of emergence of new scientific theories (Barad, 2007: 132-185, and Chapter 4). This text gave my project its direction, in teasing out how the spaces of artistic production could also be said to contribute in the emergence of art. Linear causality, and a focus on human purposeful activity, conceals the unpredictable and irreplaceable contribution of things to these processes. In order to highlight this, Barad uses the terms ‘emergence’ and ‘sedimentation’, which describe the ways in which new things happen, within apparatuses with porous boundaries, without being connected by linear causal chains but rather within complex entanglements.

Within a complex, historically determined apparatus of production such as the printmaking workshop (fig. 14), I designed two series of works which

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14. Barad’s work has developed in the context of a Feminist New Materialism that has come more into prominence since the beginning of this decade. The volume of collected essays *New Materialism. Ontology Agency and Politics*, published in 2010 was followed by numerous publications and events, some of which I was able to attend, like the presentation by Jane Bennett at Birbeck in 2013 and Rosi Braidotti’s inaugural talk at the Centre for Cultural Studies Research, University of East London in 2015.

15. Philosopher Manuel De Landa has laid claim to the concept of emergence which is central to his book *Philosophy and Simulation. The Emergence of Synthetic Reason* (2011) and has expressed strong opposition to Barad’s approach (Harman, De Landa 2017) which he interprets as idealistic, as she sees discursivity as always already part of material discursive entanglements, where there is no individual prior to the relation. De Landa’s concept of mind is strictly anthropomorphic and he does not accept that there may be non-human knowledge. So when Barad talks of discursivity he interprets it as a domination of the human mind on matter, when actually she is including non-human practice and non-human knowledges within the discursive. De Landa’s concept of emergence is based on a study of emergent properties in chemistry (De Landa 2011).
engage with specific pieces of equipment and techniques. The two projects, Aquatints (fig. 12, 13) and Photo-etchings (fig.14), originated in the encounters with machines and materials facilitated by printmaking tutor Pete Dobson, and deployed simple sets of rules that function similarly to the premises of a scientific experiment. The labour of ‘following the materials’ (Ingold 2009: 9; Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 408; Simondon 2005: 51) and co-working with two different sets of opportunities and constraints within that particular furnished space, led me on one side to encounter a machine, the Beever Press (fig.14), that facilitated the layering of my Aquatint prints and became the constitutive condition for the project to be possible; whilst on the other side, the struggle with the photo-etching process ultimately led to machinic breakdown and work stoppage. In my conversation with Dobson, his relationship to the printmaking workshop came into focus: his maintenance labour, facilitating an intimate relationship with the machines, allows him to innovate in terms of their operation. He also stressed the importance of material processes in defining outcomes beyond the intentions of the machines’ users: ‘the process takes over one’s mark making’, he noted. It is only by engaging in detail with what happened in these processes that the contribution of things can be appreciated: To merely ‘skim off the top’ (Ukeles, quoted in Ryan, 2009) or consider making ‘the wrong way round’ by beginning with the finished artwork and reflecting back on the processes that led to its production (Ingold, 2010b: 3), does not afford a proper understanding of the work that things do. Thus in opening a pathway to engaging with the first research question: the concept of furnished space refers to the things that orient practice, but more than this, from Barad one finds that furnished spaces can actually be productive in unexpected ways, and that this can be crucial to artistic production. Furthermore, as noted this

16. See Appendix, p. 112
has been reflected in my practices in the printmaking studio through letting things essentially do the work in my Aquatint Etchings and Photoetchings.

### 4.2 The critique of the hylomorphic model of creation

In working to address the second research question of how furnished spaces actually do some of the work involved in the emergence of art works it is important to recognise the historical trends that are working against the recognition of the role of things in artistic production. In this section how will explain how what I term the hylomorphic model of creation plays an important role in concealing both reproductive labour and the work that things do. In the English language, there is a generative semantic collapse between things working, i.e. functioning, and things working, i.e. labouring. I adopt the English double meaning of the word working, and try to make it play both roles — of functioning and labouring — in this thesis. Writing in French, where there is no overlap between these words, Simondon is keen to define the importance of ‘functioning’ as an autonomous concept steeped in the nature of ‘technical objects’. In a provocative move he also strives to demonstrate that it is ‘things’, and humans only insofar as they become things, that work (Simondon 1958); directly contradicting those who look at labour as the foundation of human ‘species-being’ (Roberts 2007).

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17. In fact in French you would say ‘Ça marche’, ‘it walks’, rather than ‘it works’, to mean that something functions.

In ‘Textilities of making’ (2009), Ingold quotes a passage in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (2004), where they explain how they want to overcome a habit of thought in Western philosophy, inherited from Aristotle, which sees the creation of an object as bringing together *morphe* and *hylos*, form and matter, with form being imposed on inert matter by an active (human) agent engaging in purposive action. The critique of hylmorphism is borrowed by Deleuze and Guattari from Simondon. Using the work of Deleuze and Guattari, but developed through his own study of skilled practice, Ingold describes how

19. A layering of readings of Simondon’s work is included here, as an example of diffractive methodology. For a further discussion of a methodology of layered readings, or diffractive readings (Barad 2007: 30) see section 7, Methodology, of this Introduction. Please note, I do not discuss Simondon’s theory of individuation directly as it is outside of the remit of this thesis.
30 · Introduction
Louise, (2013) photo-etching on paper, approx. 50 x 35 cms.
hylomorphism impedes an account of what actually happens in practices of making. The reciprocal negotiation, the improvisation, the intimacy with materials that practices of making facilitate is lost. This hylomorphic model of creation can be seen at play, for example, in the way David Harvey describes Marx’s understanding of the production process in his commentary to Marx’s *Capital Volume I* (1976):

“At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally [i.e. mentally].” We have an idea, Marx says, and then make it real. There is therefore, always an “ideal” (mental) moment, a utopian moment, entailed in human productive activity (Harvey 2010: 113). (my italics)

Harvey is saying that the result of the process of making pre-exists this process entirely and is fully contained within the initial idea. Conversely, for Simondon any process of making involves a more complex negotiation with materials and technologies. What emerges at the end of the labour process is not so much what had been conceived ideally at the beginning, but what has been found on a journey taken ‘following the materials’ (Ingold 2010b: 4). For example, making a brick includes several passages to create, from the clay mixed to debris found on the banks of the river, a material with the required plasticity. Rather than just imposing on clay the abstract geometric form of a parallelepiped, the process of making a brick involves constructing a mould as a device that not only gives shape to the clay, but that can be opened without damaging it and has to be prepared with its own specific material characteristics (Simondon 2005: 39-40). By looking at making the wrong way around (Ingold 2010b: 3) the impression might arise that the brick was already there as an idea before any of this journey of negotiating with materials happened. According to Simondon however, inventors do not have ideas that are then applied to inert matter through purposeful intellectual domination, but rather play with existing elements and imagine a new technical object in relation to a milieu, or in my own terminology, a ‘furnished space’, which it exists in a reciprocal causal relationship with (Simondon 1958: 58). The hylomorphic model, based on a presumed intellectual
domination of matter, blocks a recognition the role that furnished spaces have in the emergence of art works. Thus to address the second research question it is crucial that we critique and invert this hylomorphic model of artistic creation.

### 4.3 The house as a vampire or a machine

Turning to the third research question of the work involved in setting up and maintaining furnished spaces. This once again works against a theoretical tradition in which domestic life and the household is rendered passive or inert. I argue that Sartre’s notion of the house as practico-inert very much personifies this tradition. As we shall see, I seek to turn this understanding on its head through this theoretical investigation and through artistic practice(s). In his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1976), first published in 1960, French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre developed a new concept which expanded on the Marxist idea of the inertia of matter: the practico-inert.  

For Sartre the investigation of the practico-inert entailed ‘a study of the type of passive action which materiality as such exerts on man and his history’ (Sartre 1976: 124). One of the examples Sartre used to articulate this concept is the house, which he described as a ‘vampire object’. According to Sartre, he fact that a house requires cleaning, heating, repainting and other forms of looking after in order to remain habitable means it is a vampire object which ‘constantly absorbs human action, lives on blood taken from man and finally lives in symbiosis with him. It derives all its physical properties, including temperature, from human action’ (Sartre 1976: 185).

Seeing the house as a vampire-object sucking the energy of its inhabitants, Sartre reveals an inability to account for the affordances and opportunities offered by furnished spaces, which he sees only as obstacles encountered by
the individual, stopping him from fulfilling his projects. Sartre complicates hylomorphism, by interpreting the product of past labour, such as a house, only as alienation of the individual’s free praxis rather than as resource. Alienation is a key term here, anchoring the Marxist understanding of economic oppression to violence against a pre-existing human nature. According to Jason Edwards, ‘what such a view still presupposes is a utopian view of non-alienating forms of production and cultural life against which current forms are measured’ (Edwards 2010: 291), and artistic and reproductive labour are often upheld as such a non-alienating form of production.21 The denial of the work that things do, implicit in this concept of the practico-inert which sees materiality as at best a ‘passive activity’, is coupled with the concealment and undervaluing of reproductive labour, a labour that unfolds within an intimate relationship with the house. Inhabiting a furnished space is seen as a passive activity (Sartre 1976: 185), as if it was just a case of executing a pre-existing script, and there is no sensitivity to the activities of invention and organisation which setting up and maintaining a house involve. Thus setting up and maintaining furnished spaces are crucial factors in artistic production, and by focusing on them both theoretically and practically in the thesis, I address the third research question by foregrounding and rendering visible these forms of labour.

21. See for example, Kerstin Stakemaier’s essay ‘Crisis and Materiality in Art. On the Becoming of Form and Digitality’ (2014)
In deepening this engagement with the third research question that focuses on the setting up and the maintenance of furnished spaces, the concept of reproductive labour becomes crucial. Reproductive labour, as feminist interventions have often highlighted, is that often unseen or unrecognised labour of maintenance that as Vishmidt and Stakemeier argue should also be recognised in the context of artistic production.

In their recent book Reproducing Autonomy. Work, Money, Crisis and Contemporary Art (2016) art theorists Marina Vishmidt and Kerstin Stakemeier have suggested that contemporary art should embrace its ‘expanded’ reproductive nature (2016: 103). In their account, artistic labour is close to reproduction, i.e. the ‘non-productive’ labour of maintenance and reproduction of the work force, in two aspects: the way it is valued, i.e., because it mostly has no value and is unpaid, and because it is naturalised in Marxist thought which means that both reproductive labour and artistic labour are seen as ‘activities of one’s nature’ (Marx 1976: 1044).

Through my concept of working furnished spaces I argue that a large part of artistic labour consists in creating the conditions for the emergence of artworks to happen, and that is another way in which art work is similar to house work. House work is made up not only of repetitive maintenance operations but also the creation and constant adjustments of furnished spaces where ‘daily life’, and ‘the private’ can take place thanks to the development of specific systems and routines adapted to the contingent, entangled material discursive contexts in which they operate. Reclaiming the creativity in house work does not mean denying the oppression and ‘alienation’ in it, quite the opposite. Not only is it not paid, not only is it sometimes still naturalised
as the job of women, it is also undervalued and associated with an ideologically constructed passive femininity (Delphy 1984). Feminist theorist Kathi Weeks’s book *The Problem with Work* (2011) problematizes the ideology of work as it is expressed in different ways by both the political right and left.

In the same way as Mary Kelly’s *Post Partum Document* (1979) sought to denaturalise motherhood (Molesworth 2000), there is a need to both revalue and denaturalise house work and art work. If we abandon the hylomorphic model of creation, as Simondon proposes, and if with Barad we accept that furnished spaces are labourers in the same way as scientific apparatuses are, then it becomes possible to revalue ‘reproductive labour’ and maintenance, as Simondon does, and to reconceptualise the activity of setting up and looking after a working space, as the most ‘productive’ rather than unproductive; precisely because this labour allows for relationships with materials to unfold in unpredictable ways. This thesis then is a call to ‘follow the materials’ (Large-Berndt 2015: 13) and ‘follow the grain of the wood’ (Simondon 2005: 52; Ingold 2009a: 2), and in doing so to recognise that setting up and maintaining furnished spaces becomes the most productive form of work which thus serves to address my third research question.
5. Methodology

The methodology employed in this practice based project is comprised of a series of strategies that investigate the forms of labour contributing to the emergence of artworks. Specific procedures have sedimented over the course of the project as ways of working that allow me to test the research questions in multiple ways. Two structuring principles, rule following and double sidedness, and repetitive operations such as layering and diffractive re-reading were deployed both in the practice and in the engagement with theory.

The practice-based methodology I employed over the course of the project was structured by the initial decision to examine the particular, contingent constraints of space, time and resources I found myself entangled in, while I was also remaining committed to working methods, such as the use of layers in painting and automatic drawings, which had sedimented as my artistic identity over the years.

5.1 Rule following

A unifying strategy that encompassed all aspects of the project was designing sets of rules so that artistic ‘experiments’ could be repeated, in response to both the assembly line and the scientific apparatus. Duchamp famously inaugurated this method of creating rules to invite chance within art work with his 1913–14 work 3 Stoppages Etalon (3 Standard Stoppages) and it has been used by many artists since. Lacking a studio, I designed the supports for a series of paintings, Vertical Studio, to fit a set of standard shelves (fig.2,3,6). The ‘automatic’ implementation of a simple set of rules turned the piece of domestic furniture into a circular assembly line. The presence at Loughborough University School of the Arts of a well-equipped printmaking workshop afforded the declination of the pre-existing interest for layering into a second set of rules, centred on the use of aquatint etching (fig. 12,13). Automatic drawing was also invested with the technologies offered by the
workshop through photo-etching (fig.15). Finally a website, www.assuntaruocco. be was structured around a fourth set of rules which make it dependent on the open-ended development of the other three on-going processes.

In her contribution to the volume ‘On Not Knowing. How Artists Think’, Emma Cocker states:

Submission to the logic of a rule or instruction can operate as a device for not knowing, as a way of surrendering responsibility, absolving oneself of agency or control within a practice in order to be surprised. The rule becomes adopted for its capacity to produce unruliness, for generating outcomes that the conscious mind could not have planned. To follow the rule is thus not always based on obedience and diligence, but rather demonstrates a desire to be led astray (Cocker 2014: 129).

Rule-making functions similarly to scientific experimental practice, in that it proposes a series of repeatable conditions through which theoretically one might be able to obtain similar and yet unpredictable outcomes.

The works of Simon Hantai, Dieter Roth, Daniel Buren provided examples of this kind of fidelity to rigid procedures. Simon Hantai was a French-Hungarian painter who came to prominence in the 1960s with many series of abstract paintings characterised by his procedure of ‘pliage’ or ‘folding-as-method’. Hantai used this phrase to describe paintings generated by painting over tightly folded and knotted prepared canvas. The unpainted areas, a record of the canvas’s unfolding, have been interpreted as ‘holes’ through which exposure to an impersonal ‘outside’ comes through:

Hantai’s ‘etudes’...refigure automatism not as a descent into psychic depths but as an opening towards an outside. This is a thought of exposure - of painting as a medium of exposure - and it is dramatized as the endlessly repeated and yet never quite foreseeable meeting of painted and non-painted, as it is also dramatized in the unfolding of the canvas itself, its passage from the monistic wholeness of a monochrome relief to the contrastive structure of a surface riven by difference. (Warnock 2012)

Rule-making allowed me to construct precise limits within which I could deploy my practice in relation to the constraints and opportunities of the particular situation I was in, rather than making arbitrary decisions. It also
made it possible to create a space of possibility where to invite furnished spaces, machines, and people to be part of the collective producing the work. Some of the procedures I created, like for example inviting other artists/art professionals to choose a drawing for me, for the Photoetchings project, directly questioned the integrity of my authorial position. Rule-making then became, through the experimental development of the project, a strategy that allowed me to analyse and re-contextualise artistic labour, by focusing my investigation on the question of where is the ‘art work’ located, within the processes from which artworks emerge. Challenging the notion that the work of the artist is now located exclusively in conceptual acuity and the deployment of artistic expertise independently of its material relationships, as suggested by Roberts (2007), I discovered that maintenance and reproductive labour have an important role in creating the spaces of possibilities from which artworks emerge. If artistic labour is limited by rule making, and artistic expertise outsourced to others, what is left are mundane activities such as organising a studio and creating systems where artistic labour is compatible with daily life. These are certainly not new activities. And yet
these are not commonly examined as an important part of artistic labour.

Artist Elizabeth Price’s PhD project ‘sidekick’ (Price 2000), explored repetitive action through unfolding a simple self-generated rule over a long period of time. Boulder was an artwork generated through winding packing tape onto itself until it became a very large sphere. One of the results of the process was that Price’s labour became less and less perceptible, the bigger Boulder became. Price also interrogated layering a material onto itself through questioning its authenticity (how can it be known that the boulder is indeed entirely made of tape, if each layer obliterates the previous one?) which I also addressed through my own approach to layering.

5.1 Layering, re-reading and diffraction

My approach to layering derives from a method developed while making figurative paintings when I was at art school in Brussels in the early 2000s, after having studied traditional painting techniques under Neapolitan artist Tullia Matania. I limited my palette to 4 colours: Ultramarine blue, Sap green, Primary yellow and Alizarine red, and I used canvas prepared with gesso and acrylic paints mixed with transparent acrylic medium and sometimes wood glue. Through layering these 4 colours in transparent glazes over and over, superposing them without mixing them directly, a variety of colours sedimented and images emerged slowly. To limit the expressivity of my brushwork I painted horizontally on a flat surface, with liquid washes which coagulated into semi-intentional shapes. I used different techniques to elicit unintentional effects, and I discovered that by shaking a brush drenched in water over a semi-congealed layer of paint, negative shapes could be obtained by removing the water when the rest of the surface was dry. By the time I started the PhD project in 2011, I decided to abandon the figurative aspects of my practice for a while, and focus my painting method on this particular technique, a negative dripping technique made of accumulating layers, interrupted by gaping holes which still allow to see through the previous layer and reconstruct
the stratification of colours contained within the painting’s surface (fig.1).

Layering a small selection of colours repetitively on canvas and paper while sparing some areas, allows one to read through the layers and perceive how the surface of a print or painting has occurred through a sedimentation of actions and colour. The construction of this text also emerged from a sedimentation of layers of repeated readings and experiences rather than from a clear idea generated in the mind and then produced as a purposeful form. Over the course of the project, I performed a repeated reading of a porous selection of sources, some of which I handcopied into my sketchbooks or typed into large documents.

An early reading of feminist geographer duo J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006) provided a useful technical tool: ‘re-reading’, which helped formalise the seemingly un-productive research practices that proved best adapted to the materials of this exploration. Gibson-Graham’s methodology stems from a ‘non humanist understanding of thinking that confers on matter…a positive and creative agency, and sees the field as a site where matter and thought can come together to produce the “event in thought” (Sharpe 258)’ (Gibson-Graham 2006: xxxii-xxxiii). Their approach to reading avoids attending to the regularities of discourse, to disperse and fracture the object of attention instead. It is a ‘reading for contingency rather than necessity…techniques of rereading adopt a stance of curiosity, rather than recognition, toward claims of truth’ (Gibson-Graham 2006: Xxi); a stance that also has to cope with and cultivate uncertainty, a ‘reading for absences’.

Re-reading, or repeated reading of an increasing number of sources, responded to the development of the practice over the course of the project. Gradually some sources were abandoned while others remained within a circular, often repeated practice23. A theoretical method which is operative within the project in connection to re-reading is Barad’s concept of ‘diffraction’ (Barad

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23. see the Work Record for a timeline of a selection of readings in connections to my practice.
Diffraction is a phenomenon that is unique to wave behaviour: it has to do with how particles combine and overlap when they encounter an obstruction, and a diffraction grating is a device used to induce wave behaviour. Barad following philosopher Donna Haraway (Barad 2007: 29) proposes to use a conceptual diffraction grating, rather than the well-worn metaphor of reflection, as a methodology, to examine subtle differences in discourses while remaining respectful of the entanglements of ideas and other materials. By looking at seemingly similar concepts without jumping to conclusions, ‘diffraction involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how those exclusions matter’ (Barad 2007: 30). In this project, a diffractive methodology helps articulate the commonalities between concepts such as maintenance, house work and reproductive labour, allowing one to clarify the way a similar set of practices is made to disappear in different ways within different ideological constructs.

5.3 Double-sidedness

Double-sidedness started as a device to dramatize and articulate my paintings’s relationship to space: it started with Vertical Studio: I made double-sided paintings to address concerns of availability of space and storage, by producing additional painting surfaces with a limited number of stretchers, and a side-effect of this was the possibility of standing the pieces up and stacking them in different configurations (fig. 20).

When I started working with printmaking, and the Aquatint Etchings, I initially experimented with making them double sided to interrogate their status as commodities (fig. 18). I was also interested in testing the durability of the material, the etching paper, and how many time it would withstand being subjected to the heavy pressure from the press on both faces. But the double-sidedness of the etchings became interesting when they were exhibited: a choice had to be made each time in terms of which side would be visible, and I took that opportunity to outsource artistic decision making and involve
gallerists and curators in deciding which side of the prints to exhibit (fig. 19).²⁴

Double-sidedness by the end of the project became a very important theoretical tool, to understand the relationship between furnished spaces, the work they do, and the labour of setting them up and maintaining these spaces. This relationship is double-sided because the two sides are inseparable, but at the same time they conceal each other. In the same way as the two sides of the etchings conceal each other, it is challenging to pay attention to both reproductive labour and the contribution of furnished spaces at the same time. If the focus is on the activeness of things and apparatuses of production, the tendency is to forget about the labour of maintaining them, like with some object oriented or post-humanist approaches, while if the focus is on reproductive labour, such as in the work of Autonomist feminists, there is seldom an interest in the contribution of things.

²⁴. I have captured the double-sidedness of the etchings with a series of videos which can be viewed on the website www.assuntaruocco.be
6. Contribution to knowledge

This research makes an original contribution to knowledge in three areas. Firstly, by examining the work of Marxist, autonomist feminist, and new materialist theories through the lens of my practice and interviews with practitioners, it reveals an inseparable connection between the concealment of the work that ‘things’ do and the undervaluing and exploitation of maintenance, house work, and reproductive labour. This is an underdeveloped area of research, although there have been calls for a reconsideration of reproduction, in particular in relation to artistic labour; and the contribution of ‘things’ has been re-examined by the flourishing of new materialist philosophies. A connection between the two has not yet been made, and doing this in the thesis enables me to rethink how the concept of reproductive labour can be related to art practice.

Secondly, I am introducing some of the lesser known and partly untranslated work of Simondon. Although considerable attention has been given in the past few years to his work of on individuation and ‘transindividuality’\textsuperscript{25}, and some of his concepts have been deployed in recent reconsid-erations of reproductive and artistic labour by Vishmidt and Stakemaier (2016), I highlight an important correspondence between his revaluation of maintenance and his critique of hylomorphism, which has not been as yet connected to either artistic or reproductive labour.

Finally, this research contributes to the development of practice-based research methodologies. Structuring principles such as rule following and dou-ble sidedness, and repetitive operations like layering and diffractive rereading are deployed both in the practice and in the engagement with theory and constitute a toolbox that I hope will be useful to other practitioners. The reciprocity and entangled relationship between theory and practice is implied in the embodiment of research within the materiality of artistic prac-tice; in the turning of artistic methods toward an engagement with text, and embracing the work that the artworks do by letting it shape the writing.

7. Thesis structure and documentation of practice

There will be an exhibition of the work made as part of this project, curated by David Bell and with support from Radar, in the Martin Hall Exhibition Space, Loughborough from 19 November 2018 to 30 November 2018. The practice is also made accessible by a complete record of activity and exhibitions included in the thesis. A record of the practice as it was in 2013 is also included in the web project A Record of Unaddressed Activity at <www.assuntaruocco.be>.

The written thesis is divided in two parts. Part 1, ‘Things That Work’ focuses on the labour done by furnished spaces. Part 2, ‘Making Things Work’, foregrounds the labour of those who produce and ‘reproduce’ furnished spaces. The ‘Work Record’ that sits after the two parts, is a collection of documentation from the development of the projects that helps the reader understand the timeline of the relationship between practice and theory.

Part 1 begins with a description of the printmaking workshop at Loughborough School of Art and Design. A first theoretical section explores the concept of furnished space through a discussion of its operative functions, and explores how this concept emerged from readings of the works of Felix Guattari, Henri Lefebvre, Ingold, Gibson, Simondon and Barad. Section 3 explains how furnished space operates through an expansion of Barad’s concept of the apparatus, and through an examination of Barham’s exhibitions. Section 4 follows, in which Simondon’s critique of the hylomorphic model is applied to the work of Marxist art theorist John Roberts’ book Intangibilities of Form (2007) and his interpretation of Marcel Duchamp’s Green Box (1934). Section 5 describes my encounter with the printmaking workshop through making the two series of prints Aquatints and Photoetchings. I demonstrate how this practice shaped the theoretical research both by orienting me towards particular approaches and also by structuring the research question as a double-sided one.

Part 2 opens with a description of the succession of studios and domestic spaces in which part of this practice-based research project has unfolded. Part 2, section 2 begins with a critique of Sartre’s conception of the practico inert
and his portrayal of the house as a vampire object; this serves as a springboard to foreground the importance of maintenance, housework, and reproductive labour, and their roles in facilitating the operation of a productive furnished space. Section 3 tackles reproductive labour, feminist critiques of Marx, and the relationship between artistic and reproductive labour. In section 4 I present an account of my own exploration of the home as a space for artistic work, through a discussion of my piece *Vertical Studio* (2010-ongoing). I conclude Part 2 with an analysis of Simondon’s thought on maintenance, in section 5, which leads me to re-evaluate reproductive labour as the most productive form of labour.
opposite page:
detail from an aquatint
test, 2012, showing the
layering of four aquatint
plates printed in Alizarine
Red, Ultramarine Blue, and
Primary Yellow
Part 1

Things that work
The printmaking workshop

The printmaking workshop is a large, cavernous space, the high ceiling pierced by skylights and traversed by pipes and cables. A large double door separates the printmaking workshop from the foyer of the art school building. A pathway cuts through it, which most members of staff and students have to use to get to their studio spaces and offices, as the foyer, printmaking workshop and studios are laid out as a series of interlocking boxes. As one enters the workshop, on the right one finds the printmaking tutor’s office, with a first small room equipped with a computer, full of shelves stacked with books and tools, and an inner room where the store cupboards contain various items including reams of paper of different weights and qualities.

Going back to the main room, on the left a large open space is divided in sections by a constellation of long work tables, presses, and other pieces of equipment. First there’s a table surrounded by chairs and stools, large enough to accommodate 20 students, where the demonstrations take place. This table is made of sheets of mdf and is also used for bevelling etching plates. Further to the left the space is divided by a long built-in work table with cupboards and shelves underneath. The top of the table is covered by sheets of toughened glass. Students stand at this table while inking their plates and rollers. A wooden contraption dangles over it, where new prints are left to dry in mid-air. The long work table continues along the wall, a row of Formica cupboards underneath. The last two are mine, and contain my copper and zinc plates, my transparencies, my own stash of inks and scrims, my work shoes and apron.

Overhanging the worktable is a long shelf with dusty miscellaneous books, and another one containing the coloured inks in large and stiff metal syringes. The worktable is usually scattered with dirty little jars, tins of ink, scrims, rags, metal cans of white spirit, old newspapers, coffee cups, water
bottles. It is interrupted by the corner of the room, where another paper drying machine stands, which is made of heavy stacks of different types of cardboard with a fan placed at the back.

From here, another long work table running against the wall, much cleaner than the others, topped in Formica, ends in a large ceramic sink. This is the area where, prior to printing, the etching paper is wetted and then left to partially dry on the side between sheets of blotting paper. Underneath this table there are deep shelves containing sheets of blotting paper and rolled up felt blankets, some of them thick and soft, some of them thin from use and encrusted with layers of ink where students made mistakes. The blankets are expensive to buy, and they are vital to the functioning of the presses. While printing, they envelop metal plate and paper and protect them from being crushed by the heavy presses.

Next to the paper wetting sink, is a smaller sink for hand washing, with a paper-towels container, often frustratingly empty, and a big soap dispenser full of Swarfega. From here, while methodically washing inky hands one can look into the students’ studios which open up on the right.

The C shaped configuration of tables I just described delineates an area where four presses of different dimensions and mode of operation reside. Two hydraulic presses, one very large, one much smaller, are operated by lever. The other two are traditional roller presses operated with a wheel handle. I only used the hydraulic presses. Invented by Mr Beever of Beever Presses at around the time the workshop was set up (1977), the hydraulic presses have specific technical characteristics that afford particular working processes.

There is a constant stream of students and staff going in and out of the studios through the Printmaking workshop, as the entrance to the students’ studios and staff offices is near the hand washing sink. The Printmaking workshop users are partly sheltered from this constant flow of people by another long table which makes the U shape into a square, whilst still allow-
ing the circulation of people in and out at each end. This long table, topped by a screen which stops at the height of one’s face, is an inking area. It’s made mostly of metal and the worktop contains two separate gas-heated plates where etching plates can be inked, letting the warmth loosen the ink. At least they used to, until new health and safety regulations prohibited the use of the gas plates. This inking area is blackened by a thick layer of ink, and dirty scrims dangle over it from a washing line. A few green plants well-tended by Pete Dobson, the printmaking tutor, adorn the top of the screen. Shelves underneath the worktop are full of stacks of old newspapers and obsolete yellow pages. On the other side, past the open thoroughfare lies a large space, the lithography workshop, with its tables full of stones and its, to me, incomprehensible machines. I have never used it.

To the right of the lithography workshop, approximately opposite the main entrance and the large communal table which I described at the beginning, is the etching room. This is another smaller room within the main space. Two windows allow to look in from the main space and the entrance is protected by a yellowed pvc strip curtain. Inside, there are two large machines containing the acid baths used for etching. The machines are electric ventilation systems extracting the poisonous fumes from the air, released when the acid in the shallow baths works on the metal plates. One must not forget to switch them on and then put up with the deafening noise they produce when checking on the etchings being bitten. On the sides of the acid baths there are usually big old stained rubber gloves and long dirty bird feathers, used for slowly moving the acid across the surface of the plate.

On the left of these two metal machines is the aquatint box. This is a tall, wooden box, with a drawer-like opening in the middle and a drum inside the lower half, which is put in motion by turning a handle. The drum contains resin dust, and the aim of the machine is to agitate it and create a suspension which will deposit itself evenly on the metal plate placed on a wire grate in the drawer to this purpose. It is important to wear a dust mask when doing this, so there are usually a few dust masks lying on top of
the first-aid box on the left-hand wall just next to it. On the wall where the internal windows are, a massive ceramic sink and two old and stiff rubber tubes, one for hot water, one for cold, are used for degreasing the plates prior to starting all etching process, together with sponges, ammonia and chalk. On the other side of the door, a contraption that makes me sweat with anxiety: a metal grid where the aquatint plate, once covered in resin dust, can be carefully placed without disturbing the dust, (it’s a few steps away from the aquatint box but the struggle of walking whilst holding the plate, without letting the resin dust fly off, makes it feel much longer) to be then burned from underneath with a blowtorch, so that the resin dust particles melt and adhere to the surface of the plate.

Coming out of the etching room, to the left another large section of the Printmaking workshop opens out: the screen printing area, with its racks full of metal-framed screens. This is also a space I haven’t used and I know little about. A large French window opens onto the school staff parking lot and is often wedged open during the summer. In the depths of the screen printing space, a further cavern, the paper making space, is topped by a mezzanine where some of the students like to have a more secluded studio. The dark room is located between the edge of the screen printing space and the main printmaking area. It has a heavy springy door and contains a UV lamp, a worktop with sinks and an oven, an electric vacuum exposure machine and a wooden cabinet which protects the sweet-smelling photoetching liquid from exposure to light. Outside the door is a large foot-operated cutting machine for cutting metal sheets into etching plates. I could never quite master the confident jump straight onto the foot pedal necessary to obtain a clean cut. Pete Dobson would often have to do it for me. In the printmaking workshop, the tight configuration of the space, the precise distribution of machines in different areas choreographs the bodies of those that use it accordingly. It gives them a place and something to do.
1. Introduction to Part 1

The above description of the print making workshop serves to introduce the properties of a key furnished space from which both my Aquatint Etchings and Photoetchings emerged. In characterizing the arrangement of things that composes the printmaking workshop, one lays a platform to uncover how it contributed to the emergence of my artworks, which thus presents my initial response to the first research question of how furnished spaces contribute to the emergence of artworks. Indeed, Part 1 ‘Things That Work’ seeks to establish what kind of work things do when they are arranged within furnished spaces as apparatuses of production. Section 1.2 is about how things work within furnished spaces, such as the study or the kitchen. I discuss geographer Derek McCormack’s key text ‘Thinking-spaces for Research Creation’ (2008), which, with its concept of thinking-space, provided me with the starting point to develop my idea of ‘furnished space’ and what it does. By isolating and comparing two examples of ‘thinking-spaces’ — the monastic cloister from philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre’s The Production of Space (1991), and the kitchen of La Borde clinic from philosopher Felix Guattari’s last work, Chaosmosis (1995) — McCormack helps us to see how furnished spaces are active and play an irreplaceable role in the activities they facilitate. I continue to develop the idea of ‘furnished space’ by using insights from Tim Ingold’s work on dwelling (2000) and J.J. Gibson’s work on the concept of affordances of the environment (1986). Beginning from a furnished space that Ingold uses to describe Gibson’s work, the study (Ingold 2010: 4), I then then compare their version of the study with cognitive scientist Andy Clark’s concept of the mind extended within the environment in his essay ‘Where Brain, Body and World Collide’ (2008).

Section 3 tackles the main theoretical reference I deployed to understand how furnished spaces operate: Barad’s book Meeting the Universe Halfway (2007). I analyse Barad’s concept of scientific apparatus, which serves as a key reference point for my conception of ‘furnished space’ (Barad, 2007:132-185 chapter 4). I activate both the furnished space, and the Baradian apparatus of production, by deploying them to examine Barham’s practice of constructing spatial arrangements of ‘furniture’ and machines as working spaces, apparatuses of production that choreograph the emergence of art-
works and open up the opportunity for the viewer to co-work with things.

Section 4 is a discussion of Simondon’s critique of the hylomorphic model of making (Simondon 2005), to engage with John Roberts’ theory of artistic labour (Roberts 2007). Looking in detail at Simondon’s analysis of the process of making a brick (Simondon 2005: 39-40) highlights the gaps in Marxist thought on making. The hylomorphic model underwrites Marxist accounts of artistic labour, and I argue this is why Roberts misrecognises the active role played by furnished spaces in the processes of emergence of artworks. I argue that Roberts’ Marxist analysis limits the scope of artistic labour. Not only inasmuch as it misses the collaborations with things that characterise artistic labour, but also in neglecting the productivity of artists’ relationships with materials in the creation and maintenance of furnished spaces, which will be the focus of Part 2 of the thesis. Marcel Duchamp’s The Green Box is discussed as an example of an artwork where Duchamp works with printers, sharing with them a knowledge of materials and technologies, and of their affordances.

In section 5 I present an account of my own encounter with a furnished space, Loughborough University’s printmaking workshop, through the two series of works I made there. The productivity of furnished spaces is demonstrated through the dependence of the works from the specific affordances of particular machines and maintenance procedures, but also the important role of the stoppages and machinic breakdowns in these projects.
2. How does a furnished space ‘work’?: the kitchen and the study.

In addressing the role of furnished spaces – which relates to both research questions one and two, around their contribution and the work that they do – it is helpful in this section to unpick the notion of furnishing in regard to furnished space. As I endeavour to do through the theoretical investigation in this first section. It is also fitting to begin with furniture, given that the whole project was initiated with Vertical Studio, a series of paintings that fit within a bookshelf. The Italian mobile, and the French meuble both translate into English as ‘furniture’. Whilst their English equivalent takes its origin from an old French word meaning ‘to furnish’, which highlights the aspects of provision and equipment, the French and Italian words designate furniture as something that is by definition transportable, as opposed to the unmoveable immobili/ immeubles, which are buildings or part of buildings. This is not too dissimilar a distinction to that of fixtures and fittings in English. The fact that furniture is by definition moveable is significant, in that it highlights how furnished spaces are collections or arrangements of individual items, sedimented through the activities of their inhabitants and coming together temporarily; and yet as I will demonstrate through an examination of my practice and research in this Part 1 of the thesis, these arrangements amount to more than their individual parts.

In The Ecological Approach to Visual perception, J.J. Gibson notes that there is an intimate connection between the concepts of environment and furniture: ‘the furniture of the earth, like the furnishings of a room, is what

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26. See for example the double ‘mobile’ dictionary entry in the Oxford Italian Dictionary, as both what is moveable (1) and as a piece of furniture (2) (Bulhosen, P., et al. 2013: 206)
makes it liveable’ (Gibson, 1986: 78). ‘The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill’ (Gibson 1986: 127). This concept of ‘affordance’ is based on the particular relationships between an environment and its inhabitants and so is fundamentally relational. For example, surfaces are ‘stand-on-able’ according to the weight of the animal: a lake might be walkable for an insect but to a human it only affords swimming (Gibson 1986: 127). Affordance is a way to think of things and how the roles they take on can change, to think of how sometimes things are tools, and enter an intimate relationship with bodies; and sometimes they are not tools, they are just things sharing the same environment (occupying the space, obstructing it, encumbering it in a certain way). However, furniture continues to furnish whether or not it is used, and the way it is arranged defines the opportunities and constraints afforded by a certain space, whether it is inhabited or not at any moment in time.27

Furniture is that which is moveable and provides affordances, and with its presence and arrangement delineates a ‘furnished space’, as a space of possibility; a temporary and singular field of opportunities and constraints. Even though it is different from ‘things in the environment’, such as trees or clouds — which as pointed out by Ingold in the essay ‘Bringing things to life. Creative entanglements in a world of materials’, represent ‘the coming together of a myriad of threads of life’ (Ingold 2010: 5) — a furnished space, I would argue, still presents a temporary and vulnerable coming together, an arrangement of things sedimented with the residue of past use, constituting and defining human environments and their affordances.

In his essay ‘Thinking-spaces for research creation’, Derek McCormack proposes the concept of the ‘thinking-space’ to describe academic events where

27. The effects of the elements, animals, or dust over the affordances of furnished spaces add another level of complexity which will be explored in Part 2, by examining the ‘exigencies’ of the house (Part 2 section 2), and also through looking at reproductive labour, maintenance and house work (Part 2 section 3).
the coming together of people and resources facilitates an environment and generates activity; ‘where thinking-space is both a processual movement of thought and a privileged site at which this movement is amplified and inflected by novel configurations of ideas, things and bodies’ (McCormack 2008:1). Whilst it is clear from the conclusions of his essay that McCormack’s focus remains on exclusively human thinking practices — he does not attribute thinking to the spaces that facilitate it — some of his reflections are suggestive of the active role of the spaces he describes. They are the site for something in the world to force us to think, and as Deleuze puts it, ‘fundamentally an object of encounter rather than recognition’ (Deleuze 1994: 139 quoted in McCormack, 2008:2). Thus ‘such environments are more than containers for thinking. Rather, the relation between thinking-space as process and thinking-space as site is a recursive one, with the processuality of one folding into the architecture of the other’ (McCormack, 2008:3). For McCormack thinking-spaces are sites that think through their architecture, while it is the thinking-space of the human mind that brings processuality, i.e. a development in time, to the repetitive relationship of architecture and bodies.

McCormack uses as an example to show how ‘thinking-spaces’ work, the description, found in Henri Lefebvre’s The Production of Space (1991) of an architectural space, the monastic cloister, connected to a certain type of activity, thinking, through the deployment of repetitive gestures. For Lefebvre space is carved by the deployment of three forces: ‘conceived space’, which is the top down power of capital and the state; ‘lived space’, made of the dwellers dreams and memories, and ‘perceived space’, which has to do with how dwellers use the space (Edwards 2010; Vermeulen 2015). ‘Architecture produces living bodies, each with its own distinctive traits. The animating principle of such a body…reproduces itself within those who use the space in question, within their lived experience’ (Lefebvre 1991: 146). For Lefebvre furnished spaces such as cloisters are productive of the bodies that inhabit them.

In the passage quoted by McCormack, Lefebvre approaches the monastic cloister in the context of other spaces that, according to him, produce specific bodies and ways of life, such as market squares and gardens. The cloister organises repetitive gestures which nevertheless give rise to novelty, and in doing so it produces a life and a specific type of happiness within a determi-
nate social and historical context (Lefebvre 1991: 225). As a furnished space, the cloister affords shelter from rain or snow allowing inhabitants to breathe in fresh air and take exercise (either alone or in groups), perhaps stopping to rest on a bench every now and then. According to Lefebvre, it facilitates an activity of thinking, meditating and discussing religious matters whilst mediating between a repetitive everyday practice and an idea of the ‘infinite’ through its architectural furniture of columns and statues (Lefebvre 1991: 225).

The description of the kitchen at the La Borde psychiatric clinic included in Guattari’s book Chaosmosis (1995) could be the archetype of both scientific lab and artistic workshop. It is furnished with things that ‘influence on the people who participate in its activities or are just passing through’ (Guattari 1995: 69). According to McCormack, ‘the aesthetic paradigm outlined in Guattari’s final work is open to the inventive potential of a range of sites and environments’, which means that furnished spaces are attributed a certain power of action, a certain productivity, within aesthetic processes of emergence (McCormack, 2008: 4).

However, this elaboration of Guattari’s reflections on the kitchen at La Borde clinic, into ‘thinking-space’ by McCormack is not completely faithful to Guattari, because actually in Chaosmosis the kitchen is depicted as playing a role within the therapeutic practice of La Borde, as understood in the context of Guattari’s con-
ceptualisation of schizoanalysis. Schizo-analysis includes very material practices as part of a whole approach to 'subjectivation', and involves not only humans but institutions and things in an expanded notion of psychotherapy where the kitchen can emerge as 'partial analyser' (Guattari 1995: 71). The role of the kitchen in Guattari’s account is certainly not limited to facilitating thinking as McCormack suggests, but rather the kitchen contributes to the emergence of new ‘subjectivations’ and patterns of behaviour in the patient, and that’s how it ‘works’.

In the 1977 documentary about La Borde, by filmmaker Igor Barrère, the psychiatrist Jean Oury, founder of the clinic, says:

> Being here, in this establishment, or even in a sector of it, everything can have a therapeutic role: the layout of the rooms, the arrangement in groups, even each individual. So much that at the beginning of La Borde we had dictated some theoretical rules, saying that because of being committed to this place, either we want that or not, we all have a therapeutic function, including the administrative staff...What became famous here is the kitchen. The whole kitchen staff has a therapeutic role. (my translation)

As a facility within the context of a ‘clinic’, a space of refuge and healing, the kitchen takes care of its occupants as it teaches them to take care of things and of themselves: it is generative, it can ‘trigger an existential agglomeration’ (McCormack 2008: 4). But for McCormack the kitchen becomes a ‘thinking-space’, a space that thinks. McCormack would not be isolated if he really

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28. Even though I disagree with McCormack’s use of Guattari’s description of the La Borde clinic to define ‘thinking-spaces’, because I think the work that the La Borde kitchen does goes beyond just thinking, I found McCormack’s essay helpful in reframing Guattari’s account of the kitchen away from the focus of Chaosmosis on subjectivation, which makes it less relevant to this project. So, it is through McCormack’s approach to Guattari and Lefebvre that I developed the concept of furnished space, as a site that, as a configuration of furniture and activities, is doing both the facilitation for working, and the work.
were extending thinking practice to the material world. Philosopher and cognitive scientist Andy Clark’s model of prosthetic thinking includes things outside the mind (Clark 2008) and for Karen Barad intelligence is not a prerogative of the ‘human species’ but pertains to nature in general (Barad 2007: 379).29

McCormack’s interpretation of thinking-spaces hints at furnished spaces that might do the thinking themselves, but seems to stop at evoking processual spaces in which arrangements of things generate movements and creation following certain refrains or rhythms. Although McCormack talks about furniture, and furnishing as a methodology in organising an academic event (McCormack 2008: 6-7), his understanding of things has some strong limitations: he talks about things as ‘props’, he describes mattresses and balloons as things that seem like fun and that could help create a generative atmosphere for an academic event (McCormack 2008: 7). McCormack’s thinking-spaces reserve all their liveliness to generating academic research. A thinking-space in McCormack’s world is made up firstly of human bodies and their interactions, and the resonances these interactions have in exclusively human minds. It is a choreographic space which does not reflect the material, architectural aspects of Lefebvre’s cloister and trivialises the things in Guattari’s kitchen and their relationships, downgrading them as props. As McCormack concludes:

...despite some differences in their theoretical orientation, both Lefebvre and Guattari point to the importance of the refrain of thinking-space as both process and noun: with respect to process it is about inflecting thinking through affective encounters of different degrees of intensity; and with respect to the latter it is about producing facilitating contexts,

29. Using thinking and the example of the thinking-space as a blueprint for thinking of work, and of a working furnished space has to be seen in relation with the further arguments in Part 1 section 4, and in Part 2, especially in relation to issues around immaterial labour and Roberts’ reduction of artistic skill to conceptual acuity (Roberts 2007: 56). If even thinking, which is traditionally considered the least ‘material’ kind of work, is done in collaboration with furnished spaces, then so is every other type of work, all the more if it involves more perceivably ‘hands-on’ relationships with materials.
sites of experience and experiment for thinking relations between bodies, concepts, and materials of various kinds’ (McCormack 2008:4).(my italics)

To think up a space that thinks, in the way McCormack describes it, and to set it up in practice, becomes a remarkably productive kind of work, in that it creates a space of possibility for the emergence of not yet known things. If one thinks about McCormack’s expression: ‘producing facilitating contexts’ in connection with maintenance, house work and reproductive labour, which will be examined and re-evaluated in Part 2, the work of producing and maintaining facilitating contexts, which I would define as furnished spaces, seems potentially much more ubiquitous than just setting up a space for an academic event.

Thinking pertains not only to academic labour, it is an activity that pervades all productive activity, now more than ever with the new precarious forms of labour where self-marketing and administrative tasks are part and parcel of being ready-for-work. Art has been claimed to be an intellectual occupation at least since the renaissance but since Marcel Duchamp and conceptual art, the ‘immaterial’, thinking based activities have been privileged in defining what art is (Lippard & Chandler 1968). For example, Roberts, whose theory of artistic labour will be discussed later in Part 1.4, defines artistic skill after Duchamp as ‘conceptual acuity’, as opposed to the craft based skilfulness of ‘la patte’ (Roberts, 2007: 56). I disagree with many of Roberts’ findings and yet I argue that in the contemporary context, in art like in all other occupations thinking is working, and so I would argue through the affordances inscribed in its furnishings, a ‘thinking-space’ undertakes both the facilitation of work and the work itself.

30. See for example Paolo Virno’s A Grammar of the Multitude on the general intellect (Virno 2004) and Franco Bifo Berardi’s Soul at Work. From Alienation to Autonomy (2009).

The furnished space traditionally dedicated to thinking within a domestic setting is the study.\(^{32}\) The study is a room where somebody might retreat to read, write letters or emails, away from the noise and humdrum of everyday things going on in the rest of the house. It is commonly considered a space for work nestled within a space for leisure\(^{33}\) and ‘private life’. Its function and what it is supposed to contain are so well understood that they are usually taken for granted. In Ingold’s essay ‘Bringing Things to Life’ (2010b) the author describes his own study:

Sitting alone in my study as I write, it may seem obvious that I am surrounded by objects of all sorts, from the chair and desk that support my body and my work, to the pad on which I write, the pen in my hand and the spectacles balanced on my nose. Imagine for a moment that every object in the room were magically to vanish, to leave only the bare floor, walls and ceiling. Short of standing or pacing the floorboards, I could do nothing. A room devoid of objects, we might reasonably conclude, is virtually uninhabitable. In order to make it ready for any activity, it has to be furnished (Ingold 2010: 4) (my italics).

This description is used by Ingold to introduce Gibson’s theory of the affordances of the environment (Gibson 1979) where the Gibson describes the furnishings of a room as ‘what makes it liveable’ (Gibson 1979: 78), because they make possible the activities that take place within it, shaping them with their specific opportunities and constraints. Ingold, however, takes issue with Gibson’s comparison

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32. On the dematerialisation of art and the passage from the studio to the study, famously introduced by Lippard and Chandler (1968) see Part 2 section1. For a discussion of the artist’s studio or lack thereof in contemporary art practices, see Jens Hoffmann’s edited volume The Studio (2012). Recently a lot of attention has been dedicated to rediscovering the materiality of digital technologies, which puts in crisis any notion of immateriality of artistic practices that employ those technologies. See for example Jussi Parikka’s book A Geology of Media (2015) or also Parikka and Hertz (2012) and Leslie (2015).

33. See Kathi Week’s The Problem with Work (2011: 35) on the home as a privatised space for ‘leisure’.
of the furniture of a room with the ‘furniture of the earth’ (1979: 78). By isolating the components of a domestic environment as separate objects, and applying the same treatment to all that is found in natural environments, Gibson, according to Ingold, is guilty of oversimplifying things like trees, which have no defined boundaries: ‘Where does the tree end and the rest of the world begin? These questions are not easily answered – not as easily, at least, as they apparently are for the items of furniture in my study’ (Ingold 2010: 4). Ingold argues that rather than objects, phenomena in the open environment are best described as ‘things’, which are ‘going-ons’, ‘a coming together of the thread of life’ (Ingold 2010: 4).

In highlighting the work that furnished spaces do, the concept of ‘things’ certainly advances from the category of ‘objects’ since things are less fixed, bounded and determined. Yet I would argue that in taking for granted that his study contains such a schematic collection of objects, rather than ‘things’, which he lists as pad, pen, desk, chair, spectacles, Ingold is also missing something crucial about what’s ‘going on’. There are many questions that come to mind, regarding the taken for granted solitude of Ingold’s study. Where does the study begin and end? Where does the study end, and the rest of the home begin? What work is it, to keep the study free of the traces of life’s going-ons that traverse the rest of the house, to arrange its contents as a furnished space for thinking, rather than eating, sleeping, washing children? And who does this work of keeping things separate and in their rightful place? May there be hierarchies of activities, and gender, enacted in the work of separating the study from the rest of the house?24

34. Furnishing a house is about putting things in a specific configuration according to the available space. Deciding which things belong to a particular space and which do not, and doing the work of keeping things in place. In the case of a furnished space like the study, a lot of the work involved in setting it up and maintaining it, is about keeping it clear of all the things that have to do with everyday life, and filling it with those that belong to intellectual work. The kitchen table could be used for intellectual work, but it cannot be kept clear of the things of life in the same way all the time, or it would lose its ability to function as a kitchen table. The things of life can be put away, but they always return to the kitchen table. Intellectual work, or indeed artistic work, is less affordable if it depends on having to do lots of moving about things before and after being able to do it. The political aspects of the theory of affordances will be further explored in Part 2 section 2 and Part 2 section 3.
I would argue that the study, like the tree, is also an entanglement of ‘life’, an entanglement of things and of political, economic, and social factors. One thinks of some famous photographs of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in his study, surrounded by books and papers. How did Sartre afford to sit in his study? What kind of dwelling contained his study as a separate but dependent furnished space, and who looked after these coexisting spaces, maintaining both their separation and mutual dependence? There is no study without the home that surrounds it. And often in a home there is no study, as some homes can’t afford to keep such a space separate from the ‘going ons’ of daily life. Some have to work, and think, at the kitchen table. Is the kind of work and thinking afforded in different furnished spaces different? I would suggest it is, and that is precisely one of the ways in which furnished spaces do some of the work involved in the emergence of new things, such as artworks.

To go back to thinking, according to cognitive scientist Andy Clark,

we must abandon the image of ourselves as essentially disembodied reasoning engines... by accepting that we are beings whose neural profiles are profoundly geared so as to press maximal benefit from the opportunities afforded by bodily structure, action and environmental surroundings’ (Clark 2008: 14).

Clark argues that the brain functions in close relationship with an array of physical supports outside the body, where additional memory is stored and reasoning unfolds in dialogue with not only written notes, and texts, but things like desks, notebooks and computers. The process of writing an academic essay is an example of this point: rather than being a product only of purposeful brain activity, the essay emerges from a series of loops ‘out into the environment’ (Clark 2008: 12). First there is rereading of old texts, materials and notes. To this the brain responds with half-baked ideas and criticism. ‘These ideas and criticisms were then stored as more marks on paper, in margins, on computer discs, etc.’ (Clark 2008: 12). The data is then reorganised, on a clean
document, and further new reactions and ideas emerge from this operation. In the same way as monks’ religious contemplation was facilitated by the repetitive gestures of walking and conversing in the enclosed space of the cloister (Lefebvre 1991: 225), the repeated loops into the environment of, presumably, the study, the office, or the desk at any rate, add something irreplaceable to the activity of academic production. ‘The biological brain is just a part… of a spatially and temporally extended process, involving lots of extra-neural operations, whose joint action creates the intellectual product’ (Clark 2008: 12). If this is true, this means that furnished spaces such as the kitchen or the study, together with the material discursive entanglements that constitutes them, participate in the processes of emergence of new ideas as thinking-spaces, stimulating thinking through material arrangements of opportunities and constraints. Furthermore they play a constitutive role in the actual thinking processes of humans who enter them, making human cognition more intimately ‘thingly’, and more entangled with material contexts, than one would expect. This has obvious consequences in terms of the importance that access to space and facilities has in determining which projects will develop and endure.

I would argue that these insights on the entanglement between furnished spaces and academic or intellectual labour are also valid for artistic labour. In the case of this project, even though Vertical Studio had emerged to respond to a lack of space, there were times when it didn’t provide a viable alternative home-studio space, because of the new demands that family life imposed on the home in which it was installed (see fig. 24). I will return to these issues in the next section and in Part 2. What we see clear signs of, in this early theoretical exploration, is how furnished spaces have specific generative capacities. Returning to our research questions, from Lefebvre’s monastic cloister, to Guattari’s kitchen, to Sartre’s, Ingold’s and Clark’s study, we have begun to see how furnished spaces offer specific affordances and can be productive of more than the sum of their parts.
3. Karen Barad and Anna Barham: the labour of the scientific laboratory and the exhibition as an apparatus of production.

In seeking to unpick the second research question around how ‘furnished spaces do some of the work involved in the emergence of art works’, it is helpful to take a theoretical detour into Barad’s interventions in the field of philosophy. Barad is crucial to the investigation here because she highlights the productivity of things in a distinctive, theoretically rich and nuanced fashion, which serves to shed further light on the productivity of furnished spaces in artistic production. In *Meeting the Universe Half-Way* (2007) Barad bases her philosophy on a new-materialist account of what it’s like to be a scientist engaged in experimental practice, and on an examination of what actually happens in the scientific laboratory. She is interested in the ‘physicality of apparatuses and the ideas they embody’ and the encounter with a history of physics lab at Barnard College, working with ‘magnificent pieces of old equipment’ (2007: xi), played a role in getting a sense of this.

Barad’s work in the field of physics is anchored in a post-Cartesian understanding of space, where rather than an a-priori empty Euclidian box, space is, with Lefebvre, mutually constituted with society, ‘an agent of change’, playing ‘an active role in the unfolding of events’ (Barad, 2007: 223-224). Barad has reflected on the role of the scientific laboratory and the scientific experiment in the emergence of new scientific theories with her concept of *apparatus*. The apparatus as I understand it, defines for Barad, a productive arrangement of things, materials, machines and activities of which the boundaries are constantly in a process of evolving and being questioned.

Apparatuses are not mere instruments serving as a system of lenses that magnify and focus our attention on the object world, rather they are laborers (sic) that help constitute and are an integral part of the phenomena being investigated (Barad, 2007: 232)
Through her study of Niels Bohr’s ‘philosophy-physics’ Barad re-evaluates the importance of laboratory set ups in the production of new scientific theories and demonstrates the impossibility of producing knowledge that is not anchored in their materiality. Barad uses these insights to analyse apparatuses of production in the world outside the physics laboratory, with her reading of feminist political economist Leela Fernandes’s work on a Calcutta jute factory (Barad, 2007: 224). Reading Barad’s work on experiments brought some unexpected moments of connection between scientific and artistic practice specifically in regard to the role that materials and furnished spaces take on, and the relationship of reciprocity, negotiation and micro adaptation that the artist and scientist cultivates with the materials and devices they work with.36 ‘This is part of the creativity and difficulty of doing science: getting the instrumentation to work in a particular way for a particular purpose’ (Barad 2007: 170).

I think it is also possible to use Barad’s analysis of experimental apparatuses and the entangled relationships they foster to challenge dominant discourses on who labours in the emergence of art. By reading her work diffractively with the work of anthropologist Tim Ingold, a kinship emerges between scientific practices relying on a constant adjustment to material responses ‘to get the instrumentation to work’ (Barad, 2007: 170), and skilled practices which ‘follow the materials’ (Ingold, 2010: 3).

When talking about what happens in the scientific lab, Barad introduces the concept of ‘apparatus’. This is a ‘human artefact’ (Barad 2007:

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36. The reciprocal relationship between artists, materials and furnished spaces will be further explored in Part 2 of the thesis. Of course, furnished spaces do not produce themselves, they are produced by the work of those who set them up, maintain them, and use them. Still, activities sediment a furnished space with their residue, and change its affordances, without there being any one distinguishable causal chain at the origin of the change. This kind of sedimentation of past activity within Marxist thought is characterised as fixed capital or dead labour and often juxtaposed to the vitality of living labour. In Sartre’s Critique of Dialectical Reason (2004) it becomes an obstacle to individual projects in the guise of the practico-inert. I will engage closely with these ideas in Part 2 section 2.
115): a piece of equipment that embodies ideas (Barad 2007: xi). Barad is critical of actor-network theory, because in emphasizing the role of networks ‘or assemblages of humans and non-humans’ in the creation of viable scientific theories, it removes what she refers to as the relationship between ‘discrete objects’ and scientific practices. (Barad 2007: 56). For Barad ‘things’ rather than networks, are the object of investigation.

There are four main points I take away from my reading of Meeting the Universe Half-way: apparatuses as furnished spaces, the porous boundaries of the apparatus, reciprocity between apparatus and operator, and ultimately apparatuses as labourers doing some of the work in the emergence of new scientific theories.

Barad’s use of the term apparatus to define sites where scientific equipment shares residence with all sorts of other things, from a cheap cigar, to issues of class and gender; and in which all of the agencies at play have a role in the emergence of new scientific theories, is not so far from what I have decided to call a furnished space. An important aspect is that things are not democratically horizontal: in furnished spaces, things are structured by hierarchies and sedimented with the residue of past use. Still, a furnished space is not equivalent to, but rather an expansion of the notion of, apparatus, because it includes not only the lab or the factory, spaces with which Barad engages directly, but also the studio, the home, or an exhibition. Here the machines and furniture included might be tables and benches, dishwashers and Sheila Maids, or digital printers and voice recognition software.

Barad focuses her attention on the issue of the boundaries of the apparatus. Through reinterpreting the history of the Stern-Gerlach space quantization experiment (Barad 2007: 161-168), she demonstrates that it is not only material things that play a part; some of which did not belong to the experimental set up, such as the cheap, sulphurous cigar which makes the oxidised trace of an atom appear on the silver plate, thus making the experiment ‘work’. It is worth quoting Otto Stern’s recounting of the experiment, which Barad analyses closely, to understand how Barad rethinks the boundaries of the scientific apparatus from the point of view of experimental practice:

After venting to release the vacuum, Gerlach removed the detector flange. But he could see no trace of the silver atom beam and handed
the flange to me. With Gerlach looking over my shoulder as I peered closely at the plate, we were surprised to see gradually emerge the trace of the beam ... Finally we realized what [had happened]. I was then the equivalent of an assistant professor. My salary was too low to afford good cigars, so I smoked bad cigars. These had a lot of sulfur in them, so my breath on the plate turned the silver into silver sulfide, which is jet black, so easily visible. It was like developing a photographic film. (Friedrich and Herschbach 2003: 78-79 quoted in Barad 2007: 164)

By highlight the role played by this bad cigar, and consequently the role of Stern’s relative impoverishment and the performance of gender, Barad shows how social, economic and gendered entanglements play a role in the emergence of new theories (Barad 2007: 167). To return to my earlier points regarding Ingold and Sartre’s study in the previous section, Barad’s reworking of scientific apparatuses strengthens my point that it matters that an academic essay may have been written in a study, rather than on the kitchen table, or that an artwork may have been made in a bedroom rather than in a studio. The boundaries of apparatuses of production are porous, and we do not know what will suddenly enter the scene and play a role. But for something to play such a role, we need an apparatus in place, and the separation of things that belong to the apparatus and things that do not is an important, ongoing and laborious practice. What is excluded is as important as what is included, according to Barad it has ‘constitutive effects’ (Barad 2007: 59)

Barad describes a relationship of reciprocity between operator and equipment in scientific experiments: This is not about forcing inert matter to take on a certain desired form through purposive action, as in the hylomorphic model of creation. Nor is it about playing a role of the external, detached observer/recorder operating the equipment and taking note of the results. Scientific equipment needs to be tinkered with and coaxed into working, and even when it works, interpreting the results is not a simple matter, and one may find out something completely different from what they were looking to learn from it.

Although virtually every quantum physics textbook hails the Stern-Gerlach experiment as a definitive and straightforward result (push a button and note what happens), it was only years afterward that the results were given their current interpretation: Stern and Gerlach had produced evidence not for space quantization but for the ex-
istence of the spin (angular momentum) of the electron. Practically all current textbooks describe the Stern-Gerlach splitting as demonstrating electron spin, without pointing out that the intrepid experimenters had no idea it was spin that they had discovered. (Friedrich and Herschbach 2003: 53, quoted in Barad 2007: 161)

And yet, apparatuses, with their porous boundaries where one never knows where they begin or end, in need of coaxing and helping as they are, still play an irreplaceable role in the emergence of scientific theories: ultimately, ‘apparatuses are laborers’, they ‘help constitute and are an integral part of the phenomena investigated’ (Barad 2007: 232).

How do machines work? What kinds of work do machines do? What roles do humans play in the operation and production of machines? What roles do machines play in the production of other machines and humans and in the reconfiguring of human-machine boundaries and relations? (Barad 2007: 230)

It could be argued that artist Anna Barham addresses all of these questions with her artistic practice. Over the last ten years, Barham has consistently made artworks that are platforms, seating, arenas, furnishing the exhibition spaces with mostly free standing multi-functional structures in which machines, TV screens, printers, projectors or dictation equipment are precisely situated and the movement of the viewer/participant attentively choreographed (see fig.11). Her videos and sound pieces stage the encounter between sets of rules designed by the artist, and machinic processes.
A major strand in Barham’s work from 2010 has been the construction of free-standing MDF structures, which takes inspiration either from the Tangram, an ancient Chinese puzzle which consists in creating shapes out of a set of 7 triangles contained within a square (see fig.27), or from the simplified shape of the Leptis Magna amphitheatre. All of these structures are made to be inhabited by bodies and machines: they contain TV screens, projectors, speakers, and house performances, lectures, reading groups or workshops.

Barham attentively pulls apart the workings of machines, by, for example, diverting the operations of dictaphones and voice recognition software. Appropriating the errors generated through testing the limits of these language-interpreting machines, she turns them into a kind of objective poetry, like in the video *I Feel Love* (2014)⁴⁷, or the score for *Double Screen* (2013).³⁸ Or in the case of her video *The Squid That Hid* (2015)⁴⁹, she hacks the fabric of a digital image by inserting in the jpeg code that makes it up, shreds of natural language, destroying gradually the image by revealing its inner workings as made up of letters and numbers that in other situations, might spell out a scientific theory or a poem.

The machines that Barham recruits and stages do all sorts of work: as Voice Recognition Software they generate po-

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³⁷. The trailer for *I Feel Love* (2014) is available to watch online <http://www.annabarham.net/video/ifeellovetrailer.html>

³⁸. *Double Screen* (2013) is available to watch online <http://www.annabarham.net/video/doublescreen.html>

etry, as search engines they provide stock images that become the
basis of Barham’s prints and videos, as welders they help her make steel legs
for tables, as furnished spaces they facilitate her workshops and talks.

Her role as both an operator and producer of machines, is constantly staged
as connected: she constructs machinic spaces that erect themselves as perfect
geometries, as if appearing from a purely mathematical tabula rasa, to chore-
ograph actions and encounters outside of everyday heteronomies, never mind
the complex material negotiations, with things like flexible MDF and dust, they
emerged from40. But then on these ideal stages, words and images are spoken
or projected, which are conversations between existing, contriving, contingent
machines, like Google searches, or Voice Recognition Software, and humans, like
the artist or those invited to take part to her Live Production Reading Groups.

Barham’s sound pieces are conversations between humans and machines. She
reads texts to the computer, and appropriates the result, filled with misunder-
standings, then reads it back, or more often asks others to read it back to the
computer, and lets the text progressively degrade. As the textual material departs
more and more from conventional signification, VRS is pushed to the limits of its
ability to listen and interpret sounds, while the human participants are asked to
interpret a machinic, unpunctuated text, giving it a meaning by drawing breath.
Humans become machines by lending their organic sound making apparatus to
the process. Animals, like cicadas, are also sound making machines (see the re-
cent video Sick Ardour [2017]), but trying to understand the body of the cicada
as a three-dimensional machine might mean, at least digitally, destroying it.41

In the exhibition skw (fig.5, 28-30), which I was involved in co-organising while
part of the group running c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e, a project space in Brussels, I would
suggest that Barham focused on ‘the reconfiguring of human-machine boundaries
and relations’ (Barad 2007: 230). This time, given the architectural intricacy of
the exhibition space, Barham did not create a free-standing structure to house

40. See my conversation with the artist in Appendix, for more on the
construction of her MDF structures in relations to the different affordances
of her two, successive, home-studios.

41. The video Sick Ardour (2017) is available to watch online http://www.
annabarham.net/video/sickardour.html
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her machines/co-workers, but decided to use scaffolding, a highly available and recyclable building material, to create a system to structure the space and suspend two TV screens. And rather than build custom made seating, this time she replicated the existing bench and camouflaged her furnishing intervention.

Working closely with Barham on all aspects of the exhibition, from discussing her initial ideas, to sourcing the materials, to installing with her and writing collaboratively the exhibition text, I was able to witness how the artist constructed her exhibition as a complex apparatus of production. The exhibition culminated in an hour-long event, Penetrating Squid chapter III, a ‘live production reading group’, which activated the extended bench, and the scaffolding structure, as a furnished space made especially to accommodate 15 guests. The invited participants were asked to read texts provided by Barham, various versions of the score of her 2013 video work Double Screen (not quite tonight jellylike), and were able to witness the Voice Recognition Software’s struggle to make sense of their vocalisations on the tv screen in front of them. After this brief collective moment where humans and machines were invited to co-work for Barham, the artist stored the captured textual variations on her computer, ready to put them to work again in the next iteration of her exhibitions/apparatuses of production.

Returning to our two key research questions around the contribution of furnished spaces and the work that they do in the emergence of art works, through an engagement with Barad we have acquired some useful insights regarding furnished spaces as apparatuses of production and the entanglements of things they are composed of. We have also seen in Barham’s work how the productivity of things – and machines - in furnished spaces can be integral to art works and how they are produced and experienced.

Anna Barham, (2015) installation view of skw, at c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e, Brussels. -52nthjt3k8, found video, 1’23” loop, silent, 2015
10 arms, Steel tubes, clamps, dimension variable, 2015
Ellipsis, UV print on holographic paper, mounted on aluminium, 96.8 x 68.8 cm, 2015
Black outlines existing like stages, wood, dimensions variable, 2015
Anna Barham (2015)
*Penetrating Squid*
chapter III, c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e, Brussels.
In responding to my first two research questions by seeking to render furnished spaces as active arrangements of things rather than passive inert collections of objects, one requires an additional conceptual counter weight that breaks with some of the established narratives in Western philosophy around the artist the passivity of matter. In this section, I will draw on the work of French philosopher Gilbert Simondon, to analyse and challenge theories in which the contribution of furnished spaces to the emergence of artworks is concealed. As mentioned in the introduction, according to Anni Albers to make a successful design one must treat one’s materials as ‘co-workers’ (Albers 1971: 6 quoted in Keller 1977: 55). And this is a perspective I share: materials, machines, things arranged as furnished spaces, participate in the processes of emergence of artworks as workers. Not only do they ‘work’, in that if they have been deliberately laid out, set up, and organised, they also then afford certain outcomes and they ‘function’ well. Things in these furnished spaces also work as they contribute to the productive process itself. To better understand what goes on within furnished spaces such as studios and workshops whilst engaging in setting up and co-working with furnished spaces as part of my practice, I also undertake critical readings of theories of making, or ‘artistic labour’, and the ways in which the work of the artist has been understood and made to fit into theories of labour.

One such study is John Roberts’ 2007 book *The Intangibilities of Form, Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Ready-made*. I see Roberts’ account as characteristic of Marxist approaches to contemporary artistic labour that are based around a problematic hylomorphic model of creation. According to Ingold, who draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (2004) and also Simondon (2005) the hylomorphic model of creation extends the Aristotelean separation of matter and form in

42. The issue of is art a form of labour or not is discussed in Part 2 section 3.
all things, and conceives of making as a top down relationship where intelligent
design dominates and gives form to inert matter (Ingold 2009: 92); rather than
a reciprocal relationship where a practitioner has to negotiate with and follow
the material she is working with. Marxist theorists like Roberts presume this hy-
lomorphic model of creation when they think of how art is made. This model has
been abandoned by physicists like Barad as a way to understand phenomena,
but Marxist thinkers, like Roberts, still reproduce it in when they give an account
of making and artistic labour. As a result, they construct an interpretation of art
work as a type of labour that is either the archetype of non-alienated labour, or the
archetype of a new form of the oppression of all labour, or even not labour at all.43

Hylomorphism designates the Aristotelian view that objects are comprised
In Aristotle’s Physics and Metaphysics, matter and form are the two ba-
sic principles constituting all bodies, which are, respectively, potential and
actual. These principles cannot be known or manipulated experimentally,
they can only be understood intellectually, as metaphysical principles.

Ingold’s critique of hylomorphism as it has been applied to the under-
standing of making (Ingold 2009) closely follows Deleuze and Guattari’s
A Thousand Plateaus (2004), which makes reference to fellow French phi-
losopher Gilbert Simondon’s ideas expressed in his thesis of 1958 and
later republished as L’individuation à la lumière des notions de forme
et d’information (2005). I will look at Simondon’s theory of technolo-
gy, which includes his critique of the hylomorphic model further below,
but first focus on Ingold since he has produced an original and useful ac-
count of skilled practices, including art. For Ingold, Aristotle’s views be-
came embedded in Western thought as the ‘hylomorphic model of crea-
tion’ (Ingold 2009) and dominate the way artistic creation is understood.

43. Examples of these three positions are the myth of art as self-expression
and non-alienated labour, the artist as prototypical precarious post Fordist
worker, Theodor Adorno’s art as concealment of labour. Marina Vishmidt
and Kerstin Stakemaier give a summary of these positions in their book
Reproducing Autonomy, Work, Money, Crisis and Contemporary Art (2016)
which I discuss in Part 2 section 3.
To create an object, Aristotle argued, you have to bring together morphe, form and matter, hyle. And in the subsequent history of Western thought, this so called hylomorphic model of creation became ever more deeply embedded. But it also became increasingly imbalanced. Form came to be seen as actively imposed by an agent with a particular end or goal in mind, while matter was thus rendered passive and inert, that which was imposed upon (Ingold 2009: 92).

Form is understood as human design, and matter as imposed upon through the exceptional qualities of the human intellect and the human hand. One can almost hear Aristotle echoing through Marx's Capital (1976) as recounted by anthropologist and geographer David Harvey in his Companion to Marx's Capital (2010):

“At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally [i.e. mentally].” We have an idea, Marx says, and then make it real. There is therefore, always an “ideal” (mental) moment, a utopian moment, entailed in human productive activity. Furthermore, this moment is not haphazard: “man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes...his own purpose in those materials” the activity is purposive. “And this is a purpose he is conscious of, it determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it. This subordination is no mere momentary act.” (Harvey 2010: 113) (my italics)

I have struggled to reconcile the description in this passage with my experience of what happens when making art myself or collaborating with other artists, even when I worked as an artist’s assistant or when I have helped in organising exhibitions. It seems to me that the reciprocal relationship with furnished spaces and the materials they contain and organise is completely suppressed here, and that the productivity of furnished spaces and the unexpected outcomes from the processes of emergence of artworks is missed in this kind of characterisation of the productivity of labour. Of course, the passage inscribes a sense of purposive human creativity within labour processes, and if creative artistic activities can be considered labour is a contested issue.44

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44. See Part 2 section 3 for more on the relationship between art and labour.
Against this understanding of processes of production, Ingold brings in a number of Deleuze and Guattari’s arguments. Firstly, Ingold says, making is about ‘following the grain’ of matter (Ingold 2009: 9). There is a reciprocity, where the maker has to take into account a particular materials’ idiosyncratic qualities and responses to manipulation. This argument is borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari, who, as previously mentioned, elaborate on a series of concepts by Simondon. Simondon ‘exposes the technological insufficiency of the matter-form model, in that it assumes a fixed form and a matter deemed homogeneous.’ To the formed or formable matter we must add an entire energetic materiality in movement, where materials already carry implicit forms, such as ‘torsions of the fibers guiding the operation of splitting wood’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 408). There are …intensive affects, now resulting from the operation, now on the contrary making it possible: for example, wood that is more or less porous, more or less elastic and resistant. At any rate, it is a question of surrendering to the wood, then following where it leads by connecting operations to a materiality, instead of imposing a form upon a matter: what one addresses is less a matter submitted to laws than a materiality possessing a nomos (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 410).

Deleuze and Guattari then, highlight ‘a life proper to matter’, which is ‘dissociated by the hylomorphic model’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 410). The Greek word *nomos* indicates the idea which Deleuze and Guattari propose, of a materiality which has its own law; which is, literally, autonomous.45

Secondly, for Ingold we have to read making forwards, rather than backwards, which is to say, it does not work to just look at the finished thing and from

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45. It is significant that Deleuze and Guattari attribute autonomy to materials, whilst autonomy has been considered a characteristic of the artist, see for example Vishmidt and Stakemaier (2016) discussed in Part 2 section 3. An attempt to think of the autonomy of materials has been made by Reza Negarestani in his essay ‘Contingency and Complicity’ (2011), where he hypothesises a complicity of the artist with the autonomy of ‘contingent materials’ which would create ‘non-affordable’ interactions with materials (Negarestani proposes his own interpretation of Gibson’s concept of affordance in this essay).
it deduce the plan or intention that generated it. As if it stemmed fully
formed from the mind of a purposeful designer/creator/author like Athena
from Zeus’s skull. Making has to be read forwards, as a relationship between
the object in process and the maker, ‘in an ongoing generative movement
that is at once itinerant, improvisatory and rhythmic’ (Ingold 2009: 1).

I would add to this a third point: that this generative process of emer-
gence does not involve just the dialogue or ‘weaving’ between the prac-
titioner and the material. It involves the sedimented affordances of the
spaces where the process takes place, which are its furnished space or
‘milieu’, as Simondon would put it (Simondon 1989: 66-67), and a myr-
iad other things which traverse the space and enter it unexpected-
ly, like the pathways going through the printmaking workshop, or the

Ingold seems to limit the scope of this critique when he says the dominant hy-
lomorphic model has become ‘imbalanced’ (Ingold, 2009). In fact, Deleuze and
Guattari’s interest in Simondon’s critique of the hylomorphic model includes
its social and political aspects. Simondon’s critique, according to Deleuze and
Guattari, allows for the perception of the model’s ‘social presuppositions’:
‘Simondon clearly shows that the hylomorphic schema owes its power not to
the technological operation but to the social model of work subsuming that
operation’ (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, note 92). This means that the divi-
sion between those who give orders and those who execute them conceals
the fact that no matter is passive material: matter always has to be worked
with, followed, and prepared to become a usable ‘material’ (Simondon 2005:
51). According to Simondon, in the operation from which an object emerg-
es, which is supposedly comprised of form and matter, like a clay brick, the
real dynamism of the operation is far from being represented by the cou-
pling form-matter (Simondon 2005: 39). The form and matter of the hylo-
morphic model are abstract, and so are the clay and parallelepiped shape,
seen as matter and form of the brick. As abstractions, they cannot give an
account of how an actual, observable clay brick, drying on a plank of wood
in the workshop, emerges. To make this point, Simondon gives a detailed
description of the process of making a brick (Simondon 2005: 39-40):
To give a form to clay, isn’t to impose the parallelepiped form to some raw clay; it is rather to forcibly ram some prepared clay into a constructed mould. The preparation of clay and the construction of the mould are already an active mediation between raw clay and the geometric form to be obtained. To give form to something, a particular, distinctive mould has to be prepared in such and such a way, with a particular type of material. There exists therefore a first journey which goes from geometric form to concrete mould, a mould that is material, existing in the same way as the clay does, laid next to it, of the order of the ‘manipulable’. The mould is constructed in such a way that it can be opened and closed without damaging its content. The mould, moreover, is not simply constructed; it is also prepared: a dry dusting will stop the damp clay from adhering to the sides at the moment of coming out of the mould, by disaggregating or forming crevasses.

The clay is also submitted to a preparation; as raw material, the clay is what the shovel scoops up from the deposit at the bottom of the swamp, together with bulrush roots, and grains of gravel. Dried, ground, sifted, wetted, long kneaded, it becomes this homogeneous thick paste, with sufficient plasticity to marry the outlines of the mould into which it is pressed, and firm enough to keep that shape while the plasticity disappears. In addition to the purification, the preparation of clay has the purpose of obtaining the homogeneity and the degree of humidity best suited to conciliate plasticity and firmness. There is in raw clay a capacity to become a plastic mass in the dimension of the future brick, thanks to the colloidal properties of the aluminium hydrosilicates; it is these colloidal properties that make the gestures of the technical half-chain leading to the prepared clay efficacious; the molecular reality of clay, and of the water that it absorbs, orders itself through preparation so that it can behave during ‘individuation’ as a homogenous totality on the same scale as the brick that is emerging. The prepared clay is that in which every single molecule will effectively be put in communication, whichever its place in relation to the mould, with the ensemble of the thrusts exercised by the walls of the mould (Simondon 2013: 46).
The hylomorphic model only retains the extremities of the two half-chains elaborated by the technical operation as described by Simondon; the actual process of the operation is concealed. The hylomorphic schema corresponds to the knowledge of those who remain outside the workshop and only consider what comes in and what comes out; to know what really goes on, it's not enough to penetrate the workshop and work with the worker. One would have to penetrate inside the brick mould itself to follow the operation of form taking on the different levels of magnitude of physical reality (Simondon 2005: 46).

For Simondon, what is traditionally understood to be ‘passive matter’ - as in Marx’s description of the creative labour process as ‘living fire that shapes the pattern’ in the Grundrisse (1993: 361) - is in fact abstract availability in relation to an order given by others. The real passivity is that of the human mediation, which will procure and prepare matter (Simondon 2005: 51). Form corresponds to what the ‘man in charge’ (l’homme qui commande) has thought to himself, it is the message that carries his orders. Form is of the order of the expressible. The active character of form, and the passive character of matter, respond to the conditions in which orders are transmitted, and which presuppose a social hierarchy. Deleuze and Guattari elaborate this further:

Royal science is inseparable from a “hylomorphic” model implying both a form that organizes matter and a matter prepared for the form; it has often been shown that this schema derives less from technology or life than from a society divided into governors and governed, and later, intellectuals and manual labourers (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 369).

There are limitations to Ingold’s interpretation of Simondon’s critique of hylomorphism: a diffractive reading of Ingold through Simondon and Deleuze and Guattari, reveals that Ingold does not take on the political and social aspects of Deleuze and Guattari’s text, nor the critique of the division of labour already inscribed within Simondon critique of the hylomorphic model. These aspects are particularly illuminating if one looks at a Marxist theory of artistic labour such as Roberts’ (2007) which I will address in the following paragraphs.

In Harvey’s conception of labour as purposive activity cited above (Harvey 2010: 113), one gets the impression that the purposiveness of the activity might carry some sense of reciprocity and some sort of recognition of
matter’s liveliness in the struggle it takes to conquer it. Harvey is championing an interpretation of Marx where there is a reciprocity between ‘transforming the world and transforming oneself’ (Harvey 2010: 112). This does not, however, leave space for the kind of reciprocity that, although it starts with a purpose (a project or idea), might be transported somewhere else while working with the ‘grain of the wood’ during the production process. Here the process might become itinerant rather than iterative, and acquire a different knowledge and generate a different output from that which the purposeful labour had originally intended to produce.

For Ingold practitioners travel on the spot by following the materials, they are ‘wayfarers’ (Ingold 2009: 2). But the critique of the hylomorphic model of creation also applies to the modes of production of scientific knowledge, even in capitalist production. Barad insists on the example of the Stern-Gerlach experiment, as an example where the two researchers did not know what they had found until much later (Barad 2007: 165-166). According to Barad, a great part of experimental work consists in developing a knack of coping with the antics of one’s equipment, and in the end the most difficult skill is to know when the experiment is actually working (Barad 2007: 144). This is not dissimilar from what I found out by engaging with my experiments in the printmaking workshop, where one of the challenges has been to understand when the equipment was working, what constitutes the parameters of ‘success’, and what the work produced was supposed to look like. Indeed, for Simondon technology has its own logic, beyond the constraints of capitalist markets and some technological discoveries are made while trying to achieve something different (Simondon 1958).

With his book *The Intangibilities of Form. Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* (2007), Roberts’ ambition is to produce a complete theory of art and labour. The book contains an argument in defence of human exceptionalism, through the deployment of the ideology of labour. For Roberts, labour is at the source of human consciousness itself, which according to him developed with the ‘totipotentiality’ of the human hand (Roberts 2007: 94-98). Roberts’ humanist stance puts humans and their adaptability on a higher plane than any other being (Roberts 2007: 54), and makes labour the most defining human activity.46

For Roberts, a furnished space like a factory or studio is only important as a

46. For a critique of the ideology of labour see the discussion of Kathi Weeks’s *The Problem with Work* (2011) in Part 2 section 3.
theatre for displaying different states of the commodity: alienated or non-alienated (Roberts 2007: 25). In his study of Duchamp Roberts describes the non-assisted ready-made as moving from one space to the other, from the factory to the studio to the art gallery, without entering relationships to those furnished spaces but rather being transubstantiated in terms of forms of labour and value. Even though he gives technology credit in facilitating the deskilling-reskilling of the artist and her transformation from maker of ‘retinal art’ to maker of conceptual art, the role of technology, machines and materials in the emergence of artworks is very limited in his account. Artworks themselves are seen, similarly to other commodities, as containers of congealed labour rather than active and potentially operative ‘things’.

One of the areas where Roberts creates a problematic combination of concepts is his use of ‘immaterial labour’ as synonym to intellectual labour (Roberts 2007: 25-26) and his conception of artistic labour as ‘immaterial production’:

It is the power of non-alienated labour (in this instance immaterial labour) to transform the inert, alienated matter of the commodity which represents the liberatory content of his (Duchamp’s) art and that drives his use of the readymade (Roberts 2007: 26).

The term immaterial labour was introduced by Maurizio Lazzarato in a text of the same name, later published in the collection edited by Paolo Virno and Michael Hardy, Radical Thought In Italy: A Potential Politics (2006). As Sophie Hope and Jenny Richards collaborative project Manual Labours has demonstrated, with an in-depth exploration of the relationship between labour, bodies and a variety of furnished spaces, such as the office, the home, the arts institution, this term falls short of giving an account of contemporary labour:

The concept of immaterial labour developed and subsequently critiqued by autonomist Marxists relates broadly to the kind of work that produces immaterial goods such as service industries, knowledge economies and communications. There is a materiality to these goods (in terms of buildings, technologies, furniture, tools), and also a physicality to enable their delivery and dissemination (Hope & Richards 2015).

Roberts’ analysis however predates most of the criticism of the notion of immaterial labour. For Roberts, artistic skills find their application in the demonstration of ‘conceptual acuity, not in the execution of forms of expressive mimeticism’ (2007: 3), and he sets ‘immaterial’ artistic labour apart from any other type of labour as being non-alienated.
Further on in Robert’s book, Duchamp himself seems to contradict Roberts’ previous distinctions between painting and the readymade, for Duchamp ‘in later statements incorporates the history of painting into the ready-made. “Since the tubes of paint used by the artist are manufactured and readymade products we must conclude that all paintings in the world are “readymades aided” and also works of assemblage.” (Roberts 2007: 53)

“What is making?” Duchamp asked bluntly in 1961. ‘Making something is choosing a tube of blue, a tube of red, putting some of it on a palette and always choosing the quality of the blue, the quality of the red…So in order to choose, you can also use a ready-made thing, made either mechanically or by the hand of another man, if you want, and appropriate it, since it’s you who chose it’. Or, as he was to say in a similar vein in the following year: ‘So man can never expect to start from scratch; he must start from ready-made things’ (Roberts 2007, p. 52) my italics.

This is an interesting statement to think of in relation to Simondon’s ideas of ‘worked matter’ discussed in the previous paragraphs. Yet even when authorship is diffused, it is important to Roberts to claim that it is the labour of the artist, and the fact that the artist’s labour is non-alienated, that is the most important aspect of artistic production.

It is the power of non-alienated labour (in this instance immaterial labour) to transform the inert, alienated matter of the commodity which represents the liberatory content of his art and that drives the use of the ready-made. (Roberts 2007: 26) (my italics).

Here Roberts seems to subscribe to the idea that art is a practice that, at least in its most ‘immaterial’ forms, promotes a free play of the human faculties, and a return to an authentic expression of ‘self’. I find the equivalence of ‘liberatory’ ‘un-alienated labour’ with ‘immaterial’ artistic labour in this crucial passage problematic. Drawing on Adorno’s analysis of the concealment of labour in art, Vishmidt and Stakemaier have argued that the presumed liberatory, un-alienated nature of art, its ‘autonomy’, is predicated on a concealment of its conditions of reproduction (Vishmidt & Stakemaier 2016: 45). As art is understood to be unalienated labour and thus might show the way to redeem labour itself from alienation, housework is traditionally understood in capitalist
cultures to be a second nature, or done for love, and thus not actually labour. How does this passage of the Duchampian readymade from alienation (the world of commodities) to non-alienation (inside the artist studio) actually make sense? What is the relationship between un-alienated labour and the wage regime? Does being un-alienated justify not getting paid? This, after all, is the case for most artists, and it certainly happened consistently to housewives.

Roberts follows the Marxist definition of productive labour, reproducing its distinction between productive and unproductive labour:

...an artist is a productive labourer if he or she enriches a gallery or publisher and not because he or she is a hard-working fount of creative ideas. In this respect labourers whose labour is exchanged directly against revenue perform only personal services... (Roberts 2007: 27).

Today we are all enriching companies like google or facebook when we simply type search words or like our friend’s posts on social media. Roberts does not take into account that one of the privileged sites of ‘alienation’ today, involving everyone (including, but not limited to, artists), is performing unpaid labour for digital platforms and social media platforms (Fuchs 2014). This unpaid labour, following Roberts’ Marxist definition, is productive since it produces surplus value when the data produced by users is turned into monetary form via advertisement (Fuchs 2014: 2). Within the context of contemporary capitalism, the distinction between productive and unproductive work seems far less crucial - from both the point of view of the worker and of capital - than the distinction between paid and unpaid work, as Italian Marxist philosopher Paolo Virno famously pointed out: ‘The old distinction between “labour” and “non-labour” ends up in the distinction between remunerated and non-remunerated life. The border between these two lives is changeable, arbitrary, subject to political decision making’ (Virno 2004: 103). How can the distinction between productive and unproductive work hence serve any purpose as the foundation

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47. See Part 2 section 3 for more detail on issues around artistic labour, alienation, and an exploration of this issue from a feminist perspective.
for a new theory of labour and art? Marx himself said that being a productive worker is a misfortune (Marx 1976: 644). Why is it then so important to exclude so many forms of labour from being productive? Why is it so important to limit ‘productiveness’ to the human role in capitalist production processes, making such a point of demonstrating that plumbers or housewives are not productive, in the same way as machines are ‘not per se productive’ (Marx 1993: 691)?

In trying to establish if the production of art falls under the law of value or not, Roberts quotes a famous passage in Marx, which I believe should have warranted a deeper discussion: ‘As Marx says: ‘Milton, who wrote ‘Paradise Lost’ for five pounds was an unproductive labourer...Milton produced Paradise Lost for the same reason that a silkworm produces silk. It was an activity of his nature’ (Roberts 2007: 28)(my italics). Marx uses the naturalization of artistic labour to characterise certain artists as unproductive labourers, and Roberts accepts this without discussion, and uses this position to make a separate point. It is interesting that nature is called into question by Marx here: according to him, in the same way as artists produce their works, silkworms make silk, and, one could add, women do reproductive work. But if one wanted to know more about what silkworms actually are and do, an important aspect is that silkworms

48. The intention in this passage is not to criticize Robert’s understanding of Marx, but Roberts’ uncritical adoption of the Marxist naturalisation of certain forms of labour to explain the difference between productive and unproductive labour. I want to make the point that, within contemporary labour conditions, the distinction between productive and unproductive labour is no longer useful to locate where it is that surplus value is created. It is outside the remit of the thesis to summarise the abundant literature on post-Fordism, of which Virno is a prominent example, but I think that the references to Virno and to Fuchs work on digital ‘prosumption’ are very effective. In Marx, artistic labour is naturalised, and reproductive labour is not even seen as labour but as an activity of women’s nature, which is something that has been challenged by Marxist and autonomist feminists from the 1970s onwards (see Part 2 section 2 and Part 2 section 3 for more on this issue), but Roberts takes no notice of this in his new theory of artistic labour. I am using Roberts’ work as an example to show how adopting uncritically certain Marxist concepts carries ‘naturalisations’ that go unrecognised, similarly to how the hidden hierarchies of labour on which the hylomorphic model is built are also obscured.
as they have been bred by humans for centuries did not exist in ‘nature’: the product of genetic selection, unable to feed themselves so unable to survive without humans, conditioned to produce silk as raw material for historically specific fabrics even though their lives are ended by the silk harvesting process. What about that for an example of alienation? It is worth asking what notion of nature, and labour, do the activities of silkworms and artists belong to. It would appear that it is problematic to label any activities as ‘activities of somebody’s/something’s nature’. And this problematizes further the issue around making labour into ‘the’ activity that makes humans human, which underlies John Roberts’ argument and constitutes the rock bed of the ideology of labour, as analysed by Kathi Weeks in The Problem with Work (2011).

For Roberts, as

‘syntactic machines’ humans take advantage of understanding that is already built into our bio-historical development. The call for technologically untainted, ‘pure’, or ‘highly crafted’ forms of artistic production, for example, is therefore crudely counter-intuitive, insofar as it negates what defines the cognitive and material achievements of human beings. The distinguishing feature of humans is their capacity for ‘swift, sensitive self-design’ revealing the superiority of human cognitive attributes over all other living beings. (Roberts 2007: 54)

What seems to be most important in the passage above is proving that the entanglement of things participating in the emergence of artworks does not threaten the establishment of artistic authorship and human exceptionalism, even if the artist is working with materials that are already fabricated, and everything she enters relationships with has been touched or moved by others. And even if the artist does enter reciprocal relationships with furnished spaces, machinzs and materials, the journey of ‘following the materials’ and the negotiation with furnished spaces is absorbed in a glorification of human adaptability rather than reflect the contribution of the contexts that the artist works with.

49. See Lisa A. Onaga (2013) ‘Bombyx and Bugs in Meiji Japan: Toward a Multispecies History?’
When Roberts comes to tackle one of Duchamps’ most innovative artworks, *The Green Box* (1934), he seems to encounter some classic themes of printmaking practice. *The Green Box*, after an initial version was made in 1914, was ‘published’ in 1934. It consists of a flat, felt covered rectangular cardboard box containing 1 colour plate and 93 loose paper documents reproducing Duchamp’s handwritten notes, and was intended to be produced in a signed edition of 300 (Bloch 1974: 4). An ‘edition’, is a multiple artwork that is in part ‘original’, if only in so far as it is signed by an artist (a scribble from la patte may suffice), in part produced with the aid of machines.

Having worked as a commercial printer in his youth, and having professional printmakers in his family (his grandfather was a well-regarded etcher and engraver and his two brothers, especially Jacques Villon, were also trained printmakers), Duchamp had an extensive knowledge of printing processes and techniques (Thirkell 2005: 2). For *The Green Box* he chose to use phototypography, or collotype, an expensive and complex technique invented in 1855 which enabled the production of finely detailed prints from photographic negatives (Stulik and Kaplan, 2013). Importantly this was very faithful to handwritten notes as Duchamp pointed out in a letter to a patron (Thirkell 2005: 2). Duchamp’s collotypes were printed in black ink and then carefully coloured au pochoir, i.e. layered in watercolour washes following precise purpose made copper templates, and also torn using carefully produced metal templates to faithfully reproduce the original torn bits of paper Duchamp had used for his notes. The paper used was also extremely important to Duchamp, so much so that he looked all over Paris to find the perfect match with his original handwritten notes. The work involved in the production of this multiple was carried out by a specialist collotype printing plant near Paris (Thirkell 2005: 4).

This information helps us contextualise Roberts’ remarks on the *Green Box*:

The interface between the reproducible and non-reproducible in *The Green Box* (is) crucial to understanding Duchamp’s relationship to the legacy of painting and to questions of artistic skill. For what *The Green Box*...
Box presents is the placing of the artist’s body in a position of purposeful non-alienated intimacy with the machine. Hand and reproducible process impose themselves on each other all the way down. (Roberts 2007: 62)

What does Roberts mean in this paragraph? If non-alienated intimacy designates a relationship with the machine where the artist is not alienated, which is to say not separated or estranged from both what she makes and the surplus value created by the production process, then how does this non-alienated intimacy take into account the machine operator? After all they are the ones making the collotypes, and skilfully using the pochoirs to create subtle layers of watercolour, not Duchamp. And if the non-alienated intimacy of the relationship with the machine needs to be facilitated by a worker, as it is in minimalist installations or in László Moholy-Nagy’s famous Telephone Pictures (1923) and countless other examples since, the fact that some ‘alienated’ labour is still involved in the emergence of artworks, it seems to me needs to be taken into account, because how can a non-alienated relationship to the machine take place between the machine and the artist, when the labour of the machine operator is still alienated? Mierle Laderman Ukeles has recounted in a 2009 interview how she was acutely aware of this issue when she wrote her Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969 [50]

I felt when I was watching Richard Serra do these very simple things like throwing the lead, or Judd building things the language of Process Art and Minimalism, which I felt very in tune with I felt like “what are they doing?” They are lifting industrial processes and forgetting about the whole culture that they come out of. So Serra was this steel worker without the work, without the workers. And Judd was this carpenter without workers. They didn’t have workers, they didn’t have people, they had objects or they had results. And I felt that they were falling into the same trap as the rest of this damn culture, which couldn’t see the whole structures or cultures of workers that made the kind of work that invented these processes and refined them. They were skimming off the top (Ryan 2009).

[50] A scan of Ukeles’s manifesto is available to download < www.arnolfini.org.uk/blog/manifesto-for-maintenance-art-1969/Ukeles_MANIFESTO.pdf>
This ties in very well with Vishmidt and Stakemeier’s Adornian account of how labour, and especially reproductive labour, is concealed within ‘non-alienated’ artistic work. Roberts based his whole evaluation of the readymade’s innovation on focusing on the relationship between the artist and his use of the alienated work of others/non-artistic hand of others. From Roberts’ point of view, The Green Box enters murky territory because the hands recruited may not be artistic but they are certainly skilled in the printer’s craft, which is hardly an example of non-artistic hand employed in deskilled industrial labour. Furthermore, for Roberts alienation is not just about ownership of the products and means of production, it is about skills, and how they have been taken away from workers with the advent of the industrial mode of production. For Simondon, alienation also has to do with a lack of knowledge and a lack of intimacy with technical objects but alienation is also shared both by workers and machines. For Simondon, technological ‘individuals’ (machines) develop according to their own independent logic in relation to their milieu, and are alienated within capitalism because they are used as means to an end, in the same way as workers are (Simondon 1958: 117). Roberts seems to affirm a reciprocity between hand and machine by saying that in Duchamp’s Green Box, they ‘impose themselves on each other all the way down’. But elsewhere, he states clearly that ‘What is purposeful about the labour of art is that it is transformative of its materials in ways that are non-subsumptive and non-heteronomous, thereby allowing the subjectivity of the artist to penetrate the materials of artistic labour all the way down’ (Roberts 2007: 87) (my italics). Non-heteronomy means autonomy, so this is once again an affirmation of the autonomy of the artist, against all odds, and of the importance of his (penetrative, male?) subjectivity. This would horrify Anni Albers, who wanted precisely to escape expressing an artistic individuality, by ‘co-working with materials’ (Albers 2000: 39). I would argue Duchamp went on a journey with the materials and entered a relationship with all the aspects of the production of The Green Box, because his knowl-

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51. See Part 2 section 3.

52. See Part 2 section 5 for a discussion of alienation in Simondon.
edge of printing technology couldn’t be unlearned, and meant he was working side by side with the printers that were making the prints. For Simondon, it is not by regaining a purposeful control over the machine that humans become less alienated: it is by recognising how humans and ‘technical individuals’ (i.e. machines) work alongside each other within specific milieus, or furnished spaces as I would define them (Simondon 1980: 66-67). By holding on to an understanding of the entanglement of material-discursive elements that contribute to the emergence of artworks within specific furnished spaces, it becomes possible to see how the making of art might be indeed a very special activity. This is not because it exemplifies the utopia of non-alienated labour, but rather because it allows us to experience directly how the common alienation of workers and machines described by Simondon may be reduced, rather than by outsourcing alienated labour as Roberts seems to suggest, by engaging in a reciprocal relationship with things where the labour of setting up and maintaining furnished spaces is the most productive, or ‘less alienated’, there is.

Returning once again to our main research question regarding the role of furnished spaces in the emergence of art works, we can see that ‘following the grain’, in this context, of arrangements of things, is integral to artistic production. But we have also stressed the political and social dimensions of this point by breaking from the dualisms of form and matter that characterise hylomorphism – a theme to which we return in the following Part. In rethinking this relationship between form and matter, we are – in terms of our second research question – foregrounding the work of things by arguing that the artist is better seen as developing a reciprocal relation with things rather than acting upon them as the hylomorphic model assumes.
5. The workshop that works: a record of printmaking practice

Through the theoretical discussion in the previous section we have come to see the work that things do in furnished space through an emphasis on a reciprocal relationship of practitioners with things and their productivity. This theoretical development was also borne out by testing a variety of sources against my artistic experience and practice of printmaking at Loughborough University – which thus constitutes a key practice based angle with which to respond to the second research question regarding the work that furnished spaces do in the emergence of art works.

When I started my PhD at Loughborough, a very exciting aspect of being part of an Art School again was being able to use the facilities there. I sought to make use of a variety of different workshops, and following the path of least resistance I decided to do something that would allow me to engage with the printmaking workshop, the equipment it contained, and the knowledge and help of printmaking tutor Pete Dobson. I put my name down for a tour of the facilities by Dobson at the beginning of the academic year, and as soon as I saw the aquatint box I became interested in making work with it. Taking inspiration from my ongoing painting project *Vertical Studio* (fig. 1,2,3,4), I wanted to work with flat, transparent layers of colour and a simple set of rules. The aquatint process, I thought, might allow me to do that.

I attended an aquatint etching workshop, where we were taught how to use the aquatint box. Wearing a dust mask, we had to turn the handle at the front of the aquatint box furiously for about a minute, so the resin dust inside the drum would be agitated enough to become a fine suspension. Then we placed our etching plate inside the drum for a minute, to allow the dust suspension to slowly precipitate onto the plate. After this, the resin had to be melted from underneath with a blowtorch so it would adhere to the surface of the zinc.
plate. Dropping varnish at random over the aquatint covered surfaces of 11 identical zinc plates before letting the acid bite them, I obtained 11 randomly dotted surfaces (fig. 32). The drops of varnish, protecting the plate through the acid bite, created shiny dots which would be impervious to the ink while the rest of the plate was covered by a grain made of tiny holes, where the acid had penetrated between the particles of aquatint resin, and where the ink would get trapped (fig. 13). I started making tests by inking and printing the plates in overlapping layers, each time with a different plate and colour.

Having learned how to use mangle type presses during my degree, I was used to the difficulties that registration presents to printmakers: on these types of presses, where the plate and paper are dragged underneath a heavy roller by turning a wheel, the plate has to be placed on the press bed face up, and the paper face down on top of the plate. To figure out where the paper should go in relation to the plate, one has to make a registration sheet, where the plate and paper are drawn. This allows one to mark the corners of where the paper should be. The registration sheet is placed underneath a transparent plastic sheet and the plate placed on top. The plastic sheet makes the surface slippery, which is made worse by having to cover the plate and paper with felt blankets to protect them from being crushed, so you can not really see what you are doing. What often happens is that the paper moves slightly during its passage underneath the roller and the print is not exactly where it should be. This is annoying when a print is made with only one passage under the rollers, as it might not come out quite straight on the paper, but it can become maddeningly difficult if one has to layer many passages because each layer might move in a different way. ‘Registering’, i.e. printing overlapping layers accurately, becomes a major worry.

When I first printed my aquatints, Dobson taught me how to use the hydraulic Beever press (fig.14). Hydraulic presses have a completely different way of working from the classic mangle type presses. They apply pressure in a top down direction, and there is no lateral movement to worry about. Although Beever Presses’s website54 recommends to still use a registration sheet and

54. See <http://www.beeverspress.co.uk>
to place the plate down first, Dobson taught me to put the paper down first, then to place the plate, face down on top of it. This may seem a small difference, but it in fact made all the difference in terms of what this particular machine afforded the Aquatints project. Printing on water-saturated paper with a zinc plate, which has a 1 mm thickness, leaves a relatively deep embossing mark. After the first layer, each time I printed over the aquatints, I could simply drop the plate face down over the existing emboss and I knew that it was in the right place, and that it would not move. This means that even though I have printed approximately 154 times in total so far, I never ‘ruined’ a print by overprinting in the wrong place. All the layers, some slight differences in the size of the zinc plates notwithstanding, are pretty much in line. This particular working process played a significant role in making the project endure for so long. If I had encountered registration problems at the time of making the first tests for the project, I would have had to rethink it.

This kind of interaction with the affordances of a furnished space such as the printmaking workshop can only be explained by engaging in a significant amount of detail when describing the technical processes at play. It would be easy to overlook the contributions made by the hydraulic press to the project by focussing on my initial intentions and the set of rules from which the project emerged, just as it is easy to rationalise brick production by understanding it as the imposition of ideal form onto raw matter. The project’s space of possibility is dependent upon this rare piece of equipment. Accordingly, its continuation is dependent on my being able to travel to Loughborough and access the workshop. Because the equipment afforded this project, thanks to its specific characteristics, it simply worked, and, looking at it superficially, the ongoing outcomes could be simply interpreted as an equation between initial idea and repetitive execution. I had to reconsider each phase of the project from the beginning to be able to discern the irreplaceable role played by the Beever press. If I had tried to continue the project on a mangle press elsewhere, that would have also taught me the work that the Beever press was doing. The project was designed to interact with the furnished space of the printmaking workshop by engaging with the aquatint box, etching acid baths and presses. The unpredictable role played by the hydraulic press was of particular significance: indeed, the project could not have begun or continued without it. This is an embodiment of the ways in which furnished spaces do some of the work in the emergence of artworks, and also of how easily their contribu-
tion can be overlooked even by those who try to intimately embrace them.

I made as many plates as I could over a period of a few weeks then I started repeatedly carrying out the repetitive, technical tasks of inking and printing the plates over and over on the same 11 small sheets of Fabriano Rosaspina paper. After making a series of tests to determine how many times the paper could be printed on without suffering substantial damage, I started printing following a certain order of plate and colour. I decided to write a code, so that I could avoid making decisions about which plate and what colour to use. Following the code I could, if I wanted, reproduce, or at least approximate the results in each stage of each print, as in a scientific experiment.

Every time I print a new layer of colour, I select the prints and plates I am going to use according to this pre-established code pencilled on the prints. There is a series of numbers, which designate each of the 11 plates I have made, accompanied by the letters R B Y G, which designate the colours of the inks I use: Red, Blue, Yellow, Green (see image). The particular hues I have chosen reflect the hues I have been using in my paintings for many years: Alizarine Red, Sao Green, Ultramarine Blue, and Primary Yellow.
The first time I printed the piece opposite (fig. 33), I inked plate 11 in blue. The second, plate 9 in yellow, and so on, the 3rd with plate 1 in green. The image shows the print in 2013. In 2015 the same print had been printed again with 2 more layers, plate 2 in red and plate 3 in another glaze of blue (fig.34).

Once identified the plates and prints I am going to ink with my first colour on a particular day, I submerge the prints in the water bath, watching the layered colours of the aquatints become dark as they saturate with water. I leave the prints in the water to soak, then place the zinc plates on the gas plate to warm them up before I ink them with an old, ink-soaked piece of scrim. The warmth helps loosening the ink so it can lodge itself in the tiny grooves of the plate more easily. I let the inked zinc plates cool down again, before delicately removing the excess ink, first with a loosely scrunched up ball of cleaner scrim then with a clean sheet of tissue paper. After having removed most of the excess ink with the scrim, and before starting using the tissue to finish polishing the plates, I wash my hands at the sink next to the paper soaking bath.

Once my hands are clean, using a clean piece of paper to pinch one of their corners between my fingers without touching it directly, I remove the soaked prints from the paper bath and allow them to rest between layers of blotting paper laid out on the clean Formica surface of the table next to the paper bath. The water saturated prints are at their most vulnerable at this stage. I finish polishing all excess ink from the zinc plates while the prints shed some of the water onto the absorbent paper. After having washed my hands again, I make sure the prints are free of excess water by delicately pressing the blotting paper on them, then I lay them on the cleanest felt blankets I can find on top of the hydraulic press’s heavy melamine inferior board.

I then bring the inked plates one by one, after making sure the numbers on the back of the plates correspond to the numbers in the code pencilled on each print. I lay the zinc plates face down onto the damp prints, making sure they fall onto the embossed depression left by the previous passages of the prints through the press. After having protected the prints and plates with a piece of clean newsprint I lay the top board
on them and, always with some difficulty due to the weight and size of the boards, I slide everything under the press. Then it’s time to use the lever to put the hydraulic press into action. I move the hand operated lever up and down for several minutes as I watch the pressure exercised on the oil within the machine slowly go up on the dial. Once I get to the desired level of pressure I can stop and loosen the press again. I slide the heavy and cumbersome melamine boards sandwiching the prints onto the table in front of the press and remove the top board. This is another vulnerable moment as the damp paper could stick to the plates as I try to separate it from them, and tear. As I usually print several prints at once, I cut the newsprint covering them with scissors so they can be lifted individually. With the damp newsprint still attached, I then delicately turn them one at a time and place them, newsprint down, onto the hot plates. The warmth helps separate the paper from the zinc plate, curling at the corners. I delicately lift the prints, holding them with pincers made of clean paper. I place them onto the press to look at them and discover how the additional layer of colour has modified the pre-existing image. I then cover them in clean tissue paper and put them under a heavy stack of cardboard sheets that makes up the print-drying device placed in the corner of the print room, just behind the press. The cardboard absorbs the dampness from the prints while the weight of the sheets prevents them from curling. The day after, I lift the heavy cardboard sheets to find my prints amongst the many other prints that are also drying there, and I place them back in an A4 sized cardboard box in which I carry them away.

Which of the actions I painstakingly described above could be defined as ‘making art’? Washing hands, carrying things from one place to another, inking (which bears a resemblance to rubbing or polishing), and perhaps especially cleaning can all be understood as forms of maintenance. I would argue the ‘art’ is in co-working with things through this intimate, repetitive, reciprocal relationship, where the contribution of the furnished space I engaged with is present at all levels, including at the level of the initial intentions and setting up the rules choreographing these activities, which would not have been possible without the particular type of press that was available in this particular workshop. Even if the technical operations are done by someone else, as in Anna Barham’s holographic prints pro-
duced in collaboration with a Sheffield printing company, or with Duchamp’s Green Box, made by a specialist printing plant near Paris, the work still depends on a specific encounter with a furnished space and its affordances.

Some interesting questions emerged from exhibiting the aquatints. As illustrated by the videos included in the website I made with the help of Loughborough Digital Hub tutor Andy Chong, the aquatint prints are double-sided (fig. 18). In an exhibition context, they consequently come charged with two inherent constraints, or opportunities, for outsourcing aesthetic decisions. One is the obvious question: which side?

I started printing on both sides of the etching paper at the end of the first year of my PhD at Loughborough. Conversations with my then co-supervisor Mel Jordan focused on artistic production in terms of commodity production and how the prints could problematize their status as aspiring commodities. Investing both sides of the paper seemed a way to make the works literally embody these questions, by simultaneously offering two images in the place of one, but also imposing a choice and the subsequent exclusion of one face at a time. I tried to confirm this ambivalence by designing ‘frames’, or simple hanging devices, consisting in sheets of Plexiglas held up by pins (fig. 35). They look like they could be easily dismantled, predicing instability and availability to change, but at the same time, because of precariously sandwiching the prints between their transparent surface and the wall, do not allow to view both sides of the print. Deciding to exhibit these works presupposes accepting to simultaneously hide them.

Another important layer of instability is offered by exhibiting the prints

55. see for example <http://assuntaruocco.be/arvM9.html>

56. Of course, the prints could be exhibited differently, so that both sides were visible. For example, in the 2013 Dieter Roth exhibition at Camden Art Centre Diaries, Roth’s double-sided drawings were exhibited in frames at 45 degrees from the wall. But still, the point is, with the double-sided prints, the two sides of the same sheet of paper can never be seen at the same time. Even just by turning the page, they are always separated. If one looks at one face, the other one is concealed.
in the midst of an on-going process, which is automatic in that a pre-es-
tablished procedure is unfolding, depending on contingent circumstanc-
es. After I moved away from Loughborough and the Printmaking work-
shop, the opportunity to exhibit became the opportunity for returning
to the Workshop to add another layer to the prints. So even though the
rules established when the project was originally designed were generat-
ed through my interaction with the printmaking workshop and with print-
making tutor Pete Dobson, what now animates my movements in returning
to Loughborough and printing another layer of colour is totally dependent
on external circumstances, such as being invited to exhibit the prints.
For a number of years before and during my PhD research, I had been making ‘blind drawings’ while listening to lectures and seminars (fig. 36). They functioned as a way to focus my attention on what was said, although I did see them as experiments in composition and mark making, where I was trying to move away from the practice of ‘objective’ drawing which I had been taught. When I learned about the possibility of using the photo-etching equipment at Loughborough SAED Printmaking workshop, I decided to use this technique to reproduce my drawings. It was an opportunity to experiment with the passages between different technologies: biro pen on paper, digital photography and printing, photosensitive emulsion and etching with acid on copper, seemed such a heterogeneous mix of procedures, and I decided to experiment with this process of technological translation. I wanted to make a series of photo-etching prints out of my blind drawings, but there were many thousands of drawings. In an effort to invite ‘heteronomy’ and question the nominalist imperative implicit in the practice of art (‘this is art’), I also designed a procedure that would allow me to outsource that choice, of which drawings to transform into a print: I simply asked some people I knew to choose a drawing for me.

57. ‘Thierry de Duve...locates in art ‘after Duchamp’ not so much a kind of activity as a form of speculative judgement - ‘this is art’’ (Vishmidt 2013).
I carried a trolley suitcase full of my black books filled with blind
drawings, there must have been about a hundred black books at that
stage. I gave people coloured stickers so they could keep track of
their favourites and I asked them to choose one double page.

Back in my house in Loughborough, I took a photo-
graph of the black book resting on a wooden table, open
at the double page chosen, with my digital camera.

I edited the file in Photoshop, trying to preserve both the detail of the
drawn lines, and the texture of the wooden table which framed it. To make
a phototetching, I needed a black and white image printed on a transpar-
ency. Having enough contrast between blacks and white was important
for the process to work, so I had to separate the drawn areas and tex-
tured areas within the image and force the contrast in different ways.

Once I obtained my transparency from the digital printing services at the
Art School’s ‘Digital Hub’ (fig.37), I was ready to prepare my copper plate.
Copper is an expensive material, and to make the large plates I needed, so
that the etched drawings would be the same size as the original drawings,
I paid around £30-40 each. Copper is also heavy, as I directly experienced
when I carried home the copper I bought from a specialist shop in Borough,
London, called Intaglio

Printmakers, Pete
Dobson had sent me
to. The copper was
pre-polished, the
polished side covered
with plastic film so
it wouldn’t get dam-
aged while it was cut
to size and the edges
filed. The standard
sized copper plate
had to be cut to size
first, to reflect 1:1
the size of my sketch-
book. This was done by Dobson: I could never quite master the vigorous jump necessary to operate successfully the large metal sheet cutter that lives in the print room, just outside the door leading into the dark room. I worked at the large table where workshops are usually held in the middle of the central area in the Printmaking workshop. I filed the edges of the copper plate, smoothing them so the paper wouldn’t get caught or torn on any sharp corners when printing. I covered the back of the plate with brown tape to protect it from the acid, and I degreased the plate with a mixture of water, ammonia and chalk in the big sink inside the etching room. Once these operations completed, I was ready to start the process of photo etching the transparency on the copper plate.

I carried out this process in the dark room, as the photo-sensitive emulsion used for photo-etching needs to be worked with in a dark environment. The first part of the process involved much trepidation on my part because of how difficult I found it to get right the quick motion of roller-ing the sticky blue liquid etch-resist emulsion onto the plate. The blue liquid, that smells strongly, almost inebriatingly of aniseed, is kept away from any source of light in a special wooden box in the darkest and farthest corner of the darkroom. I put my copper plate onto the table next to the box, then I poured the sticky liquid onto a small piece of glass and quickly started rolling a small roller over it then transferring it onto the surface of my copper plate. This had to be done as fast and as evenly as possible. Once the plate was covered with a semi-transparent blue film, I placed it in the oven to dry at 50 degrees for an hour or so.

The etching plate was ready to expose when its blue face had lost any trace of stickiness. I moved it to the vacuum exposing machine, a contraption with a pivoting metal frame that allows plates to be caught between a pane of glass and a rubber sheet thanks to an electrical suction pump, so they can be exposed to a powerful UV light while held in place vertically. First, I placed a dot screen between my etching plate and the glass surface, so after a first exposure a texture would appear to make it easier for the details in the drawing to come through. I left the room and switched on the UV light on my way out without looking back so as not to damage my eyes, which always made me think of the myth of
Orpheus and Eurydice. After this first exposure, I exposed the transparency itself, for 2 minutes, making sure it was the right way around, so that it would etch the wrong way and print the right way so to speak.

Once the plate was exposed and freed from the vacuum exposing machine, I knew I would soon learn if the process had worked. I placed the plate in a shallow bath, full of a weak solution of water and blue etch resist liquid, the same as that I had previously rolled onto its face. I kept the water moving by lifting the bath this way and that way. The design on my transparency quickly started to appear, fine copper lines and fuzzy textures beginning to show as the non-exposed areas of the blue etch resist film, those areas covered by the black ink on my transparency, crumbled away. Once the design was sufficiently revealed, I rinsed the plate under running water to stop the process short.

With some of the Photo-etchings, the exposure went well, and I was able to proceed to etch the plate without any issues. This was rare, as at this stage I often had to repeat the exposure, sometimes after having re-worked the original digital file and reprinted the transparency to try and obtain a more contrasted and readable image (readable for the ‘machine’) in a painstaking process of adjustment and negotiation with the different technologies. Other times, I had to wash the plate more carefully as I suspected that the degreasing process had not been thorough enough, and for that reason the blue etch resist film failed to adhere to the surface evenly. Other times, we couldn’t figure what went wrong until we realised the etch-resist liquid was past its sell by date. Once the etch resist film had been applied successfully, etching the plate was a process of variable length, as it would take a different amount of time according to the strength or weakness of the acid bath. As previously described at the beginning of Part 1, the etching room is a separate room within the print making workshop, where a variety of safety measures have to be fulfilled. With gloves on, the extractor on full blast pumping out the toxic fumes created by the chemical reactions, I submerged the copper plate in the acid and swept its surface delicately with a long feather every ten minutes or so while the acid ate away at the metal. Every now and again I rinsed the etching plate and showed it to Pete, to ask him if it was ready to print yet.
When it finally was, and the acid had drawn deep grooves and fine lines where the blue etch-resist film bore the lines and textures on my transparency, I put the plate back in the weak blue solution so the rest of the film crumbled away and revealed shiny areas of copper untouched by the acid. Printing could then start, and it proceeded much like for the Aquatints, except it was slower because of the size of the plates.

Issues around the readability of the open sketchbook led my successive attempts at photoetching. To satisfy the premise of the project, it was important that the prints did read as an image of an open sketchbook, rather than just as an abstract drawing. This information was needed, to make it clear that the abstract drawing represented on the print, was part of a larger sketchbook which had been photographed whilst open on this particular page. It was very difficult to accurately translate into etching the textures of the drawn lines, of the thickness of the sketchbook and also of the wooden desk which I photographed.
the drawings on, at the same time. As Dobson says in our conversation to achieve all of these textures was almost impossible with some of my photographs, and I would have needed to make a duo tone print, by layering two copper plates featuring two different transparencies, rather than only one. This would have been impossible given the cost of the copper plates. After much deliberation with Dobson, I ended up adopting a stencil to delineate the area of the open double page with a roller covered in a subtle yellow tint (fig.38).

One aspect of the project that I noticed very quickly, was the instability of the results. Contrarily to what I was doing with the aquatint prints, where from a limited number of plates I wanted to get 22 distinct ongoing variations, I was making these photo-etchings as multiples, and I expected them to be a fairly accurate reproduction of the sketchbooks. The initial intention was of turning the chosen drawing into an autonomous artwork which would also be multiple, and so could potentially be sold or given away as an instance of itself. But no matter how much I tried, I never managed to make the same print twice. And some of the prints, like Gauthier, or Aria, were incredibly difficult to print. Because of the too wide variation in textures that I was trying to translate into one etching, the plates I obtained were extremely subtle, and even if I tried to ink them in a consistent way, very different prints were produced from the same plate. In addition to that, the malleability of copper makes the etching fragile, which also means that the plate is worn every time it is printed. The original drawings were therefore transformed into a series of unexpected variations, which I tried to capture with the videos shown in the website A Record of Unaddressed Activity (<www.assuntaruocco.be>).

It was with one particular print, a drawing chosen by curator and writer Tom Trevatt, that the project encountered such challenges that it came to a halt (fig.39). The drawing chosen included a hand-written sentence ‘speculative subject always becoming world’ which I had written down during a talk given by philosopher Ian Hamilton Grant at the Royal Academy in London. Tom said he was particularly interested in the relationship between the sentence and

58. See Appendix, p. 110.
the drawing, and as I wanted to faithfully portray his choice it seemed important that the sentence be readable on the finished etching. But no matter how much I tried, I could not make it so. The photoetching process seemed to be completely recalcitrant to what I was asking it to do, it refused to reproduce drawing, writing, and the wooden texture of the table that the sketchbook was on, at the same time. Pete advised me to try and use a dry point to touch up the writing so it became readable, and I did, but then I realised that, within the parameters of the project, the etching was ruined once the image stopped being the result exclusively of the photoetching process. Dobson proposed to use a different technique, Solar Plate, to try and overcome the difficulty with this print. Dobson had by now switched his interest from photoetching to Solar Plate as it was a much more reliable process to work with for the students.

As an exploration of the affordances of the Printmaking workshop this project revealed both the opportunities and constraints of this furnished space, even though in the end it was the constraints that made themselves most felt in what could be seen as an instance of machinic work stoppage. What I found out when I took on the offer by Pete to continue the project with a different technique, Solar Plate, illuminates even more the contribution of the workshop itself and of the things it contains to the project, which the Solar Plate technique could not engage with.

Why is it that the Solar Plate technique could not do what photoetching was doing, even though it was, like photoetching, provided by Pete, within the confines of the printmaking workshop? I would argue that as a process, it was too cut off, disentangled from the printmaking workshop as a furnished space. Solar Plate is a thin sheet of plastic, coated with a photo sensitive layer, which, after exposure, comes off, so that from a negative transparency a positive is obtained. The Solar Plate does not need the printmaking workshop as its furnished space: it functions as a product coming from the outside, ready to go, easily exposed, creating a negative plate with only one processual passage. The furnished space of the Solar Plate is not really that of the Printmaking workshop. The process has already happened somewhere else, in the factory where the plate has been produced, before it arrives in the workshop. The workshop does not do anything, or almost. Even though there are no raw materials in the Printmaking workshop, and everything that we work
transparency and various attempts at printing

Tom, (2014)

see also Appendix pp. 60-62 and 75-76.
with is already ‘worked’, prepared matter, there are material transformations and complex processes at play, which we have to follow and negotiate with. This is not to say that an artwork emerging from an exclusively digital furnished space would not also go through transformation and negotiation. We have seen, for example, how Barham’s works stage the relationship and negotiation between the human and digital. By accurately reproducing a digital image, Solar Plate acted not so differently to a digital printer, so why go through the Solar Plate process at all if I could simply use a digital printer?

Solar Plate does not involve the multiple points of contact between the process of producing the prints, and the furnished space of the print room, the things that live in the Printmaking workshop and the activities of my body choreographed by the print room. There is no heavy, expensive copper plate; just a sheet of plastic. Thus, there is no need for the big table, where I would laboriously file the edges of the copper plate; no need for the plate cleaning station inside the etching room, where I would degrease the copper plate; no need for the strong-smelling photoetching emulsion inside its special box in the dark room; and no need to worry about cleaning bits off the roller to prevent them from damaging the surface of the photosensitive film. Following the exposure of the solar plate, there is no need to leave the plate in the acid bath, where the etch resistant photosensitive emulsion sometimes immediately failed (ruining the plate). All of these activities are not an indulgence in a romantic conception of artistic process. They are actual opportunities to enter in a relationship of dialogue and negotiation with things in the Printmaking workshop, they are opportunities for the workshop itself, as a complex furnished space, to do some of the work. The Solar Plate technique is not an innovation that allows to obtain the same outcome with a simpler process: as stressed by Dobson in our conversation the object obtained is of a completely different nature. It is a faithful reproduction of a digital image, and it belongs to the realm of the digital.

59. See Part 1 section 3

60. See Appendix p. 1144.
The image I got when I tried Solar Plate was almost flat, with hardly any embossing, a faithful reproduction of the digital file printed on the transparency I had brought from home. But differently from Duchamp’s *Green Box* (1934), I was not trying to faithfully reproduce my scribbles and the way my ideas had been jotted down on paper. Duchamp’s fac-similes in the *Green Box* do, amongst other things, the job of preserving and making available as an artwork, the artist’s thinking process in its materiality. My drawings were a side effect of an activity of listening to lectures and seminars. They were only activated when they became an excuse to go and see some people and ask them what they thought a drawing should look like, so that I could appropriate their artistic expertise and decision making. When I brought these chosen drawings as ‘already produced matter’ to work with in the print-making workshop, I wasn’t only interested in faithfully reproducing my drawings. I photographed the drawings as part of a picture which also included the table, and the sketchbook itself, and became interested in the ways the photoetching process in its complexity would respond to the lines and textures I was bringing to it. It became clear that the process was struggling to cope with reproducing both drawn lines and the textures of black paper and wood. But if I had used two plates to do this well, it would not have been economical given the cost of copper. But also, I would have lost this opportunity to follow the materials wherever they took the images. In fact, as long as the etching presented a resemblance with the chosen drawing which was the starting point, this seemed acceptable as an outcome.
6. Part 1 Conclusion

In this Part 1 of the thesis, I have examined a question that emerged from my practice-based exploration of a specific furnished space, the printmaking workshop. Do things arranged in furnished spaces do some of the work involved in the emergence of artworks? We can see from my use of the hydraulic press in the printmaking workshop how it specifically contributed to the emergence of my series of Aquatint Etchings. The photoetching processes described above also shed some important light on the research question, regarding the contribution of furnished spaces, by highlighting once again their productivity and their key role in the emergence of these pieces, particularly since the outcomes were in this case both indeterminate and unexpected. A reciprocal relationship of co-working with things emerges from my practice in the printmaking workshop.

Over the course of the project, I looked for a theoretical toolbox that would allow me to understand the contribution of things to artistic labour. I reworked Barad’s redefinition of the notion of the apparatus as an ongoing sedimentation of materials, machines, and things within a space carved up by the entanglement of economic, social, political contexts through my own encounter with the Printmaking workshop. I have established that in a similar way to which scientific apparatuses are labourers, the furnished spaces where artworks emerge are labourers and they contribute in unpredictable and irreplaceable ways to the processes from which artworks emerge by doing some of the work.

To find out just how furnished spaces participate in these processes, I sought to understand what really takes places in furnished spaces such as the studio or workshop, by observing my work processes, and engaging with ideas on the process of making. This necessarily involved looking at notions of artistic work. Many of the theories of artistic work over the past few decades have in one way or another, had a strong relationship with Marxist thought. The problem with applying Marxist theories of work onto artistic processes is that by uncritically adopting a hylomorphic model of creation, these theories invariably miss the contribution of materials, machines and furnished spaces to the processes of emergence of artworks.
In Part 2 of the thesis I will, by engaging with the home-studio, demonstrate that this problem of presupposing the domination of form over matter also has consequences for the way in which activities of setting up and maintaining the spaces where work and life happens are undervalued.
Part 2
Making Things Work
**Homes and Studios 2010-2018**

2010: An open plan workshop inside a Victorian mews in Clapham Common, next to a car repair and opposite a textile designer. A big double door, laminate flooring, white painted brick walls; a cold, deep open space. Small high windows overlook the yard, a larger high window at the back, with no view. As you come in, on the left a camping stove sits on top of the fridge, straight in front of you a couple of sofas facing each other, with a gas fire in the middle. Further on the left, a nook contains a toilet and shower room. Three loosely separate work spaces, with large tables. E There are three loosely separate work spaces, each with large tables: evidence of four artists working there (this was done through subletting as rent and business rates were expensive). A flight of stairs on the right leads to a smaller, bright space with rows of windows on both sides screened by colourful curtains. A bed, and a desk and sofa are separated by a set of shelves. Clothes hang on a rail, a jumble of shoes on the floor, an electric heater.

2011: A two bedroom flat on the ground floor of a 1940s council building in Stockwell. Thick, solid walls; old ceramic fireplaces; central heating. A little private yard sheltered by the roof of the open walkway. The shady, cluttered living room contains a large, kidney shaped Edwardian desk; a sofa; and bookshelves. The floor is covered by a thick Afghan rug. On the left of the ornate fireplace, in the alcove, a bookcase sits on top of two old wooden filing cabinets, a bentwood chair in front of it (fig.2). The bookcase contains a number of rectangular MDF stretchers, some covered in canvas, others prepared with layers of gesso, others layered in bright acrylic paint. The bottom drawer of the bookcase is full of brushes and tools. There is a small work surface at the front: a plank of wood balanced on the filing cabinets, where the canvases are painted on.

2011-2012: A Victorian hospital in a back street not far from Stockwell tube station. Abandoned, it was taken over by artists twenty years ago. In a small, dark room off the main corridor on the ground floor the bookcase has been joined by a folding table (fig.3,4). There is rent to pay, possible
because of a PhD studentship, and a commitment to participate in group maintenance activities as part of the studio membership. A communal garden is well-tended and kept open at weekends for the neighbourhood to enjoy, with events organised regularly. Nevertheless, the council decides to sell the building to developers and kick out the artists. The developers turn the hospital into luxury flats and build a series of high rent workshops where the garden once was.

2012: A first floor flat in Loughborough, on top of a halal butcher and a sex shop. In a large, single-glazed bedroom, the bookcase is next to the bay window. Another set of shelves has joined it. There is plastic sheeting laid on the concrete floor to protect it from paint splatters.

2013: An Edwardian house near Loughborough station. The bookcase and the other dark wooden shelves have taken residence in the battered conservatory at the back, against a turquoise wall, near an old stained sofa and the washing machine. The MDF stretchers have acquired more layers of paint.

2014: The bookcase has moved to the fourth floor of Rogue Studios, based in a Victorian warehouse near Manchester Piccadilly station. They have been joined by two other sets of shelves in a small rented studio with the large window obstructed by a wide metal pillar. There are plasterboard partitions on both sides, which stop shy of the high ceilings. There is wifi, electricity, a communal sink and toilet down the large corridor, communal kitchens with microwaves. It is usually very quiet but the sound of other artists working in their space can be heard distinctly, one of them constantly talking loudly on the phone walking up and down the long corridor.

2015-2016: During pregnancy, the eight flights of concrete stairs to access the studio in the warehouse become gradually steeper and longer. With a carry cot or baby-wearing, the steps are still steep, and the floor of the studio suddenly seems too dusty to let a baby play there. The paintings on the bookcase become dusty too. In the meantime, the owners of the build-
ing announce their decision to sell the warehouse to developers. More than one hundred artists and two textile factories prepare to move out.

2017: In an Edwardian two up two down in Fallowfield, a new foldout trapdoor is fitted to the roof void, and loose boards placed on the wooden joists. The paintings which had occupied the bookcase are covered in bubble wrap and placed inside suitcases in the roof. The bookcase, together with the other sets of shelves are left behind in the vacated Victorian warehouse. Later in the year, a new set of shelves, Ikea Algot wall mounted shelves this time, is added to the living room downstairs, and the paintings and bottles of acrylic paint taken down from the roof void. But the baby can walk and climb, and the shelves are too much of a temptation for her as open containers of watery acrylic paint and wet surfaces are left accessible. More layers of dust cover the surface of the paintings (fig.24).

2018: A three storey, four bedroom Edwardian house on top of a hill in Sneinton, Nottingham. There is enough space in this house to take out from one room everything that belongs to daily life, leaving only what belongs to the studio: a bright room at the top of the house, overlooking two tall trees, the hills and the windmill, with a lockable door. A writing desk between two windows. Shelves holding books, magazines, tools, paints, paintings. The double-sided paintings become table legs when a glass shower screen is received from a neighbour, to create a large work table for the next project.
1. Introduction to Part 2

In Part 1 demonstrated how furnished spaces contribute to the emergence of artworks in specific ways and can be said to labour as they, similarly to scientific laboratories, constitute apparatuses of production as material discursive entanglements (Barad 2007) with porous boundaries, sedimented with the remnants of past work and affording specific constraints and opportunities. Part 2 examines the third research question: what work is it for artists to set up and maintain furnished spaces? As I argued in the introduction and demonstrated throughout Part 1 the contribution of furnished spaces cannot be explored without also reconsidering the work that goes into making things work. The work that things do and the labour of setting furnished spaces up and maintaining them are inextricably linked as two sides of co-working with things. Part 2 is focused on the inside of the furnished space of an artist’s home-studio, and on the labour of those who care for furnished spaces; those who ‘produce’ and ‘reproduce’ them.

To set the scene, I have described above the working spaces which me and my work have inhabited since the start of this research project, and which, I argue, have contributed to the piece *Vertical Studio*, and to the research as a whole.

Rather than seeing matter as negligible fixed capital (as in Marx’s Fragment on Machines (1993: 691)), dead labour, or zombie inertia (Sartre 2004; Wark 2014), I argue with Gilbert Simondon that ‘worked matter’, which constitutes furnished spaces, is replete with energy (Simondon 2005) and affordances (Gibson 1986). Furthermore, thinkers who do not consider the productive workings of things miss both the very opportunities and facilitating contexts they themselves take advantage of in their own daily practices, and in doing so, they also miss the productivity of the practices of co-working with materials (Albers 1971) that go on in the studio, the home and all other furnished spaces (Barad 2007: 232).

In this second part of the thesis I argue that producing and maintaining ‘facilitating contexts’ (McCormack 2008: 4) such as furnished spaces; and in particular, furnishing and looking after working spaces such as the artist’s studio and, in these post-studio times, the home, needs to be re-evaluated as a one of the most productive aspects of artistic labour. The home, by definition a furnished space, is also a space that works. In Part 2 I develop my argument from
two thoughts: like the factory and the workshop, the home is also a place of labour, and people inhabiting homes also labour in them.\textsuperscript{61} Many artists work from home. This is what the emergence of post-studio practices also means, as ‘dematerialised’ (Lippard & Chandler 1968) practices may not need a dedicated studio but they will always have to be sustained from somewhere\textsuperscript{62}.

I begin the theoretical discussion in section 2 by analysing Jean Paul Sartre’s idea of the house as a vampire object (Sartre 2004: 185), and through this example, critique his concept of the practico-inert, which was his attempt to enfold a notion of materiality within Marxist thought. Sartre’s striking characterisation of the house as exemplary of the practico-inert helps me further my critique of Marxist theories as founded on a flawed notion of the inertia of matter, inscribed in the hylomorphic model of making. My conversation with artist Anna Barham about her two successive home-studios and their different affordances allows me to uncover the constraints and opportunities provided to an artist by working at home.

In the third section I summarise a debate around the nature of work. I pay close attention to forms of work undertaken in the home, which is traditionally understood by Marxist-feminists as ‘reproductive labour’ (Weeks 2011: 24; Delphy 2016: 142). I use Kathi West’s \textit{The Problem with Work} (2011) to problematize assumptions and arbitrary distinctions on what is and is not work, and why work is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} For a discussion of house work and of the home as a place of labour I make reference amongst others to the work of French feminist writer Christine Delphy (1984) and Italian autonomist feminist Silvia Federici (2012).
\item \textsuperscript{62} According to Lippard and Chandler in their famous, short essay “The Dematerialisation of Art” (1968), with the development of artistic practices that ‘emphasize the thinking process almost exclusively’, the artist’s studio is ‘once again becoming a study’ (Lippard and Chandler 1968: 46). See Part 1 section 3 for a discussion of the study. See also \textit{The Studio}, a recent anthology of contemporary and historical texts by artists and curators on this subject edited by Jens Hoffmann (2012). There are many examples of artists working from home and even making work about it. Kirsty Bell’s book \textit{The Artist’s House: From Workplace to Artwork} (2013) is a collection of examples from the last few decades.
\end{itemize}
deemed to be so important in the first place. I then engage with some arguments from Marina Vishmidt’s and Kerstin Stakemaier’s 2016 book Reproducing Autonomy. Work, Money, Crisis and Contemporary Art, which provides a study on the relationship between reproductive labour and the work that artists do. In Vishmidt and Stakemaier’s collaborative account, both artistic labour and house work, though in different ways foundational for capitalism, are concealed as non-labour, because they are seen as non-measurable and of no value. Art can provide a rare exception, when the products of artistic labour take on the status of the commodity through the art market (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 103). While we can take much from Vishmidt and Stakemaier’s account, I argue that they ultimately remain tied to a hylomorphic model of creation. French feminist Christine Delphy brings another interesting approach: she demonstrates that the work which happens in the home is not different from any other paid work: it makes very similar intellectual and physical demands and is similarly productive to any other work (Delphy 1984). Artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles in her Manifesto for Performance Art 1969! made a similar point by bringing ‘private’ house work activities in the museum and calling them ‘maintenance’.

In section 4 I describe how I constructed a home-studio and explored its affordances through my project Vertical Studio (2010-ongoing). This work allowed me to focus on overlooked aspects of maintenance, such as storage issues, which I argue play an important role in what artworks emerge, and survive. Through Vertical Studio, I also explored artistic labour by using repetitive rule based procedures and outsourcing artistic decision making through delegating the construction of the installation to the curators when it was exhibited. In Vertical Studio, the ‘organisational’ similarities of house work and art work are highlighted, where the distribution of things in furnished spaces structures the affordances of those spaces.

In section 5 I look at how Vishmidt and Stakemaier use Gilbert Simondon’s ideas of ‘psychophysiological alienation’ (2016: 62) as alienation that unites both humans and machines in capitalism, without fully taking on board his critique of hylomorphism (Simondon 2005) and his critique of the Marxist theory of alienation (Simondon 2005: 117). While Vishmidt and Stakemaier, like Roberts, hold onto an ideal of un-alienated labour even when they debunk the myth of artistic autonomy, for Simondon all work is alienated, whether done by people or machinery. Simondon’s ideas are activated through an analysis of the machine-human relationships staged in the works of artist Anna Barham.
‘This is not a metaphor’ French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre affirms of the following:

To preserve its reality as a dwelling a house must be inhabited, that is to say, looked after, heated, swept, repainted, etc.; otherwise it deteriorates. This vampire object constantly absorbs human action, lives on blood taken from man and finally lives in symbiosis with him. It derives all its physical properties, including temperature, from human action (Sartre 2004: 185).

Sartre sees the relationship between house and dwellers as symbiosis, a kind of co-dependence, but one where the activity of humans looking after the house is deemed passive, and the inert, dead matter constituting the house has monstrous qualities: it has, he states, ‘exigencies’, which is to say that it requires looking after and so, for Sartre, becomes a ‘vampire object’. What does it mean to see a house as vampire? And what does this idea mean for the work that artists, and others, do in setting up and maintaining furnished spaces? In a not dissimilar fashion Marx talks about the product of past labour, such as a house, as ‘dead labour’ (Marx 1976: 342). And of course, with his idea of the house as a vampire, Sartre is reinterpreting Marx’s famous quote: ‘Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks’ (Marx 1976: 342). ‘Dead labour’, which is a rather gothic way to designate past labour, is seen as a ghost that comes back to haunt ‘living labour’, that is to say, dead labour acts ‘from beyond the grave’ by enforcing exploitative practices written in its configuration of materials and social relations, onto living labour. Even though this may seem to inscribe a certain evil power into things, in Marx things like buildings, or furnished spaces like factories and the machines they contain, are ‘merely the technological condition for the occurrence of the (production) process’ (Marx 1993: 691). Once they are produced by living labour they simply sit there as fixed capital. The only subsequent change is depreciation, and the fact that after a period of use they may break and will have to be replaced.

Yet this conception of houses and machines as passive and inert does not
account for the day to day realities of using furnished spaces, which not only need constant care and repairs but are sedimented with the residue of their use and may develop affordances that are not connected with the processes of their production in linear ways (Barad 2007: 237). Sartre is concerned that Marxism does not account for the ‘inertia of infra-structures’ and for the ways in which matter opposes a passive resistance to human processes of production (1955: 64, quoted in Wark 2014: 5). Accordingly he develops a sensibility for the power of materiality implicit within Marx’s concept of dead labour, made more explicit through his conception of the practico-inert (Sartre 2004).

In part 1, we saw how for philosopher Gilbert Simondon, worked matter is matter that has been energised; it is full of potentiality. For Simondon, the division between those who give orders and those who execute them conceals the fact that no matter is passive material to begin with: matter always has to be worked with, followed, and prepared in full respect of its autonomy (Deleuze and Guattari 2004: 410) to become a ‘material’ (Simondon 2005: 51). But for the Marxist tradition, worked matter is either passive matter that will be transformed through the imposition of a purposeful design (Harvey 210:113); dead labour, which comes back to haunt us; or a leftover from production, the ‘labour of the negative’, which Sartre calls ‘counterfinality’. For political theorist Pheng Cheah ‘Marx defined creative labor [sic] as a process of actualization whereby given reality or matter is negated through the imposition of a purposive form’ as a leftover or afterthought (Cheah 2010: 71) (my italics). Art is seen in this tradition as the ‘Great Refusal, the protest against that which is’ (Marcuse 1991: 63) and is supposed to point to the ideal of a non-alienated human activity, which posits freedom as the power to ignore the world and everything it contains. In Sartre’s interpretation, this negativity of matter is seen as the hopeless transformation of human ‘praxis’ into the practico-inert, with its ‘exigencies’ and ‘counter-finalities’.

Sartre’s wish for a liberation from the house’s vampire propensities is a paradox if one is open to taking notice not only of the exigencies, but of the affordances of the house. Sartre’s idea of the house as vampire simultaneously reveals his inability to acknowledge the way his own living arrangements may have played a role in facilitating his working practices, but also the productivity of the labour expended in furnishing and maintaining a furnished space such as the house. For Sartre, what Marx called ‘dead labour’ is actually matter that has to be continually reanimated and re-encountered
such that it will continue to provide use-value. Therefore, whilst recognising a certain reciprocity in human-thing relationships, Sartre also berates it, and denounces it as false (Sartre 2004: 319); devaluing the labour of maintenance as a drain of energy, and likening it to blood being sucked from ‘man’.

In ‘Simone De Beauvoir: Engaging Discrepant Materialisms’ (2010), Sonia Kruks examines the work of the theorist from the perspective of feminist new materialism. The author seeks to ‘explicate the interconstituent qualities of diverse “materialities” that shape human practices, selves, and social formation’ (Kruks 2010: 260), and bring together ‘discrepant genres of materialities’ such as to be found in neo-Marxist, feminist and gender theories (Kruks 2010: 258), by returning to existentialism and to the work of Simone de Beauvoir. Kruks reads De Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (1989) as a precursor to Sartre’s Critique of Dialectical Reason (1960), ‘the neo-Marxist magnum opus of Sartre’s later years’ where ‘Sartre attempts explicitly to conjoin his earlier existential phenomenology with a Marxist-inspired neostructuralism’ (Kruks 2010: 261). Kruks’s essay champions de Beauvoir’s interpretation of the Sartrean practico-inert, attempting to reactivate De Beauvoir’s ideas as a toolbox for understanding the materiality of being a woman today. Kruks uses Sartre’s example of the house as a vampire object to explain the concept of the practico-inert, which she deploys without challenging the assumptions it contains about both the inertia of matter and the devaluation of activities of maintenance and reproduction, which are integral to the analysis developed here. I would argue that the assumptions and omissions in Kruks’ text suggest that the concept of the house as a vampire object is exemplary of a suppression and concealment of the intimate reciprocity between people and furnished spaces. The enabling quality of a home, which is so urgently apparent at a time when so many people - through no choice of their own - do not have a home, is dismissed in a gesture of bourgeois entitlement.

To link this back to my research question, how, then, do the experiences of artists disrupt the concept of passive matter and dead labour? For example, what about a house that affords working, that creates a space of possibility for new artworks to emerge? Artists have often made their studios play the role of makeshift dwelling, or their homes make space for their work. What happens then to the ‘vampire’ propensities of the house? Duchamp notably had a studio in his New York home (fig.40,41). In her 1997 essay ‘Work Stoppages’, the curator and writer Helen Molesworth inter-
interprets the readymades, contained in Duchamp’s home-studio, as works that have to do not-only with artistic nominalism, but also with house work:

In his studio, Duchamp’s readymades deployed a version of slapstick humour designed to stymie domestic labor. They called into question, or heightened into relief, the status of “normal” domestic operations – keeping the house clean and orderly by hanging things up and putting them away in their “proper” places (the bottle rack, the hat rack). In so doing, the readymades represented the normally obscured domestic labour, but they showed that labour as stalled, humorous, and impossible. (Molesworth 1997: 21)

As a result of the disruptive presence of the readymades, Duchamp neglected house work and famously his studio became a breeding ground for dust. Duchamp was able to indulge in aristocratic idleness, which not many artists are able to emulate, not just because they can not afford it, but also because they share their furnished spaces with babies, or washing machines. In the conversation we had on June 19, 2018, artist Anna Barham talked about her Sheila Maid, which used to hang in her live-work space, not too differently from Duchamp’s hat rack.

AB: ...I had always hung the washing in the studio. There was this thing dangling from the ceiling and you had to make your way around it. Sheila Maid I think it’s called. I must have decided not to do washing if I was going to be dusty that day. It was

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63. As exemplified in Man Ray’s 1920 photograph Dust Breeding, which shows a section of Duchamp’s Large Glass (1915-1923) covered in dust. See also Molesworth’s essay ‘Work Avoidance: The Everyday Life of Marcel Duchamp’s Readymades’ (1998).
To and fro activity. The washing machine was in the basement, but you couldn’t dry anything in there. And I didn’t dry stuff upstairs I didn’t have a free standing airer that you could move around the house. I must have only have done washing when I wasn’t working in the studio.64

In Barham’s home-studio arrangement, dust played an important role; although in different ways than Duchamp’s, it might be that it shaped her work just as much. When she first moved to a small former carpentry workshop, the ground floor was furnished very much as a studio. ‘It was quite empty and it had a big wooden table in it that I kept quite high that you could do woodwork at. And I was doing actual dusty work in there.’ ‘I used to put plastic sheeting up to try and keep the dust from going upstairs or downstairs, but … you could use it in quite a lot of ways. And then I think all the amphitheatre structures65, the first one I made of those, I definitely made it in the studio there (fig. 25). That was massively dusty’… ‘Inevitably, once I had my daughter Iris it changed, and I still used it as my studio, but I used it much more for drawing. I don’t think I ever made something dirty in the house again once Iris was born.’ Barham recounts how owning her own home-studio allowed her to continue making her big welded or MDF structures, when she left college: ‘...it enabled me to still work a lot, when a lot of people that I went to college with, had to work more hours to afford a studio. So it allowed my practice to continue.’ And yet, over the years, although she could command more affordances as her career took off, and galleries and institutions were willing to take on this dusty and demanding work for her, her projects became more and more sensitive to issues of storage and material reuse.

Putting things on top of other things, putting things back where they belong, is a big part of ‘house work’: tidying up. Having access to different, dedicated spaces, makes it possible to keep things separate so that certain activities are afforded and others are not in each specific space. Different things have different exigencies, for example they may require a dust free environment,

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64. All quotes from a conversation with the artist on June 19, 2018. See the appendix for a transcript.

65. See images of Barham’s MDF structures in Part 1, p. 51
like babies, and wet paintings. Some activities do not coexist so well in an open plan space, as I learned when I used spray paint to touch up some frames in my big open plan live studio, and a fine suspension of spray paint lifted itself in the air and sedimented over my paintings a few meters away. Of course, there is the tradition of the ‘loft’ studio, one big industrial size room where everything is together. But what does it mean for everything to be together in a furnished space like that? Alberto Giacometti made his wife share his minimal living quarters with him (Liberman 1960). Jackson Pollock was able to demolish a partition in the New York apartment that he shared with Lee Krasner to make a bigger painting (Levin 2011). When Pollock and Krasner moved to their house in Long Island, a detached barn was his studio, this meant that his painting was more of a seasonal occupation. It also meant that the house was kept in order as a space for living and entertaining.66

But what happens if you have a child with you, in the space where you want to chop big bits of MDF? The constraints of the space change with the needs of its inhabitants. What Barham’s trajectory from the studio to the study shows, is how it is not the house that is a vampire: it is the specific, competing demands of different types of activities, of different types of materials, and different types of inhabitants, including babies, and children, that make themselves most felt.

The relationship between artists working at home, and the spaces they are able to furnish has a strong role in what artworks emerge. Rather than a vampire, in this case the house clearly reveals itself to be a space furnished with both affordances and constraints. It undertakes some of the work involved in the emergence of new artworks, but requires work itself in order that it might be made to work in a particular way. Here, the distinction between making art and doing house work becomes untenable, when artistic labour is dependent on activities of separating things, like lifting up the Sheila Maid, or

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hanging up some plastic sheeting. But even in the case of intellectual labour, like Sartre’s or Ingold’s, the writer’s ability to produce new work depends on a constant activity of keeping that space clear of the things that do not belong to intellectual work. How much more difficult would have been Sartre’s writing practice if after every meal he had to clear the kitchen table and do the dishes to be able to work?

The fact that our relationships with the spaces that sustain us, like the home, are concealed in professional life (Gatens, quoted in Molesworth 2000: 5), means that despite the widespread belief that gendered hierarchies and divisions of labour have been left behind, those occupying roles in the public arena - whether male or female - are expected to behave as if they had someone at home taking care of practicalities. The connection between the ‘set up’ artists have, and their ability to do work is still always glossed over in discussions of artistic labour. And yet it seems clear to me, that in the emergence of artworks it makes a big difference if artists have assets or independent wealth, or if they can afford any kind of support, when they have a family, so they can continue to work.

Within Sartre’s theory of the practico-inert (2004), the division of labour within the household is naturalised, so that the bourgeois man’s interiority is expressed and calcified by his house and garden as possessions, while the wife or caretaker looks after them without being able to enjoy or possess them (Sartre 2004: 213-214). House work is only rendered visible by Sartre when it serves the purpose of demonstrating the blood sucking propensities of the house. Apart from that, it disappears from consciousness. The intellectually demanding, exhausting and skilful practice of house work, of making the house work, so that daily life can happen, is reduced to a repetitive, numbing routine.

Furthermore, maintenance is equated to blood sucking, rather than the intimate

67. see Delphy’s denunciation of inequality in French marriage and property rights for women (Delphy 1984).
relationship with machines that Simondon describes (Simondon 1958: 248-9).

Sartre still stresses the primacy of the individual, and the resistance of lived experience to any abstract system. He thinks totality as a dead exteriority produced by human action... It is that great heap of worked over matter that resists our actions and shapes them to its habitual patterns, rather like the way Marx thinks fixed capital as dead labor over and against living labor in the ‘Fragment on Machines’ and elsewhere. The practico-inert as irreducibly other, even though produced by collective human labor (sic). (Wark 2014: 6)

Media scholar Mackenzie Wark’s understanding of Sartre strengthens my argument that Sartre’s concept of the practico-inert is a direct elaboration of Marx’s concept of dead labour and of the inertia of matter. Both Kruks and Wark credit Sartre for giving materiality much more attention and much greater importance than his fellow Marxists. But I would argue that he does it while wrapping it in negativity and hopelessness, characterising it ultimately as an obstacle to individual praxis or as unintended outcome of production as in ‘counterfinality’.

In his Deleuze and Guattari-inspired critique of the hylomorphic model Ingold also used the house as an example, describing a vision of things in a manner superficially similar to Sartre inasmuch as he highlights the work that houses require of their inhabitants in order to function.

The distinguished Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza...admits that while he can build and design houses, he has never been able to build a real house, by which he means ‘a complicated machine in which every day something breaks down’ (Siza, 1997: 47). Besides builders and repair-men of diverse trades—bricklayers, joiners, slaters, plasterers, plumbers and so on—the real heroes of house building, according to Siza, are the people who live in them who, through unremitting effort, shore them up and maintain their integrity in the face of sunshine, wind and rain, the wear and tear inflicted by human occupancy, and the invasions of birds, rodents, insects, arachnids and fungi (Ingold 2010a: 94)

Ingold shows a sensibility to the house as a machine, a thing, and an ‘entanglement of the threads of life’ (Ingold 2010b) coming together through a variety of practices, which counters the demonization at play in Sartre’s writing. However he still seems unaware of the complexity of the entanglement from which the
space inside the house is carved out. This is evident in the way Ingold uses a description of his study, as a neutral container for objects and their affordances.\textsuperscript{68}

Sartre’s position on skilled practices is particularly relevant to my investigation of artistic labour. Where Simondon sees in the individual gesture of labour, the moulding of one brick, an irreducible moment of individuality\textsuperscript{69} which the hylomorphic model overlooks, for Sartre there is only passive repetition and iterativity in skilled practice, because the process of learning to ‘follow the material’, is seen as ‘institutionalisation’, rather than an apprenticeship in which one undertakes a journey with the material; with institutions marking the transformation of ‘free praxis’ into the practico-inert’ (Sartre 2004: 653).

The pathos of Sartre’s conception of the practico-inert as evil materiality, and of ‘men’ as bewitched matter (Sartre 2004: 235), comes under question if one thinks outside the binary division between the human subject alienated in her experience of negated freedom, and the alienating material objectivity that meets it.

Machinic agency is part of the ongoing contestation and reconfiguring of relations of production. The point is not that management and workers become cyborgs in their relationship to machines, but rather the point is that machines and humans differentially emerge and are iteratively reworked through specific entanglements of agencies that trouble the notion that there are determinate distinctions between humans and nonhumans. (Barad 2007: 239)

Material arrangements such as furnished spaces are not inert, and they do not always produce the effects that are expected of them. Architecture and planning have some effectiveness, but whatever these forces organise is sedimented with use and experience. The constraints and opportunities afforded by furnished spaces are not limited by the intentions behind their first construction. They are sedimented with the marks

\textsuperscript{68.} See Part 1 section 2 and p. 42 on Ingold’s study

\textsuperscript{69.} See p. 60 for Simondon’s description of the process of making a brick.
that bodies leave behind through use, and become entanglements of agencies through the ever-changing intra-actions between materials, tools, machines and people that they facilitate (Barad 2007: 239).

My interpretation of the relationship between workers and apparatuses of production is not depoliticised in being critical of certain aspects of Marxism. An important point to note about the affordances of furnished spaces is how paying attention to them highlights the mechanisms through which ‘success’ can be attained in capitalist society if things are on your side. And how do things get on your side? As we will see in the next section, according to Moira Gatens, there remains an expectation that a (male) individual’s participation in the public sphere is facilitated labour in the private sphere performed by women, which is unpaid and unacknowledged (Gatens 1991). Sartre’s own work practices were facilitated for the 20 year period he shared an apartment with his mother, by hers and her maids reproductive labour. In the light of this, this passage is particularly striking:

…man constitutes himself in the exterior milieu as this particular practico-inert set of worked materials, while establishing its practical inertia within his real person.... one can say that his interior life (la vie interieure) is literally none other than his home life (La vie d’interieur) and that his thoughts are defined by the inert and changing relations between his various pieces of furniture. (Sartre 2004: 213-214) my italics.

Here, the concern for the vampire-like qualities of the house is left behind, together with the sense of ongoing decay that characterises the house as a set of exigenacies. The objects in the bourgeois house and garden are seen as moveable and inert crystallisations, and alienations of the owner’s humanity. The alienating, ‘blood sucking’ practices of cleaning, sweeping, repainting are done by others, whose labour is overlooked, together with the affordances and activity of the house itself.

70. For more information on Sartre’s living arrangements see B. O’Donohoe, ‘Living with Mother: Sartre and the Problem of Maternity’ in Sens Public <http://www.sens-public.org/article300.html?lang=fr>
The work that things do, Sartre calls the force of inertia, a passive activity. When we use the hylomorphic model to think about making, then we are assuming matter is inert and passive and furnished spaces don’t work, and this culminates in a conception of the practico-inert: The product of past activity is seen as an obstacle to projects rather than a resource, and worked over matter has a power, but only a negative power, as zombie labour from the past that alienates individual action. That’s how we get to conceptions like Sartre’s vampire house, where there’s on one side a blindness to the enabling, and facilitation that the house performs. On the other there is a devaluation of the ‘reproductive’ labour of maintenance, and house work which Sartre characterises as literally blood being sucked from its inhabitants, the energy spent looking after things as utterly wasted and a symptom of the un-freedom of the human condition. Looking at the way that artists, like Barham, work with the furnished spaces they’ve got, harnessing their specific affordances and negotiating with their constraints in a way that contributes to what artworks emerge (or not), reveals that behind the concealment of maintenance and house work in public life, there is a hidden and undervalued practice of co-working with things.

To return to our third research question, ‘What work is it for artists to set up and maintain furnished spaces?’, in this section we have uncovered the concealment of an intimate and reciprocal relationship with furnished spaces, in which context things work, and are active participants in the processes from which artworks, and life, emerge. Uncovering the hylomorphic model at work in the way we think of artistic labour and house work, and recognising the contribution of things in a furnished space like the house, allows us to go beyond the living-dead labour binary and to re-evaluate ‘reproductive’ work as the most ‘productive’ work.
In engaging with our third research question about the work involved in setting up and maintaining furnished spaces, feminist interventions in regard to rendering visible domestic and reproductive labour become crucial. Since as we shall uncover the work involved in furnished spaces is often gendered and not recognised, and to provide an adequate response to our third research question this labour requires foregrounding. In section 2 I have engaged with Sartre’s theorisation of the house as vampire object within his model of the practico-inert, which I argued is an elaboration of Marx’s concept of dead labour. I have challenged Sartre’s concept of the vampire house by looking at how the affordances and constraints of furnished spaces like homes play a role in the work that both artists and writers do. In this section I will discuss more generally both artistic labour, and the labour of organising and looking after a furnished space, such as a house. The house is only a vampire, rather than a co-worker, if the practices involved in making it function are devalued, and unequally distributed in capitalist societies. These practices have been theorised and engaged with in the 1970s by autonomist and Marxist feminists. They have
been termed ‘reproductive labour’ (Weeks 2011: 24) (Delphy 2016: 142), an invisible and unpaid contribution to the ‘social factory’ (Dalla Costa and James 1975: 30), or ‘house work’ (Delphy 2016: 16) (Federici 2012: 74): a type of work that is the same as paid work, but is unpaid because of the type of relationships within which it happens. ‘Maintenance’, a term used by Mierle Laderman Ukeles in her *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* 1969! which designates the same activities as reproductive labour and house work, is a very important term as it denaturalises the labour performed privately within the family, by highlighting its similarities with other types of paid maintenance in the ‘public’ sphere (Molesworth 2000: 71-97) (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 48). I will also discuss how house work/reproductive labour/maintenance and art work have been compared and seen as related, by artists and more recently by art theorists, most notably for our purposes here, Marina Vishmidt and Kerstin Stakemaier (2016). Finally I will make reference to my experience of labour in the art world not only as an artist but also as an intern within many organisations and through my collaboration with c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e, a project space in Brussels.

The relationship between art and labour has a complex, contested history, entangled with ideas of skill and alienation, and the utopian ideal of art as autonomous activity free from ‘heteronomies’, i.e. external constraints of any kind, (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 13) and as such, art as an example of un-alienated labour. If we seek to understand the relationship between art and labour as terms, and to determine whether they do describe the same activity, we will first have to define what labour is, and an attempt to answer this question has to attend to the ways in which both art and labour are valorised within different ideological constructs.

We have seen how for example in Roberts, who embraces a celebratory vision of labour (labour as the source of human cognitive development and founda-

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71. Delphy’s book *Close to Home* (1984), which has been recently republished by Verso, had been translated from French in 1984 by University of Massachusetts, which is significant in terms of the currency of her work during those debates.
tional to human agency and subjectivity (Roberts 2007: 114)), that labour is considered to be the paramount activity that distinguishes the human species from all other animal species. Consequently, there is a keenness to demonstrate that art is also a type of labour, and a very special type of labour, ennobled by its conceptual, immaterial use of the human hand (Roberts 2007: 104). In Marx’s concept of ‘speciesbeing’ (Marx 1992: 328, 386) humanity realizes itself through the interaction with its environment through labour (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 45), whilst apparatuses of production such as furnished spaces are relegated to the function of mediating human action (Barad 2007: 231). In fact, within this schema art incarnates the ideal of non-alienated labour (Roberts 2007: 56) and ‘artistic forms of production... remained relatively unaltered and came to represent an ideal of un-alienated, autonomous work’ (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 17). As a model to aspire to, artistic labour becomes a justification for the work society (Weeks 2011: 15). Yet in contemporary capitalist societies the spreading of the model of ‘autonomous’, ‘creative’ ‘artistic’ labour has been accompanied by a growth in unpaid and precarious labour in practice (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 41).

Vishmidt and Stakemaier base their understanding of artistic labour on Adorno’s theory of art as concealment of labour (2016: 35, 45). In this conception labour, and also reproductive labour, are the abject, the hidden abode of bourgeois culture that has to be recuperated and absorbed if contemporary art is to have any autonomy today: ‘What now seems impossible to ignore is that art must directly confront the conditions of its own production as art in order to claim any kind of autonomy... the only hope for autonomy in contemporary art is for art to understand itself in relation to reproductive labour’ (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 47). While Roberts is more interested in casting artistic labour as ‘un-alienated labour,’ against the evidence of ‘alienated’ labour pervading contemporary art in all its manifestations, Vishmidt and Stakemaier maintain a difference.

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72. Theorists of post-Fordism have drawn on the figure of the artist as exemplary of the precarization of work (Boltanski and Chiappello 1999; Virno 2004)
between labour and work. In Vishmidt and Stakemaier’s terminology, labour is what Karl Marx in 1857/58 distinguished as abstract labour, which carries no specific function and thus is measurable only by its sheer quantity. In ‘work’, the individual uses tools to realise himself or herself in nature, while in labour, the individual himself becomes the tool of the realisation of a value (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 30).

This is notable, because it means that within the very definition of the activities that the writers are theorising, a distinction between bad, alienating labour, and good, autonomous work, is already at play.

Curator Helen Molesworth in her text “House Work and Art Work” (2000) foreshadows her discussion of works by Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly, Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Martha Rosler with concepts from feminist writer Moira Gatens. Gatens made a critique of the Western notion of equality as predicated on the division between the public and private sphere, where the (male) individual’s participation in the public sphere is still expected to be facilitated by unacknowledged and unequal unpaid labour in the private sphere performed by women (Gatens, quoted in Molesworth 2000: 5). In her analysis of the work of artists Judy Chicago, Mary Kelly, Mierle Laderman Ukeles and Martha Rosler, Molesworth sees a focus on ‘maintenance or domestic’ labour, uncovering precisely this concealed private sphere of ‘unacknowledged and unequal labour’. Molesworth stresses in particular how Ukeles pointedly used the word ‘maintenance’ in her Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969! to designate activities such as cleaning, washing the floor, etc. which would be usually called domestic labour or house work, and which she proposed to perform in the art gallery while living in it with her family as if in her own home. Molesworth argues that by doing so Ukeles is intentionally erasing the difference between the kind of unpaid work done in private, in the home, and the paid work done in the museum by ‘professionals’.

Marxist feminist theorist, Kathi Weeks’s book The Problem with Work (2011) problematizes assumptions and arbitrary distinctions on what is and isn’t work, and why work is deemed to be so important in the first place. Kathi Weeks is critical of the way labour has been conceived within the Marxist tradition as ‘collective human capacity harnessed by capital to the production of surplus
value’ (Weeks 2011: 13). Weeks problematizes the ideologies around work, by founding her critique on a rethinking of reproductive labour and non-work. ‘We need to understand the forces – including the work ethic – that promote an acceptance of and powerful identification with work and help make it such a potent object of desire and privileged field of aspiration’ (Weeks 2011: 3). Weeks’s book analyzes the gendered construction of the work ethic in opposition to non-work, ‘a rather more expansive category including everything from leisure practices and consumption work to unwaged agricultural, household, and caring labour…devalued by its association to a degraded femininity’ (Weeks 2011: 63). Weeks’s position, building on the work of Moishe Postone and Diane Elson (Weeks 2011: 97), is radically questioning of the way capitalism and work is usually seen in Marxist thought. Weeks also questions why different brands of socialism, such as socialist modernization and socialist humanism, although divergent still consider labour as a fundamental human value (Weeks 2011: 86).

In recent years, those promoting the work ethic and the ideology of productivity have often utilized the rhetoric of creativity and self-expression to justify positioning work as the main focus of human life. At the same time, especially in times of funding cuts and exploitation of precarious labour through zero hours contracts, I would suggest art has been keen to assimilate itself to labour as a survival strategy, because of the pressures that the universalizing of precarious work has created, but also because of the ideological primacy of labour and productivity with policy makers. With the kind of technology and social media platforms we use today, creativity is not only diffused, as it has been for many years especially amongst women, (see the 1977 feminist magazine Heresies and Lucy Lippard’s essay, ‘Making Something from Nothing’ (1978)) but it is at the same time expect-

ed and professionalized, and associated with increased precarity in the workplace.

Campaigns for artists work to be recognized and paid as work, such as US-based WAGE (Working Artists in the Greater Economy) are examples in this direction. WAGE has been put in relation to another movement, active in the 1970s, that has been discussed by both Vishmidt and Stakemaier and Kathi Weeks, Wages for House work (Vishmidt 2010). The foundational text for Wages for House work was Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James’s text The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community (1975). As Weeks notes,

Dalla Costa and James insisted that, despite what Marx both did and did not write, domestic labour is essential to the production of surplus value, and the site of its extraction is what they called the social factory (1975: 30-31). The theory of the social factory rests on the idea that beyond the factory, what Dalla Costa and James sometimes called “the community”, or society itself, is involved in capitalist relations. (Weeks 2011: 120)

This is the position brilliantly exemplified by the print, by See Red Women’s Workshop, which illustrates the beginning of this section, showing the social factory as an assembly line, where the workers are reconditioned at home by the unpaid reproductive labour of women. These questions: should artists work, or reproductive work, be paid by a wage, are extremely relevant in relation to our investigation of what kind of work it is for artists to reproduce themselves and the conditions for their work to happen, by setting up and maintaining furnished spaces such as homes, studios, or workshops.

Both Weeks and Vishmidt and Stakemaier find the political implications of Wages for House work troubling, in wanting to assimilate to the wage regime rather than fighting against it. Weeks stresses that the demand for wages for house work has to be read as a utopian demand. For Vishmidt

74. For more on WAGE, see for example Vishmidt’s article ‘Working Artists in The Great Economy’ (2011) and Cohen and De Peuter, ‘W.A.G.E.’s fight for artist fees’ (2015)

75. See p. 112.
and Stakemaier, the issue isn’t that artists or housewives should be waged, but rather, what kinds of new models for valuing labour and art should be developed. They propose an idea of ‘social autonomisation’ (2016: 104), while Weeks’s answer is championing a postwork society where a basic income follows the ‘implicit recognition that all citizens contribute to society in a variety of ways’ (Weeks 2011: 140). Still Both Vishmidt and Stakemaier and Weeks consider that the importance of Wages for House work is connected to the ‘denaturalising effect’ of the demand for wages for activities that are still considered part of women’s nature.

What had been coded as leisure was in fact work, and those supposedly spontaneous expressions of women’s nature were indeed skilful practices...these feminists usefully troubled the tradition’s definition of work.’ (Weeks 2011: 24)

French feminist theorist Christine Delphy was in disagreement with her contemporary autonomist feminists who see unpaid house work as immeasurable and abject, and part of the capitalist exploitation of men (Federici 1974). In a recently republished collection of essays from that time, Close to Home. A Materialist Analysis of Women’s Oppression (1984) Delphy demonstrates that the work that happens in the home is not different from any other paid work, except that it is mostly done by women and takes place within the marriage and family relationship. Delphy’s intervention helps recuperate those aspects of house work that are repressed in seeing this work only as repetitive oppression, highlighting the fact that it has a lot of different characteristics: it is organisational, heavily physical, intellectual, (Delphy 1984: 78-92). Although in ‘The Main Enemy’ (1980), the author analyses ‘the feminist ‘discovery’ of house work as unpaid work within the family, central to an understanding of women’s oppression today.’ (Delphy 1984: xv). For Delphy, feminists that continue to ‘focus on the function ‘the family’ performs in relation to ‘the reproduction of capitalism’ (Delphy 1984: xvi) are part of the problem. They perpetuate women’s intrinsic worthlessness built into theories of the functions of the family, which assume the house work women do must somehow be about something else, something important, like helping to maintain class divisions, since it is so trivial as not to be worth exploring in its own right (Delphy xvi).

Although she writes from a Marxist perspective, Delphy is not concerned
with adhering to Marxist orthodoxy; she ‘argues for a return to Marx’s own method and practice, and against a digging around for what Marx himself (or subsequent Marxists) have to say on a topic which did not particularly concern him (or them), in analysing women’s oppression.’ (Delphy xix).

Going against Marxist theory of non-productive labour, Delphy created her own concept of the domestic mode of production (Delphy 1984: 16). Within the domestic mode of production, non-market value rather than proving the non-productiveness of house work, is a clue to understanding its nature as a social relation where the labour which is paid elsewhere, becomes constitutively unpaid. For Delphy, ‘patriarchy is the system of subordination of women to men in contemporary industrial societies…this system has an economic base, and…this base is the domestic mode of production.’ (Delphy 19).

Vishmidt in a number of essays and in her PhD thesis *Speculation as a Mode of Production in Art and Capital* (2012) conceptualises as ‘speculative mode of production’ the relationship of artistic speculation to speculative capital as a ‘device for the production of subjects who identify with capital immanently, rather than ideologically’ (2012: 1). In the speculative mode of production, the individual artist/worker becomes an entrepreneur, and unpaid labour is transformed into an investment in their education, building their professional networks, whilst art work, which had traditionally being understood as activity outside of socially useful activity, is interpreted as an investment: ‘the artist no longer views herself as a worker, but as an investor in herself who protects her brand, itself an aestheticized capture of possible future value given present representation’ (La Berge 2015: 573). ‘the notion of the capitalist as a worker and the worker as the owner of ‘human capital’…both appropriates and cancels the political subjectivity of work as alienation’ (Vishmidt 2012: 9).

The labour of those working within the domestic mode of production is valueless because it is expended within the family, while in the speculative mode of production, unpaid labour is only valueless until it isn’t. In those cases where a value is finally attached to it, it is retrospectively, because it succeeded in obtaining a wage or, say, gallery representation and the promise of sales. But, in agreement with Vishmidt where she proposes ‘that speculation as a mode of production also implies a becoming-speculative of reproduction as well’ (Vishmidt iv) I would argue that both the domestic mode of production and the production of art have now been subsumed by the ‘speculative mode of pro-
duction’. It’s not only curators, artists and interns who work for free to invest in their own ‘brand’ hoping to either get a job or the opportunity to make sales. Shopping, cleaning, tidying, has now been professionalised: one ‘curates’ their wardrobe and their home, and dabbles in interior design, trying to grow their blog audience or Instagram following, hoping to get paid advertisement gigs or even turn their reproductive labour into a profession. Molesworth saw in Duchamp’s readymade a first instance of shopping as art (1997), and Ukeles wanted her maintenance work to play double duty by also becoming her professional artistic practice (1969). This condition is now generalised thanks to new social media platforms, and there are hundreds of thousands of youtube how-to videos, pinterest boards and Instagram accounts bearing witness to many hours of unpaid d-i-y-ing, cleaning and ‘faffing’, and unpaid creative labour making it all available. Democratising ‘content creation’, its pleasures and its exploitative demands, brings once again art work and house work together.

The problematic that Vishmidt and Stakemeir present is misdirected in my view, since it tries to hold to a conception of the artist as in some way autonomous, whilst in the context of this thesis I am more interested in the autonomy of things, and in the way humans and things work alongside each other, and I have argued that there is a case for emphasising more strongly and affording greater analytical attention to material practices, maintenance, and the arrangements of things within furnished spaces where artworks emerge. And the question of the autonomy of the artist ultimately detracts from that focus. What makes art into an activity that really can tell us something interesting about all labour: is that it embraces the relationship with materiality in practice, and consequently confronts and destabilises the hylomorphic model. As I have showed in section 1.5 on the hylomorphic model of production, the issue with uncritically applying the notion of work as non-alienated purposive action over inert passive matter to art, is that it fails to recognise the complexity and reciprocity of the relationships between artists, things, and furnished spaces that contribute to the emergence of artworks.

By writing a book on art and reproductive labour a few years after her thesis, Vishmidt seems to suggest that it is to counteract the ‘speculative mode of production’, that art needs to ‘directly confront the conditions of its own production as art in order to claim any kind of autonomy... the only hope for autonomy in contemporary art is for art to understand itself in relation to reproductive labour’ (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016). If we are talking about the autonomy of the artwork, or the autonomy of the materials of art, rather than that of the artists, two examples of artworks, one that sits problematically with this idea, the other that embraces it, come to mind.
When I was an unpaid intern in the Exhibitions department at the Serpentine Gallery in 2010, one of the jobs I was given was to walk around in the muddy Kensington Gardens to check on an outdoor exhibition of sculptures by artist Anish Kapoor. I was given a form especially to this purpose and asked to record any dirt, especially bird droppings, that might blemish the mirrored surfaces of the sculptures. My findings would then be sent to the artist’s studio so they could act accordingly to keep control of the work’s appearance. This to me is an example of works of contemporary art, which predicate their own reproduction as unblemished surfaces, on the availability of free labour in the art world while at the same time concealing this dependency. My recordings of bird droppings and the Kapoor studio’s maintenance labour were certainly not advertised as performances part and parcel of Kapoor’s work. And yet they were a constitutive part of the work, because of the exigencies written in the relationship between its very materiality and its shiny, flawless aesthetic, and the muddy and bird inhabited space of the park in which it had been installed. Conversely, a work that strikes me as consciously and intentionally foregrounding its dependency on gallery staff is the piece by Andrea Buettner, *Ahnenknödel (Ancestor Dumplings)*, which was also exhibited in London in 2010, at Hollybush Gardens. A pile of unfired clay balls, laid on a piece of plastic sheeting, have to be watered daily so they don’t dry up and crack.
Some of Buettner’s works directly staged her relationship with her gallerist and the dependence on the gallerist ‘holding it’ for the work to exist, like the 2007 screenprint *Malin with Clay*, which depicted the Hollybush Gardens director Malin Stål, Buettner’s gallerist, holding a piece of unfired clay from her installation *Clay Sculpture*, made with 500 kg of unfired clay that was allowed to dry and crack over the course of the exhibition.

In Kapoor’s *Sky Mirror*, the artwork is given a fictional autonomy, predicated on the concealment of the activity of maintenance that the work requires, to be reproduced as a flawless reflective surface which inscribes a slice of Autumn sky on the banks of the ponds in Kensington Gardens. Whilst with Buettner’s piece, a staging of the work’s material vulnerability as damp clay, and its dependence on very specific activities and furnished spaces to emerge and survive inscribes an awareness of the labour of maintenance within the work. This is something that I tried to do with my project *Vertical Studio*, which I will discuss in the next section.

In the analysis above we have seen clear evidence of the concealment of the work of setting up and maintaining furnished spaces, which is a crucial part of artistic labour; while the feminist engagement with domestic labour offers some tools to render this labour visible. In addressing the first two research questions I have sought to emphasise the work of things within furnished space in artistic production. So, in answering our third research questions we are making concealed work visible: the work of things in the emergence of artworks and its flip-side: the crucial work (that tends to be unseen and unacknowledged) within art practice of setting up and maintaining things.
In addressing the question of what work is it to set up and maintain furnished space, the interrelation between the maintenance and storage of art work and the space of the home becomes crucial. A furnished space is also a space where work is set up and maintained alongside daily life. So it is to the interrelations between the spaces of the studio and my home to which I now turn.

Vertical Studio was the starting point for this practice-based PhD. It’s a series of paintings that fit into a set of shelves. I had the stretchers made out of MDF so that they would snugly fit a set of shelves I found at the local house clearance store, and I stretched canvas over both the front and the back of the stretchers, so that they could be double-sided and freestanding. The series can be exhibited as a modular structure and can be transported inside a couple of large suitcases.

Since 2002 I had been interested in exploring the historical heritage of painting, in terms of materials and supports, and its relationship with new materials such as acrylic paints. As I mentioned briefly in the Introduction, I investigated combining traditional stretched canvas over a wooden structure and prepared it with organic glues and layers of gesso sanded in between, whilst testing the possibilities of acrylic paints rather than oils. I was interested in constructing an image by layering, rather than mixing, paint. Acrylic paint is a fast-drying paint made of pigments suspended in acrylic polymer emulsion, which is water-soluble, but water-resistant when dry. I experimented with creating transparent washes by adding fillers such as acrylic mediums and PVA to the paint when watering it down. I wanted it to be a consistent, even if transparent, viscous layer, rather than allowing each layer to mix with the layers underneath. I associated this technique with sedimentation, in that theoretically the stratification of paint could be peeled back or reconstructed. To introduce a consistency that would allow me to reproduce and build on my experiments, I decided to work with only 4 colours, alizarin red, ultramarine blue, primary yellow and sap green, and apply them in repetitive succession.
While making figurative paintings, I developed a technique, which could be defined as ‘negative dripping’. I applied a layer of transparent acrylic to a canvas lying on a flat surface, then when the paint was beginning to dry and to congeal, shake a brush saturated with water over it. When the paint layer was dry, the drops of water were still wet and I removed them delicately by wiping with the side of my hand to reveal an irregularly dotted wash of colour which, through the random openings created by the water drops, reveals first the luminous white of the gesso ground, then as the action is repeated again and again, the sedimentation of paint layers underneath.

When I was at Art School in Brussels I made bigger and bigger paintings and was given a big studio area. I would work on several canvases at a time, on the floor. This was no longer possible when I moved to a live-work studio space in London in 2008. To optimise the waiting time required for the paint to dry in between layers, I worked on a lot of canvases at the same time. At the studio in North Street I had a very big table and I was working on 20-30 small canvases at once. Then in 2010 I moved to a small apartment. How could I do the same thing in a much smaller space? that’s when I thought of using a set of shelves. I got a bookcase from a house clearance shop near the flat for £15. I sold a painting and with the money I got a series of stretchers made to fit the size of the shelves at a big timber merchants in South London.

Storage had also become a problem. My old paintings were everywhere around the flat, including in the yard outside covered by a tarpaulin (where they did rot after a few years, despite the tarpaulin). I was already working in layers. I realised making an ongoing series of paintings, which would at no point be finished, would allow me to incorporate both working and storage space within the limited footprint of the bookcase.

For my exhibition Pictures and Frames (2010) I had used a grid like arrange-

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76. See the description on my studios and homes over the 2010-2018 period at the beginning of Part 2, pp. 95-97.

77. Brussels, Galerie Sans Titre.
ment to hang my small paintings and photographs. Previously, during my MA at Falmouth I had tried to create a three-dimensional installation with free-standing double-sided hexagonal paintings. Vertical Studio offered an opportunity to explore grids and free-standing paintings again, by making a series of double-sided free-standing paintings which could be turned into the building blocks of a modular structure rather than having to be hung on the walls. Double-sidedness offered a way to economise on storage space by using the same stretcher for two paintings, but was also the premise for the paintings to become part of a three-dimensional structure that could be viewed from any direction. Strangely, I had never seen Eileen Grey’s famous Block Screens of 1925 but I drew directly on Daniel Buren’s Cabanes implosées installation, in the concatenating rooms of his Pompidou retrospective Le Musée Qui N’Existais Pas which I visited in 2002. The comparison to Buren’s expensive, expansive rooms is a humorous one, especially as the tallest structure that can be built with Vertical Studio is only as tall as me.
The mechanisms developed by Buren, of deploying a specific artistic methodology and adapting it to ever-changing contexts, rather than making ‘non-specific’ artworks which can be adapted to different contexts\(^78\), can be seen at play in artists like Phyllida Barlow (fig. 50) and Anna Barham, underneath the apparent formal dissimilarity between their work, and even though both Barlow and Barham work, in different ways, from a studio. There is in all three an interest in adapting to the specific spatial context they are asked to exhibit in, and in using it to deploy a set of methodologies, and materials, which they are committed to in an ongoing way. In fact, Barlow might have more to do with Buren than with sculptors who use similar materials to her, but who make transportable artworks, like for example Isa Genzken. But what Barham and Barlow have in common, is a concern for the destiny of materials. What to do with MDF structures, or piles of pallet wood, or agglomerations of concrete, when the exhibition ends? Barlow reuses her materials, by using her dismantled installations as starting points for new works,\(^79\) and Barham in our conversation talked about developing modular works, where the structuring elements may ‘fit into an archival box’\(^80\). Her recent works with scaffolding also addressed the issue by using a traditionally recycled industrial construction material: scaffolding companies put up then take down scaffolding when it is not needed anymore.\(^81\)

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78. See Buren’s ‘The Function of the Studio’ text (1971) for his theoretical analysis of the studio and why he wanted to ‘extinguish’ the studio with his work.

79. See ‘Unidentified Foreign Objects’, an interview with Phyllida Barlow by Elizabeth Fisher (2013)

80. See my conversation with the artist, Appendix, p. 102.

81. See p. 53 for an image of one of Barham’s scaffolding structures.
In *Vertical Studio* I combined these two concerns, adaptability to a context and materials reuse, by creating a modular piece that can change its shape within certain constraints, and which can be ‘reused’, in that it can take more layers of artistic labour in between its public permutations.

Stretching the canvas seamlessly over both front and back of the stretchers by sewing it by hand was really time consuming, I never really managed to prepare more than a small number of canvases (fig.9). And accumulating layers on these canvases allowed me to contain my previously ambitious painting practice within a very small space, while the labour expended became more and more invisible as the surfaces of the paintings started to darken more and more. *Vertical Studio* has now been ongoing for a long time. There have been times over the years when I did have a studio, as when I moved to Stockwell Studios, and there have been periods in which I was back into a domestic space, for example a flat then a house in Loughborough. Looking back over this long period of time, 2010 to 2018, I can see that the most active periods for *Vertical Studio* were those when I was working on the piece inside a domestic space. Having a studio again, once I moved to Manchester and I joined Rogue Studios, seemed to put the piece in a state of crisis. I tried to expand it by augmenting the number of shelves I was using, thinking the simple equation: more space = more paintings would take it in a new direction, but I discovered I didn’t know how to make sense of it in that different context. While *Vertical Studio* was at Rogues studios, it became more and more difficult to go to the studio when I became pregnant, even more so since I moved further away from the studio, to the house I shared with my partner and baby. At the beginning of 2016 I found myself in a situation where I had a studio but I could not go to it because of caring for a small baby, and my activities were contained within a domestic space that, in need of renovation, required a lot of my labour to be made to work as a domestic space let alone as a domestic studio. Once the house renovation was more advanced, I tried to create a new version of *Vertical Studio* which could be integrated into...
my existing domestic arrangement (fig. 24, 51). But living with a toddler that was learning to walk and to climb, meant that as a work space Vertical Studio didn’t work, because the wet canvases and pots of paint installed in our main living space were too much of a temptation for my daughter.

Vertical Studio started as an imprint of a piece of domestic furniture. The bookshelf functioned like a mould, determining the size and number of the canvases, but the piece was also conceived to take on different configurations if it was to be exhibited. The circular rhythm of the procedure it afforded, of painting a layer on each canvas, putting each back to dry, then turning them over and starting the same operation on the back, functioned similarly to an assembly line, in the way that my body and the pieces were placed as close as possible to each other and my movements limited, except there was no finished product, as there was no end goal either. In following an established and repeatable procedure it mimicked a scientific experiment as described by physicist Niels Bohr: ‘by an experiment we simply understand an event about which we are able in an unambiguous way to state the conditions necessary for the reproduction of the phenomena’ (Folse 1985: 124 quoted in Barad 2007: 111)

Outside my homes and studios, when it was exhibited, the modular construction of Vertical Studio, with its double-sided canvases poised as building blocks, afforded discussions and negotiations with its hosts. Its indeterminateness allowed me to delegate the decisions regarding what it should look like in each exhibition context. In Manchester, where it was first exhibited as part of the two-person exhibition On Physical Work with Evangelia Spiliopoulou (2013), the installation had to be positioned so it would be safely out of the main passageway, as Bureau shared its space with the immense reception of a newly built office block, part of Manchester’s business-themed re-development at 1, Hardman Square in Spinningfields (fig. 53). As a diminutive monumental response to the imposing, shiny corporate architecture the curators decided it looked best left slightly undone, and so they gave it a jagged top and left one mdf stretcher on the floor next to it. In Brussels, for the solo exhibition A Record of Unaddressed Activity (2014), a pretty 1930s
shop window pierced the exhibition space open onto the busy square (fig. 52). The c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e project space team made me build the installation similarly to how it was in Manchester first, then they took it apart. They built it again, trying to make it as tall as possible. In the end, the curators decided to spread the piece over the floor. I watched as they built it collaboratively making it low, like a garden wall. At Touchstones Rochdale, Vertical Studio was in the company of other paintings at one end of a large gallery space in the Rochdale Museum for the group exhibition In Conversation (2014) (fig.54). For the first time, there were no windows and no open perspectives that could animate the play between empty stretchers and double-sided canvases. We tried to build the installation taller than ever, by placing the paintings on their short side, but Sophia Crilly, the curator, found it looked too unstable. We then built it again, once the works by Mary Griffiths had been positioned on the large wall behind, so that my empty stretchers could frame them.

In 2015 both Vertical Studio and the series of Aquatint prints part of this
project were part of a ‘group work’ by c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e titled *Heterarchical Archipelago*, comprising a week long collaborative experiment at the gallery in January, and a public presentation as part of the curated programme of Brussels Art Fair in April that year (fig.56). In that context, all the works by the participating artists were opened to total reconfiguration as the premise was that the artists involved would share their working methodologies. This created a situation where after the initial excitement, conflicts arose over the desire of some of the participants to defend their own working methodologies as the kernel of their authorial persona, against what was arguably a too literal or aggressive appropriation by the c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e team. This exposed issues around the identification of artists with their working methodologies, within a context of the art world as an economy of exposure and the artist’s labour as an investment in their ‘brand’, which in my view the c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e group (of which I was part between May 2014 and April 2015) did not take enough into account. Within this context, *Vertical Studio* as a modular construction that, so far, had been exhibited in its entirety, was taken apart, and elements were chosen and installed as singular artworks by the artists in the group. Fittingly at the last presentation of *Vertical Studio* as part of the North Festival in Warrington, within the ‘Manchester Pavilion’ curated by Bureau (2015), I wasn’t present at the installation and I wasn’t able to get to see the exhibition so I only know it through the documentation (fig.55). Over these presentations and permutations *Vertical Studio* made good on its promise of flexibility, although the constraints due to its minimum requirements for stability also emerged. If the only difference involved in each presentation had been the change involved in adapting the construction to different environments and curatorial approaches, then the images I am presenting on these pages would look like a catalogue of variations on a modular design. But, as it is also noticeable in the images in Appendix, at each public presentation the paintings were also caught amidst a process of change involving their surfaces. Between one exhibition and the next, new layers of acrylic paint were added to a progressively increasing number of pieces, as the whole series of paintings slowly moves towards eventual saturation.
One of the themes that have emerged from the work on both *Vertical studio* and the two printmaking projects discussed in Part 1, has been the position of passivity, and availability of the work to be taken into the hands of others. This could also be read as a way of outsourcing that all important artistic decision making, that according to Vishmidt’s reading of Thierry de Duve’s *Kant after Duchamp* (1993) is ‘not so much a kind of activity as a form of speculative judgement’ – ‘this is art’ – opening a way to think art out of its specialization as a non-labour and directly in relation to the kind of abstract value that lends a social character to all labours’ (Vishmidt 2013). I would like to suggest that by outsourcing specifically this crucial aspect of artistic practice, the decision making, my work is offering a direct critique of this particular reading of artistic practice as once again a hylomorphic process of imposing form over matter aided by the cultivation of preferably if not exclusively ‘conceptual acuity’ (Roberts 2007: 93). Because really, the processes of validation at play in the art world go beyond the artists nominalist gesture: you can only say ‘this is art’ if you have somebody else to back you up. Ukeles knew this well, even though she says the opposite in her mani-

*Vertical Studio, installation view of the group exhibition ‘Manchester Pavilion’ curated by Bureau,- North Festival Warrington (2015).*
festò 82, and this is why it was important to publish her Manifesto in Artforum and stage her Maintenance Art Performances (1973-1974) in a museum.

This quote by painter Gerhard Richter is an example of what I am trying to avoid with my artistic strategies: as a painter ‘I am the one who has to decide what they should ultimately look like (the making of pictures consists of a large number of yes and no decisions and a yes decision at the end.)’ (Richter 1992). I am going directly against this strategy with my paintings, because I am letting the layers build up according to ‘heteronomies’: the opportunity to exhibit them, rather than according to my artistic ‘expertise’, as Richter suggests. I am outsourcing artistic decision making and nominalism, and exploit-

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82. Ukeles in her Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969! says ‘Everything I say is art is art’ (Ukeles 1969: 2). The article that quoted Ukeles’s Manifesto was Jack Burnam’s ‘Problems of Criticism, IX’, published in Artforum 9, no 5 (pp. 40-45)
ing ‘heteronomies’ to make the work. My request for people to help me make my work could also be interpreted as exploitative, extracting unpaid labour from those who are asking me to labour for free by exhibiting my work. As I am removing the nominalist aspect of artistic work, what I am left with is the development and execution of tasks that put me in direct relationship with and dependence from the furnished spaces I work in. I am still not outside the ‘speculative mode of production’ (Vishmidt 2011; Vishmidt 2012; Vishmidt 2013a), because even though my activities might be more similar to labour and less reliant on conceptual acuity: by entering artistic networks and trying to employ them to produce my work it shows, I still hope that the things I produce might obtain some kind of currency in the art world. And yet I argue that rather than in the outsourced speculative judgement that gives form to its public presentations, the ‘art’ in Vertical Studio is once again in co-working with things: putting the affordances of an ever-changing domestic space to work by setting up, again and again, a space furnished with a particular set of things: machines, tools and materials. Vertical Studio demonstrates that the work that artists do to set up and maintain furnished spaces is indeed artistic labour, as it creates a space of possibility for co-working with things and following the grain of materials. In the following section I turn to Simondon to provide a different theoretical perspective to this argument. I characterise Simondon as a vitally important thinker on the role of furnished spaces as co-workers.
To provide more theoretical depth to this rendering visible of the work of setting up and maintaining furnished space – our third research question – we turn once again to Simondon, who helps us to rethink things through a valuable focus on the active role of matter and the machine.

According to Vishmidt and Stakemaier, machinery within capitalism is not merely a tool or a means but a material part of our ‘species-being’, it is intrinsic to our bodies (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 61). It is in this context they become interested in Simondon’s idea of psychophysiological alienation, which designates the alienation that invests both humans and machines as means towards an end in capitalism. ‘Since technical and human means alike are limited to their function for capital, and identified as property, their mutual limitation characterises another level of alienation’ (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 61). Vishmidt and Stakemaier’s focus is on the idea of autonomy: ‘Autonomy, one might argue, thus depends on the purposeful expansion, reorganisation and individualisation of heteronomies: those heteronomies that rule, form and reproduce our lives’ (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 61). In this context they use Simondon’s ideas to hint at a human-machine solidarity, but still they frame the relationship between humans and technical objects as one of domination of human purposiveness over inert matter: they see ‘Gilbert Simondon’s attempt to formulate an understanding of capitalist technicity as a series of sedimentations of human alienation within a material that needs to be dis-alienated in the process of

5. Gilbert Simondon, maintenance and alienation
human emancipation’. I would argue that this is not in fact what Simondon suggests: what he offers is an interpretation of technical culture where technical culture is recuperated as human culture, and the antagonisms towards technology resolved, in a conception of the human-machine relationship where humans temporarily played the role of ‘technical individuals’, bearers of tools, until machines were fully developed and could take on that role themselves. Machines have historically entered a world which was organised around humans as ‘technical individuals’. For Simondon this was only a temporary phase, where humans were ‘stand-ins’ for the machines yet to come (1980: 96-99).

It is as a consequence of this shift, according to Simondon, that there is now a malaise, because humans, still attempting to play the role of the technical object, don’t have a stable place beside the machine anymore. They are either the servant or the organisers of the technical ensemble. But for the human role to make sense, it is necessary that every person employed in a technical task surround the machine from both above and below, and that they somehow understand the machine, and take care of its elements but also of its integration within the larger whole of the furnished space (Simondon 1958: 48).

If Vishmidt and Stakemaier mean, by human emancipation, a process in which humans cease to be, or cease to aspire to be, technical objects; for Simondon this liberation of both humans and machines wouldn’t be about liberating the dead labour sedimented within the material of the machines, because the alienation of machines, in their present situation, is not alienation of the human labour congealed in the machines, but rather alienation of the machines themselves; as the logic of capitalism and the

83. Vishmidt and Stakemaier quote (2016: 104) a partial English translation of Simondon’s The Mode of existence of Technical Objects (1980), but then expand on themes that Simondon addressed directly in the non-translated chapters of Du Mode d’Existence des Objects Techniques (1958), and in the larger thesis which The Mode accompanied, part of which has been published recently in French as L’individuation a la lumière de la notion de forme et information (2005). At the same time as Vishmidt and Stakemaier’s Reproducing Autonomy was published, a new complete translation of The Mode of Existence of Technical Objects also came out (2016).
Vishmidt and Stakemaier use Simondon’s ideas to further their conception of ‘autonomisation’ as a reworking of artistic labour away from the traditional Marxist division between productive and reproductive labour:

Here, autonomy does not rest solemnly within the subject, but within the possible expansion of its ‘body scheme’ through a reconstructed understanding of machinery, a relocated ‘range of indefiniteness’, an embodied measurelessness in which the distinction of artistic (intellectual) work and reproductive (manual) labour can, potentially, wither away. In our sense, this might cancel the hierarchical distinction of reproductive and productive means of production, as what is technical and what is organic are no longer condemned to a relation of antagonism, but are repurposed, autonomised from their naturalised function for capital. (Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 83)

As shown in the quote above, Vishmidt and Stakemaier are hoping to activate Simondon’s ideas towards a conception of labour that would go beyond the distinction between productive and reproductive labour. But they still do this within a Marxist understanding of labour, and like many other readers of Marx, they contribute to the continued taking for granted of the hylomorphic model of creation to explain production. Vishmidt and Stakemaier point out that the separation between the spheres of production and reproduction, which in Marx’s labour theory of value, is written in early childhood socialization, which basically means it is naturalised (quote from Gisela Dischner, Vishmidt and Stakemaier 2016: 10). I suggest this separation between productive and reproductive, and manual and intellectual labour has to do with the hylomorphic model and an understanding of making that does not account for how materials are prepared, before being deployed in production and this understanding is missing in Vishmidt and Stakemaier’s argument.

As we have seen in Part 1, for Simondon the inertia of matter originates in a very human hierarchy.

The true passivity of matter is its abstract availability, behind the order
given that others will execute. The real passivity is that of the human mediation which will procure matter. Form corresponds to that which the man in charge has thought to himself and which he has to positively express when he gives out orders: form is of the order of the expressible, it is eminently active, because it is imposed on those who will manipulate matter; form is the content of the order itself, what makes it rule. The active character of form, the passive character of matter, respond to the conditions of transmission of the order, which presuppose a social hierarchy. (Simondon 2005: 51) my translation

What is deemed ‘passive’ matter in the hylomorphic model of creation actually has to be prepared, to achieve the plasticity that will allow it to be transformed into a finished product. Materials are that, that has been already been worked upon according to Simondon (2005: 39). Within this context, for Simondon it is activities of maintenance that allow for observation and feedback loops that foster the further development of the machine, as Deleuze and Guattari also note (2004: 408). Technical activity, distinguished from alienating labour, does not only include the use of the machine, but also a certain ‘coefficient of attention’ to the machine’s technical operation, maintenance, tuning, improvement. A set of activities that prolongs the invention and construction of the machine (Simondon 1958: 140)

In my conversation with Pete Dobson, the printmaking tutor at Loughborough’s SAED Printmaking workshop, with whom I have worked since the beginning of the project in 2011, some very interesting elements emerged on Dobson’s experience of the relationship between taking care of, and understanding specific technologies, which reflect Simondon’s theorisation of maintenance as a relationship of intimate knowledge with a machine.

The workshop contains two hydraulic presses, invented and produced by Mr Beever of Beever Engineering Ltd., which have been there since the 1980s, but which Pete has only started working with, when he took on the role of printmaking tutor a couple of years before I met him. These particular pieces of equipment work very differently from the traditional mangle type presses which are usually found in printmaking workshops, and their specific affordances have contributed to my Aquatints project as discussed in Part 1 section 5. When Dobson first started at the workshop, there were a few problems with one of them, which had to do with the oil reservoirs emptying, and the seal on one of the reservoirs becoming loose. Mr. Beever, the inventor, came and fixed it, and him and Dobson had a conversation.
about the order in which the machine is to be used. Dobson told Mr. Beever that he noticed that he did it in a particular way, was there any reason for that? (There are two controls to release pressure after the press has been used, an outer control that pulls out and an inner control that turns).

He said no, in terms of the design it shouldn’t make any difference which one you open first. So, I was a bit lax in term of which control people used, because he said it didn’t matter. But it does. If you pull the one out to release it first, after you have applied pressure, after a while it stops applying pressure. I called him and I asked if he was sure about what he had said, and he replied that yes, in terms of the structure inside, it shouldn’t matter. I said ‘I have been doing it at random, and it’s not applying pressure.’ So, he came, and he had to change something within the machine, that had slipped. And he said that what had gone wrong, had nothing to do with what I was doing. After that, I decided to always turn the inner control first rather than pull out the outer control, and it’s not gone wrong since. I don’t know what that was all about. In a way, it’s interesting in terms of how you try something, and if it works, you keep doing it, if it does not you change it and do something else. (Appendix 111-112)

Dobson might have gotten to know the operation of the machine more intimately through operating and maintaining it than Mr Beever himself who invented it, but does not necessarily use it every day, or not in the way that the students and Dobson himself do in the context of the Printmaking workshop. Dobson has also developed a way of using the press that is in contrast with Mr Beever’s instructions, but which makes the operation of the press much easier in terms of registration, as discussed in Part 1 (p. 73).

Maintenance activities represent ‘reproductive’ aspects of productive labour which are essential to, but conceptually separated from the process in Marxism, but that for Simondon represent a possibility of less-alienated labour (Simondon 1958: 251). Simondon sees alienation as based not only on the fact that the workers don’t own the machines they work with, or the products of their labour, but also on the fact that they don’t understand how the machines function and how they can fix them or change them. With his ideas on maintenance as less alienated labour, Simondon would have offered another, powerful argument for dissolving the distinction between productive and reproductive labour to Vishmidt and Stakemaier’s project, but the writers do not take into account this part of Simondon’s work.
For Simondon the intimate relationships of maintenance with machines are the closest to non-alienated labour that we can get to within the current system of labour (Simondon 1958: 250). Capitalism unites both machines and humans as means in psycho-physiological alienation, and he sees all labour as alienating (Simondon 1958: 117). In his concept of psychophysiological alienation, rather than designating as Vishmidt and Stakemaier suggest a conception of matter as sedimented with alienated human labour, which has to be liberated, he much more radically considers labour itself as intrinsically alienating of both humans and machines. Importantly, Simondon does not differentiate between capitalism and labour.

Roberts, following Braverman considers that the worker has irredeemably lost the skills which would allow her to understand the work process in post-Fordism, and to this he attributes the impossibility of reverting alienation in general production. For Roberts only the ‘reskilled’ conceptual artist is able to achieve the grail of non-alienated labour thanks to relying on conceptual acuity rather than craft based skills to produce her work (Roberts 2007). The reskilled artist is able to employ the ‘non-artistic hands of others’ and somehow still be non-alienated, because, according to Roberts, her relationship with entangled materialities does not impinge on the autonomy of her work. But we have seen that this relative autonomy is, as demonstrated by Vishmidt and Stakemaier, always reliant on a concealment of the actual conditions of production of the artwork and most importantly, of the reproduction of the artist herself.

Geographers Stephen Graham and Nigel Thrift in their essay ‘Out of Order: Understanding Repair and Maintenance’ (2007) made a case for the importance of maintenance, that has elements of similarity to some of the arguments found in Simondon’s work. ‘We will argue that repair and maintenance activities have not just more grip but more emancipatory potential than may be thought by those who want to write them off as simply mundane or slavishly repetitive’ (Graham and Thrift 2007: 2). Graham and Thrift describe large systems and infrastructure which are traditionally seen as a background which remains invisible thanks to its ability to ‘work’, and to the constant labour of maintenance which keeps it working. This infrastructure of course includes roads, sewage, waste disposal, etc. but also electricity, under water fiber optics cables, and server farms.

Graham and Thrift’s ideas show how infrastructure cannot be understood as inert matter or dead labour, but rather as an active, whilst concealed, ‘background’. Infrastructure performs complex functions which
are the background to the smooth operations of capitalist economies and has to be kept alive, with constant observation and adjustments. Graham and Thrift, like Simondon, also see maintenance as an important source of innovation. They revalue messy repair procedures.

There is some evidence to suggest that this kind of piece-by-piece adaptation is a leading cause of innovation, acting as a continuous feedback loop of experimentation which, through many small increments in practical knowledge, can produce large changes. Seen in this light, ‘maintenance is learning’. The multifarious activities of repair and maintenance become not just secondary and derivative but pivotal. They become one of our chief means of seeing and understanding the world (Graham and Thrift 2007: 5).

The issue with Graham and Thrift’s account of maintenance is that it inscribes, in the maintenance practices it observes, hierarchies between high level, ‘hi tech’ maintenance and low-level maintenance such as cleaning (Graham and Thrift 2007: 3) whilst ignoring the social aspects of maintenance work and the way it is overlooked while also being underpaid, gendered and racialised. This could be also said of Simondon except that with his theory, the machinic model can be applied to furnished spaces such as the house (and it is applied to the house as machine in the introduction to the 2013 edition of L’Individuation a la Lumiere de la notion de Forme et Information) and through such an interpretation, it is possible for his model to be used to look at any kind of ‘reproductive labour’. Mierle Laderman Ukeles had made the claim in her Maintenance Art Manifesto (1969) that ‘development activities’ such as Minimalist art, are actually made up almost exclusively of ‘maintenance’. Discussing the Manifesto in an interview Ukeles said

This is 1968, there was no valuing of ‘maintenance’ in Western Culture. The trajectory was: make something new, always move forward. Capitalism is like that. The people who were taking care and keeping the wheels of society turning were mute, and I didn’t like it! I felt when I was watching Richard Serra do these very simple things like throwing the lead, or Judd building in things the language of Process Art and Minimalism… I felt like “what are they doing?” They are lifting industrial processes and forgetting about the whole culture that they come out of. So Serra was this steel worker without the work, without the workers. And Judd was this carpenter without workers. They didn’t
have workers, they didn’t have people, they had objects or they had results. And I felt that they were falling into the same trap as the rest of this damn culture, which couldn’t see the whole structures or cultures of workers that made the kind of work that invented these processes and refined them. They were skimming off the top. (Ryan 2009)85

As we have also seen in section 3, works of art function in relation not only the networks in which they are valued and have an ideological function, but also, the practices that make them survive: the cleaning, the storage, the exigencies that are written into their materiality. Ukeles claimed the term ‘maintenance’ to define house work and ‘low level’ (Graham and Thrift) activities such as cleaning, to point at the similarity between differently valued activities.86 In fact, taking on board Simondon’s thinking on maintenance activities, as including close observation and moments of invention, it could be said that house work is a type of engineering in the way it involves not only repetitive activities but also designing highly adaptable systems that make a furnished space work for its inhabitants.

Marxism according to Simondon, cannot find the solution to the problem of alienation, because it places the source of alienation outside labour, whilst it is labour itself, as labour, that is the source of alienation. Simondon is not saying that economic alienation does not exist, but rather that it may be, that the primary cause of alienation is inscribed within the essence of labour, and that the alienation described by Marx is only one mode of this alienation (Simondon 1958: 249). The technical object makes its appearance in a world where social structures and psychic content have been formed by labour: the technical object has therefore entered the world of labour, instead of creating a technical world with different structures outside of labour. The machine is consequently encountered

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86. Even though Ukeles repeatedly affirms how mind numbing and repetitive house work is in her interviews. But this is common to all discourse on reproductive labour of the time, except for Christine Delphy, who was keen to claim that reproductive labour was no different to any other work except for the way it was performed within the family.
and used through labour and not through technical knowledge; the relationship of the worker to the machine is inadequate, because the worker operates on the machine without his gesture prolonging the activity of invention. The dark central zone characteristic of labour has cast its shadow on the usage of the machine: it is now the operation of the machine, the origin of the machine, the signification of what the machine does and the ways it is made which is the dark zone. The primitive central obscurity of the hylomorphic model is preserved: man knows what goes in the machine and what comes out, but not what is done within it: in the presence of the worker an operation is carried out to which the worker does not participate, even if she orders it or serves it. To give orders is still to remain external to the order, when the fact of ordering consists in triggering, according to a pre-existing montage within the construction of the technical object. The alienation of the worker is translated into the rupture between technical knowledge and the exercise of the conditions of utilisation (Simondon 1958: 249).

I would suggest that with his argument Simondon is proposing that humans together with machines step outside of the labour relationship, abandon the Marxist purposeful design and engage in relationships where maintenance and operation (presumably uniting humans and technical objects) for their own sake are privileged, and where the sources of development and innovation are discovered within those intimate relationships of regulation and maintenance rather than within the dialectic of capitalist forces. Things ‘work’, according to Simondon, alongside humans. This destabilises the deeply embedded culture of productive labour as the definitive activity for our ‘species-being’, and of humans as producers.

By inserting machines such as printers, speakers, projectors, ready to interact with humans within her precisely constructed apparatuses of production, artist Anna Barham stages things and humans operating alongside each other. For Simondon (2005: 12) the machine is the ‘stranger’, the ‘foreigner’. A stranger within which something human is concealed, unrecognised, materialised, enslaved. Barham’s works suggest that the opposite is also true, and that the machine is at the heart of the human. She does this by uncovering the machinic within human language, and within the sound making apparatus that we are equipped with, and co-working with machines to produce machinic poetry. Instead of being used for taking down minutes at corporate meetings, dictation equipment is tinkered with, and the artist captures from its errors an objective, machinic poetry capable of opening up imaginary worlds for those who listen to it. Both human and machines are liberated from being just means towards ends in capitalism: the ability to communicate and the type of cognition (the general intellect) that is enrolled in post Fordist labour is hijacked by Barham’s machin-
ic poetry, and the stuttering of the machine is exacerbated rather than fixed.

If Simondon offers an interpretation of technical culture where it is recuperated as human culture, and the antagonisms towards technology resolved, it is in a conception of the human-machine relationship where machines labour alongside humans, and humans labouring are rendered temporarily machine-like by their common psychophysiological alienation which they share with machines. We could imagine that Barham, with her analysis of the machinic quality of human languages and of human bodies as sound producing machines, might be pointing at a relationship with machines where the machinic within humans is called to have a conversation with things.

Rodchenko when explaining his conception of a new culture of things, where things would cease to be ‘black and mournful slaves’ to becomes co-workers, talks of this new relationship with things as potentially a conversation. ‘Things become comprehending, become friends and comrades of the person, and the person learns how to laugh and be happy and converse with things’ he said in a letter (Kiaer 1996: 30). His
Workers Club for the Paris International Exhibition of 1925, has been interpreted as an attempt to embody those very ideas in the furnishings he designed as liberated socialist things, that facilitate the workers leisure (Kiaer 1996). I would suggest there is a similarity between Rodchenko’s club, with its modernist features suggesting of a stylistic tabula rasa which excludes any reference to previous designs, in order to reinvent the very idea of workers spending free time together, and artist Anna Barham’s repeated attempts at creating a furnished space for viewers or participants to inhabit. Both, underneath the striking designs, are made out of cheap, available materials, ingeniously put to work. Both can be quite uncomfortable: visitors to the replica of Rodchenko’s club in New York said the curved chairs were terribly uncomfortable (Kiaer 1996). Barham’s geometric benches and stools don’t have back rests so they are not even trying to support the body.

And yet even though Barham’s furnished spaces may bring to mind Rodchenko’s club, organised for industrious leisure, she makes furnished spaces so that she can put them to work. She’s constantly recruiting collaborators, to help her in her labour. What do people get from participating in her live production workshops? Maybe they get to experience the common alienation of their own labour and of machinic labour directly and immediately. Instead of seeing their ‘prosumption’ automatically extracted and transformed into profits by big corporations (Fuchs 2014), for once, they see themselves co-working with machines to create new, unpredictable things, using the equipment they were born with, their vocal cords, their brains, to co-work with the software and digital recording equipment. The frisson of enjoying a side-by-side interaction with the machine, experiencing labouring like the machine, but not for capital.

Breaking the black box, for Barham rather than smashing up our ubiquitous digital interfaces, means prying open certain parts of them that show a vulnerability. Co-working with the machine outside of the purpose it was created for, allows to understand a little better how the machine works, by having a conversation with it. These disruptions of the ‘normal’ use of machines, this testing of the limits of machine-human interaction, are a way to ‘follow the materials’, by exploring the entanglements of the apparatuses of production within which Barham, and her audience, are caught. In the things she produces again and again Barham is re-examining the process of production by co-working with things in ways that highlight things’, and humans’, irreplaceable contribution.
In this Part 2 of the thesis, I have examined a question that emerged from my practice of repeatedly furnishing a studio for painting inside and outside of my home. What kind of work is it, for artists, to set up and look after furnished spaces? Sartre’s concept of the practico-inert, and his idea of the house as a vampire, clashed with what I learned of the affordances of domestic and studio spaces, from my own work and from my conversations with other practitioners. The work of feminist Autonomists of the 1970s, and contemporary commentators on their work, helped me recognise the productivity of the home as part of the social factory. Comparing Delphy’s domestic mode of production with Vishmidt’s speculative mode of production, highlighted how distinguishing between (intellectual) productive labour and (manual) reproductive labour conceals the productivity and self-exploitation in both art work and house work. Ultimately the demands inscribed in the materiality of the artworks themselves are the most revealing of the kind of labour and furnished spaces that produced them.

Vishmidt and Stakemaier suggested that contemporary art could only be autonomous by embracing its relationship with its own reproduction. Simondon, by seeing both humans and machines as similarly alienated as means within capitalism, directs us away from autonomy as ultimate value and points to maintenance as less alienated form of labour there is, in that it allows to understand, and co-work/converse with the machine. There are possibilities of co-working, and conversing with things, both at the level of the simple, heavy machinery of printmaking, as exemplified by the creative maintenance of Pete Dobson, and at the level of the black boxed digital machine, which artist Anna Barham manages to disrupt without breaking it. In this context, the work of setting up and maintaining furnished spaces, that allow for these interactions, is revealed as the most important, and most productive part of artistic work. In regard to the work involved in setting up and maintaining furnished space, Simondon’s theoretical intervention is enormously helpful in recognising and foregrounding maintenance as central. The notion of humans labouring alongside machines, rather than rendering the latter subordinate to the will of the former, has clear resonance with my projects, in which the furnished spaces, machines and materials were clearly productive and generative. Simondon then, alongside other writers drawn on in the thesis, provides us with a rich theorisation through which to foreground the crucial role of things in the emergence of artworks.
Conclusion
1. Summary

This practice-based doctoral project has examined co-working with things through exploring ‘furnished space’ as a concept that could account for arrangements of things whose contribution to the emergence of artworks amount to more than the sum of their parts. I reframed artistic production as the emergence of new things, facilitated by the contribution of a hybrid collective of machines, materials, and artists inhabiting furnished spaces. Producing and maintaining facilitating contexts such as furnished spaces emerged as a complex, laborious, and unpredictably productive practice, which is systematically concealed and undervalued within a model of artistic production predicated on hylomorphism, the Aristotelian ‘habit of thought’ that sees production as the imposition of purposeful design over inert matter.

The main question, ‘how do furnished spaces contribute to the emergence of artworks?’ unfolded through the double-sided sub-questions: ‘do furnished spaces do some of the work involved in the emergence of artworks?’ and ‘what work is it for artists to set up and maintain furnished spaces?’ which engendered the bi-partite structure of the written thesis. The question is double sided: my practice and conversations with other practitioners have taught me that if the contribution of things in furnished spaces is taken into account, then the work of setting them up and maintaining them also has to be reconsidered and revalued. It is a double-sidedness rather than a dualism, because each side has a tendency to conceal the other: even if one is open to acknowledging the activeness of things (a position held by much recent ‘object-oriented’ thought), the labour of negotiation with matter, involved in the emergence of new things, can still be missed. And conversely, a focus on the productivity of ‘reproductive labour’ such as the feminist autonomist position, usually stems from a view on production that takes for granted the hylomorphic model. It is by deploying a new, ‘entangled’ notion of causality, as Barad and Simondon do, where there is no linear, easily traceable connection between purpose and outcome, but a practitioner has to ‘follow the materials’, that it becomes possible to recognise both the contribution of furnished spaces and the productivity of the labour of setting them up and maintaining them.
2. Key findings

My first sub-question: ‘do furnished spaces do some of the work involved in the emergence of artworks?’ emerged from my parallel practices of creating a studio for painting within my home, and using the constraints and opportunities I faced, to generate a series of works, while also engaging with the Printmaking workshop and its specific affordances. A sensibility to things and to their contribution seemed to be spreading through both philosophy and the study of art and material cultures, but Actor Network Theory, Speculative Realism and Object-Oriented Ontology didn’t provide me with tools that could address the very unglamorous encounters with things I was exploring. It was the feminist New Materialism that emerged at the beginning of this decade, and the work of physicist Karen Barad in particular, that provided me with examples of a practice of accounting for things and what they did within furnished spaces. Barad’s (2007) proposal for a new understanding of causality stemming from an exploration of the scientific laboratory from the inside, in its material incarnation, gave me the tools to begin to uncover the contribution of furnished spaces to the emergence of new things. Barad’s scientific laboratory is a working-space, and a space for co-working with things. Apparatuses of production, such as furnished spaces, are not just containers for things: they are spaces of possibility, in which where things are in relation to each other, and the work of putting them and keeping them there, matters. Furnished spaces, like Barad’s labs, are labourers that do some of the work involved in the emergence of artworks.

But furnished spaces work in complicated ways. They are ‘worked matter’; energised by sedimentations of past labour, both productive and ‘reproductive’, they offer affordances which facilitate the emergence of certain things and not others. Gibson’s (1986) term ‘affordance’, in opposition to the limiting Marxist term ‘use value’ (see for example Marx 1993: 691), points to the entanglement of things, including social, economic, gender factors, that, within a furnished space such as for example the study, facilitate specific working practices. And furnished spaces are not only homes, studios, factories, offices, workshops. An exhibition can also be a productive furnished space, when, as in artist Anna Barham’s work, it stages relationships of co-working and conversation between furnishings, machines, humans.
The engagement with the second sub question: what work is it for artists to set up and maintain furnished spaces? Led me to an investigation into how processes of making are understood. The study of production and productivity in Marxist thought emerged from an interest in theories of post-Fordism and ‘immaterial’ labour which, although they resonated with aspects of my lived experiences of labour as an intern in commercial galleries, public institutions and magazines in the contemporary art world of the late 2000, ultimately seemed only to function in a context where the contribution of things was concealed. Autonomist feminists Federici, Dalla Costa and James, and artists such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles, and the critical work of Weeks and Vishmidt and Stakemaier, provided the tools with which to take into account the materiality of the everyday and the hidden hierarchies and gendered oppression onto which the current wage regime is built. Delphy, with her critique of feminist autonomism and her claim that unpaid domestic labour is not essentially different from any other labour, except for being unpaid, opened up my mind to the many different types of activities that are part of ‘house work’. Ukeles, who reclaimed house work as maintenance in her Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969, helped me see its kinship with the types of maintenance that Simondon claimed as ‘less-alienated’ labour, by fostering an intimacy with things, implied in the usually concealed activity of making them work. These theoretical engagements led me to foreground the crucial roles of maintenance and reproduction in art practice, as central component’s of artists’ work which is systematically concealed.

Within Marxist approaches to artistic labour, I found that a common theme was the impossibility of recognising the contribution of things outside of a rigid schema of human purposeful production which makes matter the inert medium for human meaning, or even ignoring matter altogether through a constant effort to position artworks as less material, or ‘immaterial’ altogether (Roberts 2007). This problem within Marxist thought on artistic labour stems from the uncritical adoption of a hylomorphic model of artistic creation, which is based on a binary division between matter and form, and a conceptual hierarchy between manual and intellectual labour, already in place before anything has emerged from the process of making (Simondon, 2005: 40).

Conversely I have argued in the thesis that in the encounter with furnished
spaces such as the Printmaking workshop, as Pete Dobson says, the things that emerge are shaped by the affordances of the space more than by whatever we bring these spaces. By saying that humans only temporarily functioned as stand-ins for the machines yet to come, Simondon opens the way to think of labour as something that makes us more thingly, rather than more human. But this is not necessarily a ‘bad thing’: Anna Barham’s work stages co-working with machines as a way to uncover the machinic in humans; and the capacity to ‘converse’ that machines afford, if they are encountered not as means to be exploited, but as open apparatuses of production to test and explore.

Simondon’s critique of hylomorphism allows us to follow the continuity between invention and maintenance, and to discover the creativity and productivity of the labour of setting up and looking after apparatuses of production. There is no direct causality in this relationship, and this is also why it can be elusive: the contribution of things, although real, is not completely manipulable. One does the work of setting up and looking after furnished spaces, without knowing what will emerge, without indeed having the certainty that something will emerge at all. Both Barad and Simondon point at this break in linear causality in different ways.

Simondon’s discovery of this non-linearity of processes of emergence uncovers the secret concealed within hylomorphic models of production such as the Marxist one. By drawing on the work of Tim Ingold in order to read production ‘backwards’ it is possible to avoid understanding production (of commodities, scientific knowledge or artworks) as the imposition of an initial idea onto inert matter (as in David Harvey’s reading of Marx), or being about a series of yes and no decisions (as for Gerhard Richter). When you look after a child, or negotiate with some piece of equipment, you do not know what will happen. You just keep at it, doing what works, hoping things will work out.
3. Implications of findings

It is only by engaging in detail with what happened in these processes that the contribution of things can be appreciated: ‘Skimming off the top’ as Ukeles once said of artistic practices that conceal both reproductive and productive labour (Ryan 2009); looking at making the ‘wrong way around’, from the finished artwork to the process that led to its emergence (Ingold 2010b: 3) does not provide an account of the work that things do. In the practice of writing up with research project, I had to find ways of accounting for the detail of what happens in the processes of emergence of artworks. Taking my cue from the description of the Stern-Gerlach experiment in Barad, and from Simondon’s close description of the process of making a clay brick, I consciously retraced the sequence of operations from the beginning, in as much detail as possible. Descriptions of changing home-studio set-ups illuminated the entanglement of events that shaped Vertical Studio. A minute, personal description of the Printmaking workshop as I experienced it, illustrates its power as a complex furnished space choreographing the actions of those who enter it, even just passing by.

Applying Barad’s diffractive methodology to the reading of theory also means focusing on the details and reconstructing the differences between texts engaging with similar ideas. This allows to uncover the significance of what is excluded in each ‘layer’ (Barad 2007: 30). For example, each of the interpretations of the critique of the hylomorphic model, layers it with new modes of operation. In Simondon, it is deployed in the context of his theory of individuation, which, provocatively, sees both humans and technical beings as individuals in the making, always in process (Simondon 2005: 39). In Deleuze and Guattari, the critique of the hylomorphic model is activated whilst looking at the historical practices of travelling artisans, and their resistance to ‘royal science’ and the power of the state (Deleuze and Guattari 2004). In Ingold, it takes the role of challenging an understanding of skilled practices which, by looking at making the wrong way around, from product to maker, does not appreciate the reciprocal relationships between practitioners and the materials they work with (Ingold 2010). By engaging with all three interpretations of the
critique of the hylomorphic model and looking at each through the other, it is possible to discover a richer, more layered understanding of this concept.

In the thesis I have taken Weeks’s valuable critique of the ‘work society’ and the over evaluation of its importance (Week 2011) further by drawing on Simondon’s radical conception of technology. For Simondon, things, such as the ‘technical individual’, (i.e. machines), are alienated through work as humans are; whilst humans are made more machinic through work. I argue that seeing ‘the things in our hands’ as co-workers, going against the grain of the identification of work as an activity so essentially human that it constitutes the kernel of humanity, could provide a new model for the re-evaluation of forms of ‘non-work’, such as reproductive labour and house work, as work, with a view to radically challenging the ‘work society’ itself.

If one takes on board both the feminist and the Simondonian critiques of Marx, it is possible to understand the reciprocity of productive and reproductive processes. A re-evaluation of reproduction provides an understanding of activity outside of the current wage regime. This expanded notion of reproduction includes within itself, not as an after-thought, but as a constitutive element, those feedback loops, those moments of observation, that sensitivity to the milieu, that might provide us with a more interconnected approach to practice, in collaboration with the world. Co-working with things would allow us to work with and not against the environment.

Ukeles’s maintenance art, by making maintenance into art, does not solve the problem of the concealment of maintenance in all art. As an example of conceptual art or institutional critique, her work has been rightly canonised, meaning that her Manifesto is worth more than a 4 bedroom house in the area.
where I live. Turning the maintenance into the art was a brilliant gesture, but it has not changed things in terms of how house work or maintenance in themselves are valued, whoever it is that does them. Uncovering and portraying the work that was done to support the pristine appearance of a skyscraper does not change the understanding that artistic labour only ‘skims the surface’. If the contribution of furnished spaces and those who set them up and maintain them, be they artists or not, is not taken into account, we are still ‘skimming the surface’ (Ryan 2009). It does not make a difference to know who cleans the art institution, as this critique has been absorbed by the art world. What would make a difference is creating artworks that embody their relationship with reproduction within their very materiality, rather than concealing it.

By holding on to an understanding of the entanglement of material-discursive elements that contribute to the emergence of artworks within specific furnished spaces, it becomes possible to see how the making of art might be indeed a very special activity. Not because it exemplifies the utopia of non-alienated labour, but rather because it allows us to experience directly how the common alienation of workers and machines described by Simondon may be reduced. We can try to engage in a reciprocal relationship with things where the labour of setting up and maintaining furnished spaces is the most productive, or ‘less alienated’, there is. Behind the concealment of maintenance and house work in public life is a hidden and undervalued practice of co-working with things.

It is my hope that these distinctive contributions to art theory and art practice will prove useful to artists and researchers investigating the relationship between art and labour; as well as to those looking at the role of ‘things’ in disciplines such as philosophy, art history art theory and anthropology.

87. Details found in a press pack downloadable from Ronald Feldman Gallery, who represent Ukeles: <https://feldmangallery.com/assets/pdfs/Ukeles-Selected-Press-small.pdf> (p. 15)
4. Limitations of the study and future research

Future research might productively consider the relationship between the concept of the ‘furnished space’ developed in this thesis and the Marxist concept of ‘primitive accumulation’, to see if there are any connections with the conception of furnished spaces developed in the thesis. I would also like to investigate further a possible relationship between Vishmidt’s speculative mode of production, Delphy’s domestic mode of production, and Sharon Sukin’s artistic mode of production, which in the 1980s analysed the phenomenon of gentrification and the transformation of neighbourhoods from industrial to ‘bohemian’ (1982). Issues around the valorisation of the built environment and subsequent extraction of rent through the absorption of unpaid artistic and maintenance labour are highly relevant for understanding the implications of the productivity of furnishing spaces.

There is also further scope to investigate the relationship between the affordances of the built environment and the artistic practices that emerge, and the productivity of looking after and maintaining furnished spaces. This could draw on my 2013 visit to Treignac Project. A former factory in the French countryside, it has been turned into an arts organisation through the efforts of the owners, artists Sam Basu and Liz Murray. Basu has been using the space to host workshops and exhibitions and has facilitated the production of new art and ideas, in the context of a complex entanglement of material-discursive factors including, amongst other things, property prices, and the availability of internet connection and cheap flights. My study of furnished spaces could provide some useful insights into how in spaces like Treignac Project, artistic and reproductive labour merge into creating a facilitating space that works.

Additionally, I would be interested in examining the relationship between reproductive labour and creativity on social media platforms like Instagram. In recent years, motherhood has been increasingly coupled with storytelling and image making, and house work has been professionalised as ‘styling’ and ‘curating’ interiors. Vishmidt’s (2012) concept of the ‘speculative mode...
of production’ could be used to look at the representation of the family, the private sphere online, and the transformation of house work into an influencer ‘career’ through the expansion of the range of activities it includes.

In terms of my artistic practice, in the past two years I have worked on the project *Our Days of Gold*. This project focuses on exploring the affordances of a digital furnished space’s entanglement with social media, technological innovation and the availability of certain types of equipment. I am slowly digitising and sharing on Instagram and Photo Vogue an archive that I have been looking after for the past 10-15 years, and which includes hundreds of film rolls, thousands of digital images and videos, which were the product of a collaborative image making practice with a group of family and friends between 2002 and 2007. The space of possibility for this work has emerged from, amongst other things, the availability of cheaper, higher quality negative scanners, and the growth of online niche communities that are passionate about the materiality of film photography and its incumbent obsolescence. The ability to choose and edit the ‘best shot’ is traditionally part of the craft of an artist/photographer. I am currently sharing my archive in its entirety, and using social media to reflect on and critique notions of artistic expertise by outsourcing ‘artistic decision making’ through capturing a selection of images most liked on these platforms. Working once again with rulemaking as an experimental tool, to capture the unpaid artistic labour of others within my own work, while also expending a lot of my own time and labour to engage with others, I am already employing the strategies I developed through this project to make new work through digital media.
15 May 2011

*Vertical Studio* stretchers made to measure to fit into second hand bookcase in the living room of the flat at Rushbrook House, Stockwell. Below: first attempts at building the structure in the courtyard.
October 2011
Reading:
Berardi, F. (2009) Soul at Work. From Alienation to Autonomy
Baudrillard, J. (1975) The Mirror of Production
December 2011
Reading:
14-15 February 2012
Clockwise: Aquatint zinc etching plates after printing. First aquatint tests, mobile phone documentation

Reading:
22-23 February 2012.
Aquatint tests
4 March 2012.
Vertical Studio at Stockwell Studios

14 March 2012.
Aquatint zinc plates after printing.
Aquatint tests.
25 March 2012.
Vertical Studio at Stockwell Studios

1 April 2012.
Communal garden at Stockwell Studios
April 2012
Reading:
Durational Approaches to Public Art

18-19 April 2012.
Aquatint experiments.
25-26 April 2012.
Aquatint layering experiments.
May 2012
Reading:

8 May 2012.
Aquatint etching plates after printing.
Aquatint layering experiments.
15-17 May 2012.
Aquatint layering experiments.

18 May 2012.
*Vertical Studio* detail.
opposite page: work table at Stockwell Studios
22 May 2012
Aquatint layering experiments.

29 May 2012
Aquatint layering experiments.

30 May 2012
Aquatint layering experiments, and first experiment with written code.
31 May 2012.
Aquatint experiments.
June 2012
Reading:

7-8 June 2012.
*Vertical Studio at Stockwell Studios*
September 2012
Reading:
Bryant, L., Smilček, N. and G. Harman (eds.) (2011) The Speculative Turn

November 2012
Reading:
Berardi, F. (2009) Soul at Work. From Alienation to Autonomy (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e))
November 2012
Reading:

Leibniz, G., (1714) Monadology < http://philosophy.eserver.org/leibniz-monadology.txt
4 December 2012.
Aquatints. Series of multi-layered double-sided aquatint prints with written code.
2012-ongoing
each approx. 25 x 18 cms.
this page: 2Y-3R-4B
December 2012
Reading:


4 December 2012.
this page: 1G-2Y-3R, 3R-4B-5G,
opposite page: 4B-5G-6Y-7R
4 December 2012.
this page: 1G-2Y-3R, 2Y-3R-4B, 3R-4B-5G
opposite page: 10Y-11R-1B
4 December 2012.
B-5G-6Y-7R 9G-10Y-11R, 1R-2B-3Y,
next page: 11R-1B-2G
4 December 2012.
3Y-4G-6R, 4G-6R-7B, 5Y-8G-10R
left: 2B-3Y-4G
4 December 2012.
7B-5Y-8G, 8G-10R-11B, 9Y-1G-2R-3B
next page: 6R-7B-5Y 10R-11B-9Y, 1B-9Y-1G
December 2012.

Louise, photo-etching. approx. 50 x 35 cms.
January 2013
Reading:

February 2013
Reading:
Bryant, L., Srnicek, N. and G. Harman (eds.) (2011) *The Speculative Turn*

March 2013.
*Gauthier*, photo-etching.
approx. 50 x 35 cms.
19 April 2013.

*Gauthier*, photo-etchings.

approx. 50 x 35 cms.
19 April 2013.
this page and next page:
Simon, photo-etching.
approx. 50 x 35 cms.
19 April 2013.

*Aria*, photo-etching.
approx. 50 x 35 cms.
September 2013  
Reading:  

October 2013  
Reading:  
### November 2013

**Reading:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title and Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vishmidt, M.</td>
<td>'(Hard) Core Human Capital of Toxic Asset: After the Wage' in <em>Reartikulacija</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baines, J.</td>
<td>(2010) 'Free Radicals' <em>Afterall Online</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vishmidt, M.</td>
<td>(2013) 'Permanent Reproductive Crisis: an Interview with Silvia Federici'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vishmidt, M. and Iles, A.</td>
<td>(2011) 'Make Whichever You Find Work', <em>Variant</em> no. 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussel, S.</td>
<td>(2013) 'Object Oriented Marxism'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan, B.,</td>
<td>(2009) &quot;Manifesto for Maintenance Art: A conversation with Mierle Laderman Ukeles&quot; <em>Art in America Magazine</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13 November 2013.  
Transparency for Christian photoetching.

January 2014.  
Christian photoetching.  
approx. 50 x 35 cms.
January 2014.

A Record of Unaddressed Activity,
solo exhibition, c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e, Brussels.
<www.c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e.com/assunta-ruocco-3/> 

Readings:

Meade, F. (2012) “Re-enchanted, 
Object-Oriented”, Spike 33 – 
Documenta 13
of Affect’, Cultural Critique 
n. 31
January 2014.

A Record of Unaddressed Activity,
solo exhibition, c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e, Brussels.
Installation views:
Aquatint Etchings 8G-10R-11B-9Y, 5Y-8G-10R, 10Y-11R-1B,
6Y-7R-8B-9G, 3R-4B-5G-6Y, 2012 – ongoing:
Vertical Studio, 2011 - ongoing
January 2014.

*A Record of Unaddressed Activity,*
solo exhibition, c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e, Brussels.
Installation views:
*Simon,* (2013) stack of photo-etchings on paper,
*Christian,* (2014) stack of photo-etchings
on paper, on found tables
February 2014

Reading:

_Heresies. A Feminist Publication on Art and Politics_, Issue 4


20 February 2014
Aquatints 3R-4B-5G-6Y, 1G-2Y-3R-4B, 2Y-3R-4B-5G
next page: 10Y-11R-1B-2G
20 February 2014

4B-5G-6Y-7R, 9G-10Y-11R-1B, 3Y-4G-6R.

opposite page: 7B-5Y-8G-10R
20 February 2014

R-7B-5Y-8G, 6Y-7R-8B-9G, 10R-11B-9Y
next page: 2B-3Y-4G-6R, 11B-9Y-1G-2R,
11R-1B-2G-3Y
20 February 2014

8B-9G-10Y, 8G-10R-11B-9Y
left page: 9Y-1G-2R
March 2014
Flyer for the Symposium Making Something from Nothing, which I organised in collaboration with the Politiced Practice Research Group at Loughborough University and Radar.

Symposium - Making Something from Nothing
Joss Baines, Andrea Buxton, Marie Park, Ciera Phillips, Jenny Richards (Manuel Labours), Assunta Fuscio and Marina Vishniac

Friday 7 March 2014, 11am - 5pm
LUA Project Space, Edward Barnsley Building, Loughborough University
£5 (includes lunch and all refreshments). Please book using the Online Store.

This symposium wants to address how some recent artistic practices seem to be interested in investigating the nature of labour, and artistic labour in particular, placing certain activities, such as printmaking and ceramics for example, in proximity to those Marx would have spoken of as 'reproductive labour', and also to what more recently has also been defined as 'affective labour'.

The title is borrowed from Lois Lippard’s famous text ‘Making Something from Nothing’ (1990), in which Lippard explored some of the contradictions facing the increasing numbers of women involved in ‘artistic’ labour in the period for many women artists, the ‘reproductive’ labour which they were already performing in the home had a direct correlation with their artistic activities.

In the context of post-Fordism, and with the de-skilling, precarization and feminization of labour, there is an urgent need to reconsider the question of reproduction in relation to ‘making’. In recent times, artists have been re-engaging with craft-based activities such as print-making and pottery. A resurgence in participatory and community-based work has generated critiques and debates around value production within the art system. This symposium seeks to engage with these debates and address some of specific questions about the status of objects generated through these activities.

The symposium is part of a programme of activity organized by Loughborough School of the Arts Politiced Practice Research Group around the theme of value http://www.politicized-practice.org/value/value and a related series of commissions by Radar.

For more information and booking visit www.arts.lboro.ac.uk/plateau

Loughborough University Arts

Radar
14 June 2014.
*In Conversation*, group exhibition, Touchstones Rochdale, curated by Sophia Crilly, Bureau. Artists: Jacob Cartwright, Daniel Fogarty, Mary Griffiths, Mark Kennard, Tim Machin, Assunta Ruocco, Evangelia Spiliopoulou

Readings:

14 June 2014.
*In Conversation*, installation view and detail with
*Aquatint Etchings.*
7 July 2014.
Transparency for Tom photo-etching.
Approx. 50 x 35 cms.
10 September 2014.

_Thomphotoetchings_

Readings:
Williams A. and N. Smicek (2013) ‘#Accelerate Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics’ in Critical Legal Thinking
12 September 2014
Aquatints 1G-2Y-3R-4B-5G, 2Y-3R-4B-5G, 3R-4B-5G-6Y-7R
next page: 5G-6Y-7R-8B-9G
12 September 2014
7R-8B-9G-10Y-11R, 6Y-7R-8B-9G-10Y, 9G-10Y-11R-1B-2G
opposite page: 10Y-11R-1B-2G
12 September 2014
4G-6R-7B-5Y-8G, 11R-1B-2G-3Y-4R, 1R-2B-3Y-4G
next page: 2B-3Y-4G-6R-7B
12 September 2014
10R-11B-9Y-1G-2R, 7B-5Y-8G-10R-11B, 5Y-8G-10R-11B
next page: 6R-7B-5Y-8G-10R-11B, 9Y-1G-2R-3B-4Y
26 September 2014
Aquatint Etchings at Manchester Contemporary Art Fair, presented by Bureau
29 October 2014.
more attempts at making Tom photoetching.

Reading:
November 2014.

Readings:
Latour, B. (2005) Reassembling the Social
Berardi, F. (2009) Soul at Work. From Alienation to Autonomy
**19 November 2014.**

*Tom* photoetching
overwritten with drypoint
marks.

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**December 2014**

Reading:


on Simon Hantaï’s *Etude, 1969*’ in *Artforum* Vol.51 no.2

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**17 January 2015.**

*opposite page:*

*Group Work* at *c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e*, Brussels, collaborative
installation in preparation for *Heterarchical Archipelago*,
booth presentation Art Brussels 2015

Participating artists Olivia Dunbar, Ninar Esber, Hamza Hal-
loubi, Emmanuelle Lainé, Assunta Ruocco, Kato Six.

Images courtesy of *c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e*, Brussels.
24 April 2015.

*Heterarchical Archipelago, c-o-m-p-o-s-i-t-e booth presentation Art Brussels 2015.*

Installation views

Participating artists: Olivia Dunbar, Ninar Esber, Hamza Hal-loubi, Emmanuelle Lainé, Assunta Ruocco, Kato Six, Anna Barham
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tarde, G., (2012) <em>Monadology and Sociology</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in <em>Inflexions</em>, 1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tarde, G., (2012) <em>Monadology and Sociology</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
July 2015
Reading:
Tarde, G., (2012) Monadology and Sociology
Latour, B. (2005) Reassembling the Social
July 2015

Reading:
Berardi, F. (2009) Soul at Work. From Alienation to Autonomy
Baudrillard, J. (1975) The Mirror of Production
10 July 2015.
Studio at Rogue, Manchester

August 2015
Reading:
Williams A. and N. Srnicek (2013) ‘#Accelerate Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics’ in Critical Legal Thinking
17 October 2015.
Aquatint Etchings at
Rogue Open Studios,
chosen by Mark Kennard

30 October 2015.
This page and next page: installation view of Vertical Studio, group exhibition Manchester Pavilion, curated by Bureau, North Festival, Warrington.
Artists: Matthew Denniss, Mark Levene, Aaron Rawcliffe, Assunta Ruocco
Images courtesy of Bureau
June 2016

Reading:
Noys, B. (2011) ‘The Discreet Charm of Bruno Latour, or the critique of ‘anti-critique’

Williams A. and N. Srnicek (2013) ‘#Accelerate Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics’ in Critical Legal Thinking

September 2016

Reading:
Buren (1971) The Function of the Studio’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Reading Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2 April 2017. 
*Aquatint Etchings and stack of Photoetchings in Mark Kennard’s studio at Rogue, Manchester.*
### May 2017

**Reading:**
Tarde, G., (2012)  
Monadology and Sociology  
(Melbourne: re-press)

### June 2017

**Reading:**
‘Excerpts from sidekick’  
in *Journal of Visual Art Art Practice* vol. 2 no. 1-2 108

### August 2017

**Reading:**

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27 May 2017.  
*Vertical Studio* at 140 Horton Road, Manchester.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 2017</th>
<th>October 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reading:</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>November 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirkell, P. (2005) <em>From the Green Box to Typo/Topography: Duchamp and Hamilton’s Dialogue in Print</em>, <em>Tate Papers, no. 3</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barad (2007) <em>Meeting the Universe Halfway</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lippard, L., and J. Chandler (1968) <em>The Dematerialization of Art</em>, in <em>Art International February 1968</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simondon, G. (2005) <em>L’individuation a la lumière de la notion de forme et information</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simondon, G. (1958) <em>Du Mode d’Existence des Objets Techniques</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
February 2018

Aquatint Etchings and plates in the printmaking workshop.

Reading:
March 2018
Reading:
Heidegger M. (1977) The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays
Simondon, G. (2005) L’individuation a la lumière de la notion de forme et information

April 2018
Reading:
Simondon, G. (2005) L’individuation a la lumière de la notion de forme et information
### May 2018

**Reading:**
  (Documents of Contemporary Art)
- Simondon, G. (2005) *L’individuation à la lumière de la notion de forme et information*
- Barad (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway*
- Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*
- B. O’Donohoe, ‘Living with Mother: Sartre and the Problem of Maternity’, *Sens Public*
**May 2018**

**Reading:**


Wark, M. (2014) ‘#accelerate and Inertia, Public Seminar’


Clark, A. (2008) “Where Brain, Body and World Collide”, in


Lefebvre, H. (1991) The Production of Space

### June 2018
Reading:
- Parikka, J. (2015) *A Geology of Media*
- Noys, B. (2011) ‘The Discreet Charm of Bruno Latour, or the critique of ‘anti-critique’”
- De Duve, T. (1991) *Pictorial Nominalism. On Marcel Duchamp’s Passage from Painting to the Readymade*
- Federici, S., (2012) *Revolution at Point Zero*
- *Duchamp’s Passage from Painting to the Readymade*
- Federici, S., (2012) *Revolution at Point Zero*

### July 2018
Reading:
August 2018
Reading:
Witzgall, S., and K. Stakemeier, eds. (2014) *Power of Material/Politics of Materiality*
Barad (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway*
*Cultural Studies Review* 21

September 2018
Reading:
Filipovic, E. (2009) ’A Museum That is Not’ E-flux journal #4
Lippard, L., and J. Chandler (1968) ’The Dematerialization of Art’, in *Art International February 1968*
September 2018

Reading:

Aquatint Etchings 2-3Y-4G-6R-7B-5Y, 2-4G-6R-7B-5Y-8G-10R
opposite page: 1-9G-10Y-11R-1B-2G-3Y
September 2018
this page: 1-5G-6Y-7R-88-9G-10Y, 2-2B-3Y-
4G-6R-7B-5Y, 2-7B-5Y-8G-10R-11B-9Y
previous page: 1-8B-9G-10Y-11R-1B-2G-3Y
September 2014
this page: 1-7R-8B-9G-10Y-11R-1B, 1-10Y-11R-1B-2G-3Y, 1-4B-5G-6Y-7R-8B-9G-10Y
opposite page: 2-5Y-8G-10R-11B-9Y
September 2014
this page: 2-11B-9Y-1G-2R-3B, 1 1-1G-2Y-3R-4B-5G-6Y-7R, 1-2Y-3R-4B-5G-6Y-7R
opposite page: 2-8G-10R-11B-9Y-1G
September 2014
this page: 1-11R-1B-2G-3Y-4R-5B, 1-6Y-7R-8B-9G-10Y-11R, 2-6R-7B-5Y-8G-10R-11B-9Y
opposite page: 2-10R-11B-9Y-1G-2R-3B
following page: 2-1R-2B-3Y-4G-6R
Bibliography


Berardi, F. (2009) Soul at Work. From Alienation to Autonomy (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e))


Duchamp, M. (1975) *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames and Hudson)


Vishmidt, M. (2012) *Speculation as a Mode of Production in Art and Capital.* Unpublished Thesis (PhD) Queen Mary University of London


Articles and essays


Baines, J (2012). ‘Experiments in Democratic Participation: Feminist Printshop Collectives’ Cultural Policy, Criticism and Management Research 6 29-95


Parikka, J., and G. Hertz (2012) Zombie Media: Circuit Bending Media Archaeology into an Art Method’ *Leonardo, Volume 45, Number 5*


Cohen, N. and De Peuter, ‘W.A.G.E.’s fight for artist fees’ Frieze Issue 170 April 2015


Thirkell, P. (2005) ‘From the Green Box to Typo/Topography: Duchamp and Hamilton’s Dialogue in Print’, Tate Papers, no.3, Spring 2005


Wark, M. (2014) ‘#accelerate and Inertia, Public Seminar’, available


