

PRACTICE BEYOND BOUNDARIES

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge that this paper was developed across the complicated positions of England (London and Norwich) and Naarm¹ (specifically Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Boon Wurrung), which amplifies our awareness of our white settler privilege. On these lands, we spent many years growing and learning, benefiting from, and being sustained by the Kulin Nations custodianship of lands and waters. As two women with European heritage, we agree with Clare Land (2015, p. 215) that “We are part of the system, we are the system, we are colonialism”, and we recognise that “we act from within the social relations and subject positions we seek to change” (Land, 2015, p. 38). We acknowledge that the traditional owners have never ceded their sovereignty, and we pay our respects to peoples and elders, past, present, and emerging. For Eso-Dia- the process of decolonising our thinking and practices is an ongoing task that, despite our invariable stumbles, we continue to try to move towards.

PRACTICE BEYOND BOUNDARIES

The Impact 12 Conference asked us to consider how print practitioners have been breaking boundaries through technological innovation and cross-disciplinary practice. What new territories have been unearthed through contesting the field and its proximal position to others? In our earliest conversations about these questions, we realised they were predicated on the assumption that breaking boundaries is good, because it allows artists to pursue the new or unconventional. It also supposes that disciplinary progress will require an act of breaking, perhaps a rupture, transgression, or breaching. The notion of breaking boundaries also implies that we exist in a state of disciplinary limitations. Why is it that artists (including us at times) feel compelled to transgress boundaries and reshape the field? Finally, where do we locate the value of practice: Is it as they say ‘on the cutting edge’, or can value be oriented another way?

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have become preoccupied with the production and fortification of boundaries on a personal, community, and global scale. This paper was born from our realisation that the pandemic has amplified, redrafted, and problematised notions of the boundary in the collective imagination. This moment called us—two artists reaching across a disciplinary divide—to question the nature of boundaries and their implications. Our desire to critically assess the value of boundary making and breaking led us to our thesis: *Is there another way to approach disciplinarity without theorising boundaries, territories, and their rupture? Might we encounter this through a return to practice?*

THE TYRANNY OF THE EDGE

Boundaries in Western contemporary art practice are often conceived as distinctions between materials, technical conventions, and discursive traditions. Kalina (2021, p.1) called boundaries the organising principles of art, including its structured “forms and formulations” and its “classifying rubrics”, such as art movements and lineages. However, what appears to take centre stage in conversations on disciplinarity is the notion of crossing the edge. Indeed, cross- and inter-disciplinarity have become contemporary ideals (Pyś, 2020). Artists speak of unshackling their practice from the history of specialisms, “forging new frontiers” and “test[ing] existing disciplinary limits” (Wolmark and Gates-Stuart, 2004, p. 1). It is considered productive to occupy multiple disciplinary positions—and work across media—to effectively enlarge or re-draw the territory of possible creative action.

Trans-, cross-, and inter-disciplinarity remain contested obsessions in contemporary art, often traced back to Rosalind Krauss’s writings on *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979). When Krauss adopted the term *expanded field*, she sought to reclassify the huge range of artistic practices that were understood as sculpture at the time. Krauss (cited in Papapetros and Rose, 2014, p. 3) calls her

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efforts “a tirade against pluralism”, which she thought had left sculpture to cover such a breadth of approaches as to become “in danger of collapsing” (Krauss, 1979, p. 33). Her polemic was designed to recover sculpture as an unambiguous discipline, and to give rise to a range of new categorical possibilities.²

The *expanded field* as a term has since been co-opted by artists to describe the progressive expansion of disciplinary limits. The ubiquitous ideal of the expanded field now stands in for all kinds of disciplinary progress in contemporary art discourse. This has resulted in an extensive series of expansions, from printmaking (Schmedling, 2017; Weisberg, 1993) to architecture (Vidler, 2004), painting (Fares, 2004), photography (Baker, 2005), literature, blackness, crochet, androids (Papapetros and Rose, 2014), and even to the gaze in the expanded field (Bryson, 1988). Notions of expanded practice seem to have “cast a spell” (Meltzer, 2016, p. 125) over fine art discourse. A similar enchantment is cast through the formulations of *inter-*, *cross-*, and *trans-*disciplinarity, which all use a prefix to imply an action *through* or *between* spatial territories. Now, simply locating a practice at the privileged edge of a discipline, or in the territory beyond it, is apparently sufficient to generate value.

LINES ON A MAP

In exploring the obsession with expansion, and the traversing of disciplinary limits in art, we came to realise that the language we use to address and redress disciplinarity is spatialised. Outside of art, conceptions of disciplinarity frequently employ terms such as *domain*, *field* (Darden and Maull, 1977), and *realm* (Phenix, 1964). As Tony Becher put it, we often discuss disciplinarity with reference to “landscapes, and ... spatial metaphors: fields and frontiers; pioneering, exploration, false trails, charts, and landmarks” (2001, p. 58). Equally, in art, terms including *terrain*, *territory*, *position*, *space*, and *locatedness* are frequently reinforced. The implication is that a continuous cartographic landscape exists, where all artistic disciplines share borders, some permeable and others more bounded and contested. These borders seem to be endowed with limitless flexibility: artists might straddle the border between an infinite number of opportunistically arranged disciplines (painting and sculpture, sculpture and video, etc), hover above the entire shared landmass, or enjoy a moment of privileged fence sitting. Much time and effort has been expended by artists (including us) to locate and orient themselves in this shared terrain of artistic production. But an imperialist sleight of hand occurs here: as artists, we are required to take ourselves out of our lived experience, and locate our practice *on* an abstract map.

During our discussions when writing this paper, it seemed almost impossible to discuss disciplinarity without some reference to borders. We found ourselves repeatedly slipping into language that employed spatial terms: phrases such as “broadening our approach”, “questioning the limits”, and “working at the edge” or “in the in-between” tumbled all too easily from our lips. Eventually, the issue became too big to ignore. We began to wonder whether this cartographic rhetoric enacted

² Krauss's essay is based heavily on structuralism, and uses binary oppositions between architecture and not-architecture, landscape and not-landscape. This is done, as Bois (224, p. 480) observed, in order to perform a “necessary closure of the field it constructs in order to articulate it”.

gestures of territorialisation. For example, to occupy the hallowed ground of artistic practice, do artists unconsciously assume some kind of colonial position as the explorer, the settler, or the pioneer? Does subscribing to a territorial approach inadvertently engage hierarchical and oppositional thinking, which might be at odds with efforts to decolonise the arts? Through the use of language with imperialist overtones, are we at risk of assuming a colonising voice with every utterance?

IMPERIALIST CARTOGRAPHIES

The connection between Western cartography and imperialism has been acknowledged in recent discourse. James Ackerman (2009, p. 12) believed that the ideas of “empire” and “map” have developed in relation to one another, and the collective authors of *Decolonizing the Map: Recentering Indigenous Mappings* suggested that:

“[a]s a political technology, mapping has long played a key role in the world-making practices of colonialism through the appropriation, demarcation, naming, and partitioning of territory as part of the process of colonization and the assertion of imperial rule over peoples and places.” (Rose-Redwood et al., 2020, p. 152)

From Ackerman’s (2009, p. 1) Western perspective, the use of maps to extend the empire began in the modern era “to assert and consolidate mastery over populations or landscape at a distance”.³ Extending on this, some cartographic tendencies reflect “what Foucault has defined as acts of ‘surveillance’, notably those connected with warfare, political propaganda, boundary making, or the preservation of law and order.” (Henderson and Waterstone 2009, p. 130). Drawing a line on a map is not benign; it can be used to enact violence and exclusion.

If we think of art as a landscape of territories that can be crossed and colonised where we divide and name terrain, we may marginalise some people and practices.⁴ While the notion of art as a landscape might appear to permit a wide range of possibilities, any form of categorisation is reliant on exclusion. On the map called Contemporary Art, many practices and practitioners are not recognised; consider, for example, the hobbyist, the student, or the artisan maker. As Bruce Metcalf (1993, p. 40) wrote, “Art has its own rules, and its own language, which make implicit claims to dominance ... over all other codes. If you want to join the club, you have to speak, act, and think like the club members.” Artists’ agency may depend on their ability to use the right language to argue for their practice.

But are there more disturbing exclusions? When a colonial system encounters differences (from the Western sovereign subject), it is inclined to sequester people and practices. Ian McLean (2013, p. 173), for example, said that although indigenous art might occasionally enjoy a relatively high profile in Australia, it “is on the condition that it is indigenous art ... rather than contemporary art”. Australian Kimilaroi artist Richard Bell adds that traditional Aboriginal artworks are more

³ Ackerman (2009) cites the Roman to signal the rise of the modern state.

⁴ The language of territorialisation celebrates extending, crossing, and breaking with potentially tokenistic regard for the territory being expanded into. It may also devalue individual fields as past forms of knowledge, taking up the Western ideals of progress and newness.

readily accepted because they “take on the notion of primitivism, and hence, racial superiority” (cited in Gardham, 2021, unpaginated).⁵ In this case, the Australian indigenous artist is expected to occupy a specific territory born out of racist and imperialist attitudes designed to confine them.

Even if your practice is recognised on the map of art, the topography is not flat, so you may find yourself in a dark valley or raised atop a hill. The terrain reflects hierarchies upheld since the Renaissance that have located painting at a privileged vantage point, while jewellery and printmaking occupy the lower plains.⁶ The topography has shifted over time, meaning that newer forms, such as video or immersive installation, now take the high ground. Therefore, it is all the better if one can occupy multiple technical and discursive spaces.

The impulse to divide and demarcate is entrenched not only in contemporary art practice, but also in the academy and its ideas of disciplinarity. Archille Mbembe (2016) astutely unravelled the many ways in which the university is colonised through rigid interpretive frames and systems of standardisation, authoritative control, monitoring, and classification. It is a sobering read that brings home just how dispossessed academics and students are by the bureaucratic regime, and how non-Western knowledge traditions continue to be marginalised. Zoe Todd (2016, p.12) meaningfully expanded on the privilege afforded to white scholarship “that distorts or erases or homogenises distinct Indigenous voices”.

OTHER IMAGININGS...

Retracing the lines around the homeland of art underscored to us the need to find another way to speak and enact relations between disciplines. We were drawn back to Mbembe’s thoughts on the problems of classification, and the need to question the colonial divisions between fields. He observes that decolonising the university “involves the radical *refounding* of our ways of thinking and a transcendence of our disciplinary divisions” (Mbembe, 2016, p. 37, emphasis in original). While it might seem that Mbembe was advocating for transdisciplinarity (a concept that many define as transcending disciplinary divisions),⁷ the implications of Mbembe’s insights are much deeper. Among many important arguments, he suggested that we must be open to epistemic diversity, question dualisms, radically share, care, and de-centre the human from our thinking. These are propositions beyond boundaries. We cannot claim to be taking up Mbembe’s challenge to decolonise the university in this paper, but his thinking nurtures our desire to engage in discipline outside of the Western systems that divide and demarcate.

If traces of imperialism can be found in the rhetoric of *boundaries*, we began to wonder whether notions including *compression*, *condensation*, *mushrooming*, *proliferating*, or *knitting* together could help us re-imagine discipline. As we toyed with notions of rhizomes, weather systems, and ecologies, we realised the most compelling metaphors for us were those that, paradoxically, enabled us to focus inward to practice,

⁵ Bell cites Emily Kame Knagwarre as an example (quoted in Gardham, 2021, unpaginated).

⁶ The cartographic language, and implied map, reflect the embedded hierarchical structures and dominant bias that Western artistic production inherited in the Renaissance. Barker, Web and Wood (1999, p.17) traced the development of the art academy under the cultural rise of Humanism resulting in the privileging of some disciplines over others.

⁷ Transdisciplinarity is often conceived as a transcending of disciplinary boundaries (Rodgers and Bremner 2011). We argue that the idea of transdisciplinarity remains reliant on a cartographic understanding of disciplinarity, and the boundaries that are declared to be in need of transcending. Petts, Owens and Bulkeley (2008, p. 597), for example, observed that transcending disciplinary boundaries simply results in “redrawing the disciplinary map”.

not to gaze outwards towards a disciplinary boundary. We started to reimagine discipline as a form of gestating, attuning, bonding, or tending.

We wanted to find a way to talk about practice as being generated from within an intimate understanding and connectedness within practice, driven by the qualities of the practice and its subjects rather than by the discipline or medium. This is surely what contemporary artists do. They follow concerns and materials, not disciplinary agendas. This is not to say that discipline is problematic. In our experience as practitioners, we have encountered discipline not just through the structures of the academy, but also through processes of intimate knowledge sharing and the embodied experiences of making. For both of us, making is a part of our being, expressed outwardly through the act of practice. Our making is not held in a vast disciplinary space but in an intimate proximity. Through the two vignettes below, we explore moments from the practice of each author and seek to locate and value *practice from the inside*.

RENEE'S VIGNETTE⁸

When I was a child, my father constantly proclaimed the benefits of learning a specialised field. 'It is something that no one can ever take away from you!' He would announce:

*They can cut off my legs, and I'll still be a chemist.
They can cut off my arms, and I'll still be a chemist.*
(Ernest Ugazio, circa 1986)

Who the violent 'they' were I will never know, but it is clear he felt his very being had been irrevocably changed through his education and practice in chemistry. I look back now on more than 15 years of jewellery practice and I too can feel a part of me permanently transformed—indelibly inscribed with a *jewellery-ness*.

I feel my jewellery-ness all of the time. It is why I find myself running my fingers along the ridges of cutlery, pages, and door handles, searching for imperfections and scanning the edges and seams. When my hands are not busy, my mind contemplates minute aspects of every surface, corner, form, and join. These innate actions and thoughts are not because I made jewellery yesterday or last week. While my jewellery-ness may have come about through an applied practice in jewellery, it is now something of my own. My very being is imbued with my sense of jewellery-ness now, not the other way around. It now resides in me—it is a sensibility. Jewellery-ness is in my being, born from tacit knowledge—creating a way of seeing, handling, and, as Richard Sennett (2009) suggests, a method of engagement and problem solving. Moreover, it is a way of encountering the world. In 2009, a curious question emerged:

*What can I do with this jewellery-ness?
What would happen if I focused on these compulsions, and took away the imperative of making jewellery artefacts?*

⁸ This text is adapted and reimagined from the dissertation 'Shifting Sites' (Ugazio, 2016).

These questions shifted my focus from what I was making to what happens when I make? I started the research project *Shifting Sites* (2009—2016) with a hunch. Through exploring the ‘actions’ of practice, I developed an interest in the relationships that are implied within them.

I planned to dive into the specificity of a range of processes compelled by unpicking what was at play in processes such as soldering, quenching, annealing, burnishing, and raising. The first processes I committed to sustained a 13-year enquiry – the interdependent processes of sanding, filing, and polishing. This shift in practice gave me free rein to follow the impulses of my hands and eyes, to find, rest on, and attend to sites I encountered every day outside of the studio. More and more, when traversing urban environments and the city, I could feel the impulse of my embodied discipline to rub up against the well-worn metal bones of the city. The brass, steel, and copper of the city called to me.

This move onto the street caused me to speculate that the agency that emerged in me through my jewellery-ness was also encountering other agencies and influences.⁹ Juhani Pallasmaa (2005, p.69) claimed, “We are in constant ... interaction with the environment, to the degree that it is impossible to detach the image of the Self from its spatial and situational existence.” I could feel my inseparability from my environment.¹⁰ The hierarchy between myself as the maker, and the thing I was acting upon, engaging with, and amid, fell away. I could feel myself working amid situations, a collaboration of their potential and mine. I began to feel situations as sites of experience and material engagement.¹¹ I became aware of other forces pushing and pulling me, weather systems, temperature shifts, bugs changing course, and the sounds blurring and bouncing off buildings. I feel the tool at the surface I attend to, and amid all this, this simple gesture, its material relations, also comes into contact with an ecology of ideas, with material, cultural, social, and political implications. This is a site of provocation.

This struck me most acutely when working in Nocelle, Italy, in 2013. Encountering materials along the Path of the Gods—the only way in or out of this remote community—it was hard not to feel all aspects of the situation acutely. Wood handrails wore the touch of a thousand hands, stone steps held the memory of the resilience of the community, the trees and shrubs clinging to the hillside kept the cliff face in place, and the sea air carved and caressed the landscape. The cliffs in return affected the weather of the ocean. Cool clear days rolled into thunderous nights. Each morning, the earth was blanketed in hail. Made of the atmosphere of the place, the hail called to me.

I filed and sanded hailstones. Sometimes they melted immediately on contact until my hands and tools absorbed the cold, and sometimes they allowed facets to be carved. Each day, all traces of our interactions evaporated into the atmosphere. Each morning brought more hail—new temporarily and situationally sensitive collaborators—allowing me to make, not with an inert material, but *with* and *within* the complexity of the atmosphere: a connected conception of making.



Figure 1



Figure 2

⁹ Initially I was inspired by Jane Bennett (2010, p. 56), who suggested that “artisans ... encounter a creative materiality with incipient tendencies and propensities, which are variably enacted depending on the other forces, affects, or bodies with which they come into close contact”.

¹⁰ I now find myself listening and learning from Indigenous Materialism, where the wisdom and agency of things are not dependent on the rejection of humanist ideals (as in New Materialism) when de-centering human essentialism (Ravencroft, 2018). Carpentaria by Alexis Wright (2006) is compelling in its description of elements such as weather and water systems, that have agency and knowledge, and are powerful and unbounded by time.

¹¹ ‘Situation’ as a useful term was conceived under the influence of my experience of working out amid the world. It was also informed by Mi Won Kwon’s (2004) insights on political, social, and gendered discourses that emerge in works produced on site and Claire Doherty’s (2009) framing of situation-specific under the influence of Terry Smith’s contemporaneity.

Figure 2: Renée Ugazio, Nocelle, 2013 (process images), digital image, variable dimensions. Photography by Kate Mollison.

This collaboration was generative for practice, allowing me to think through my participation as both futile and generative. Through repetition, a critique of the futility of the gesture amid this situation emerged. Western knowledge suggests that to fail once is a lesson learned, or that failure is a path to success—fail, try again, succeed. Yet on the cliff face, there was only *fail, fail, and fail* again. However, it was through the very loop of failure that my conception of the situation and the potency of my atmospheric collaborator could come to the fore.¹²

This collaboration also made me aware that the activity of filing was a means to apply a slow and subtle irritation to a surface to see what it compels in that material—but also, what it compelled in me. This subtle irritation echoed the rub I saw in practice, rubbing up against my discipline of origin. This is a playful awareness, a subtle and productive irritation that draws attention to itself and, in doing so, reveals new potential for jewellery practice.

CLARE'S VIGNETTE¹³

I recall walking through my sister-in-law's home in October 2011 when she was receiving palliative care for terminal cancer. As I wandered from room to room, I noticed the everyday belongings that she would soon leave behind: novels she was reading, her gold watch, and a porcelain figurine. I felt acutely aware of what her belongings would come to mean after she passed away, but on that day in October, they had not yet begun to transition from everyday into ensouled¹⁴ objects. They were still entangled in life. It was not until my sister-in-law died that her belongings underwent an alchemic transformation from commonplace objects into spectral presences.

I began looking at other personal objects that had been left behind by the dead, including tools, cutlery, photographs, and clothing—stuff I found in drawers and boxes. Ordinary belongings, never intended to take on existential significance, but somehow, they had become auratic¹⁵ because the deceased had once held them in the palm of their hands.

My impulse was to hold them. And as I did so, I became increasingly aware of signs of use on their surfaces, as though the person who had handled each object had been embalmed within the metal, cloth, or wood. I became mindful of the hands that once touched the items, and noticed the blemishes of use: stains on textiles; old photographs with hand-scrawled notes and sellotape residue; a golden patina inside a silver teapot from a morning's cup of tea.

I found myself folding and unfolding cloths, leafing through photographs, turning over silverware and putting on gloves that did not quite fit, replicating a choreography of gestures that the deceased must have once performed. I moved my fingers and eyes across the outer membranes of glasses, jewellery, and boxes, hoping that if I stayed close to the surface I might trace connections between the skin of the object and the person who used it. And, as I did, it was as though a delayed touch was passing between the living and the dead.

¹² For further reading, Christy Lange (2010) extended on the artistic potentials of failure in 'Bound to Fail: Open Systems-1'.

¹³ This text is adapted and reimagined from the dissertation 'Material Remains' (Humphries, 2015).

¹⁴ Nelson and Stolterman (2003) used this term to describe objects that create binding connections with people from the past.

¹⁵ I thought of aura as being more than great value, and departed from the widely held understanding of a Benjaminian aura. Rather, it seems that aura may develop wherever seemingly dialectical notions are brought together in productive contradiction, such as when touch and loss co-exist, and presence and absence coalesce.

Figure 2:

Contemplating my tactile connection to these personal objects, I wondered how to foreground touch in the making and apprehension of my work. My thoughts turned to the way I physically inhabit the ecosystem of making a print, and the strange dialectic of intimacy and isolation that I experience within it. Ever since I produced my first print, I have been fascinated by printmaking as a practice of hidden touch. I spend hours maintaining intense physical contact with the printing plate as I carve an image; I then stand back and witness the detached, momentary, and mechanical contact between paper and plate as they pass through the press. They connect in an “embrace ... one body pressed against the other” (Rothenstein cited in Weisberg, 1986, p. 58), yet my own body is kept at arm’s length.



Figure 3

From my early explorations of print, I have remained mindful that the artist’s hand usually keeps close contact with the matrix, but is isolated and therefore absent from the final work. In analogue print, it is the matrix, rather than the paper, that is engraved, scored, submerged, sanded, drawn onto, and burnished by hand. This separation between the artist’s body and the image support describes a meaningful structure that print tradition brings with it (Reeves, 2018), a structure that led Ruth Weisberg (1986) to claim indirection and displacement are the hallmarks of printmaking.¹⁶ Kathryn Reeves (2018, p. 73) added that printmaking tends to avoid infringement into what she calls the “territory” of painting, and in doing so fails to recognise the desire to invoke the body, via the hand, in the print.

The apparent denial of touch in printmaking could have set the scene for me to want to move beyond print in search of more overtly autographic or gestural modes for this project. But instead, I felt compelled to move more deeply into printmaking, to unearth the touch it feeds off in the background and bring it to the fore of my experience.

Since I strongly identified with the hand gestures that are usually reserved for the printing plate, I began to explore ways to transfer them to the paper. I developed multi-layered relief prints, each depicting a post-mortem object, and then buried them under printed veils of black ink. While this shroud of ink was still wet, I tried to recover the objects again through an act of unearthing. I wiped the wet ink from the print as I might from an etching plate, I used deletion hones as though the paper were a lithographic stone, I sanded the paper like a woodblock, and I stippled the surface with pigment, *a la poupée*, as though on a copper matrix.

The method of *burial* and *exhumation* brought the original images back into the light after their submersion under black ink, granting each depicted object a new, metaphoric existence after death. The actions of burial and exhumation also became a reenactment of loss and recovery for me, in which I recreated the absence of the person who once touched the object (the moment when the image is buried under ink), and then re-encountered their ghostly presence (as I unearthed the image again into a changed form, through my touch).¹⁷

At the same time, the surface I produced functioned as a membrane

¹⁶ It is worthy of note that the notion of a distance between hand and paper is not an inalienable or absolute separation, and direct interventions into and onto the paper are not unfamiliar in printmaking.
¹⁷ Myths of resurrection often call on the power of touch. The New Testament describes Jesus bringing the daughter of Jairus back to life by taking her hand and commanding her to get up. In a lesser-known story, Apollonius of Tyana is said to have raised a girl from the dead on her burial day by touching her and whispering a secret spell. My attempts at exhumation are also set in motion through skin-to-skin contact.

Figure 3: Clare Humphries, studio progress shots. Photography by Matthew Stanton and Brenek Kozka.

that registered the performance of my hands as I sought to recreate and re-experience the worn surfaces of objects. By relocating gestures from the matrix to the support, each action sensitised the print with the feeling of the hand, inviting the viewer into contact with the visceral effects of my touch. In looking, one may even experience texture from the inside of their bodies as they see the worn surfaces of cups, cloths, and kettles, and remember how glass, cotton, and metal feel under their fingertips.¹⁸ The prints might therefore allow a range of intimate encounters: with the bodily memory of objects, with my body that has sensitised the surface, and even with my embodied re-encounters with the hands of the deceased.



Figure 4

In sharing our vignettes with each another, sensations of practice took root in our conversations. *Experience, encounter, and intimacy* seemed pivotal in our respective stories. We saw, in the other, a sense of solidarity with methods and tools that allowed us to work collaboratively with them, and *off* the disciplinary script. Renée invited gestures of jewellery-making to reside in her body, and find expression with the materialities at hand. She began responding to the call of the act (to file, to attune), and the particularities of the situation, rather than the obligation of the task (to make jewellery). An interchange between artist, method, and situation took place, like a conversation between friends who were ready to share and ‘make in the world’ with each other. Clare’s ‘conversation with process’ seemed to involve an attentiveness to what was speaking quietly in print: touch. She befriended this displaced presence, and invited it to step into the light. It was as though she imagined touch as a participant, a form of company she could keep, and someone to work with to invent possibilities.

FRIENDSHIP

We suspect that friendship contains possibilities for thinking about practice and discipline. Célline Condorelli (2013) talked about friendship in practice as a form of working together, and a solidarity that takes place between people, theories, materials, and things. Condorelli explored friendship as a *condition* and an *intent* that motivates action and emerges when people spend time together. In our experience, when we spend time in creative practice (for example, making a print or object), or with a material (such as ink or ice), we become aware of the particularity of our relationship with them. Practice is both an inner encounter with the self and a relation to the vibrant complexity within a given milieu—including all living and supposedly inert presences. So, ways of abrading surfaces, or wiping substances, are never just procedural; they also become personal as we develop familiarity with, and affection for, both material and process. Clare’s enduring affinity with print’s tactile potential was what compelled her to bring touch into the centre of making. She did not set out to challenge disciplinary conventions, but followed her unique rapport with the hand in printmaking. The familiarity of touching *with* print allowed her to play with material collaborators in unconventional ways. Touch became a particular method, a ritual, and a way to feel the presence of absent hands.

¹⁸ Refer, for example, to Merleau-Ponty’s proposition in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1969).

Figure 4: Clare Humphries, *I have never been able to bury her*, 2013 (details), hand-burnished and linocut print, 67 × 97 cm

Speaking of touch and affection could imply that friendship is an exclusively harmonious condition. Condorelli (2013) observed that in friendship, we care for, and are receptive to, being drawn by our companions; we allow them to teach us and help us understand ourselves better. Among friends, we might share perspectives, but we might equally encounter differences that call on us to listen. Hannah Arendt hinted at this when she wrote to her friend Mary McCarthy, "It's not that we think so much alike, but that we do this thinking-business for and with each other" (Arendt, cited in Condorelli, 2013, p. 67).

We can see affinities with Arendt's *thinking business*—or what we would call intelligence sharing—in Renée's encounters with ice, which produced a new way for her to contemplate her experience of making with and within the world. Her practice was sensitised not only through her inclinations and interests but also through her encounters with alternate presences. This is not an anthropomorphising of the other, but a valuing of, and seeking to meet and understand, the other intelligences with which we share the world. Each presence brought its own sensibilities and tendencies to the situation. For Clare, the bodily gestures of printmaking became an enlivening presence in her ecology of making. Wiping, burnishing, and wearing down, for example, were felt by her as material sensitivities, not as technical procedures, that shared forms of knowing with her.

RELATIONALITY

There are conceptions of friendship in historical discourse that are at risk of replicating the exclusions that a cartographic landscape may produce, marginalising people and practices.¹⁹ If friendship is based on who we are willing to recognise, or on what we feel comfortable with, then we risk freezing out everything and everyone else. Friendship can be exclusive and political. Therefore, some form of ethical responsibility seems necessary here.

This thought takes us to Dwayne Donald's concept of *ethical relationality*. He described this as "an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other ... [and] the other entities that inhabit the world" (Donald, 2012, p. 535).²⁰ We think here of Renée, amid the shrubs that clung to the Nocelle hillside, and the nightly bursts of hail. Renée was surrounded by forces that encountered her presence, making certain kinds of understanding of herself and practice possible. She came to experience a new relationship with the frozen rain as a co-creator. This, in turn, prompted Renée to reflect on the disciplinary knowledge systems she brings to making, and how they might position her in relation to materials and sites of practice.

Framing the relations of practice as bonds of friendship de-essentialises the Western approach to rational, goal-driven investigations in art. If making always involves encountering and negotiating with collaborators, its outcomes cannot be predetermined. Making is open to unexpected transformations and influences beyond the maker.

¹⁹ Condorelli (2013) noted that there is a small but rich philosophical discourse on friendship (in Aristotle, Montaigne, Derrida, and Blanchot) that takes a patriarchal position, which we wish to avoid.

²⁰ It is important to note that Donald's text addressed more significant concerns than those we have discussed. He examined a decolonising research sensibility called Indigenous Métissage that enquires into historic and current relations connecting Aboriginal peoples and Canadians in the place now called Canada" (2012, p. 533). We wonder whether his conception of relationality can also inform how we construct our disciplinary relations with one another, and how we relate within our making ecologies.

The practice of being open in friendship also resists the closing-off activity of boundary making. It allows one to not only use materials and processes to transform ideas, subjects, and disciplines, but also to experience materials and processes and to allow them to transform us. This union moves both ways in a dance of shaping and guiding.

CONCLUSION

This paper has suggested that cartographic conceptions of disciplinarity are at risk of reproducing colonial activity. If we see art as a landscape of frontiers to be crossed and colonised, we will marginalise people and practices through the way we divide and name the regions. So even though the idea of boundary-breaking practices appears to pursue new and progressive possibilities, it is reliant on categorisations that exclude.²¹ This impulse to demarcate is entombed within the word 'discipline' itself. *Disciplina* in "Latin is the double sense of knowledge (knowledge-system) and power (discipline of the child, military discipline)" (Hoskin and Macve, cited in Shumway and Messer-Davidow, 1991, p. 201). To find one's privileged place in a field, we must first be disciplined and subject to indoctrinated learning, and what Michel Foucault (1972, p.224) described as a "system of control in the production [and reproduction] of discourse". The conception and fortification of disciplinary boundaries may be unavoidable when imagined through these impulses to control, unify, and exclude.

However, discipline can be reappraised through another etymological interpretation that recognises the lived experience of the practitioner. Discipline also "derives from ... the Greek pedagogic term *didasko* (teach) and the Latin (*di*)*disco* (learn)" (Hoskin and Macve, cited in Shumway and Messer-Davidow, 1991, p. 201). As artists, when we learn and teach, we also listen and speak with our whole bodies. This holds for learning the material techniques of practice, and its theoretical and discursive contexts. For example, we developed our practices as we watched hands perform techniques, and were watched in turn by the keen eyes of other practitioners as we filed, polished, and drew. While these shared skills might bond us to others, as shared experiences often do, these teachings and learnings reside within us in the body. Our vignettes suggest that as we learn and practise technical processes, they transform us, and are held in the body as a latent sensibility. Discipline is found perhaps, in part, inside us. Our experience of discipline is also formed as we learn and teach with and from other living beings, lively materials, and forces. Does the copper plate or the file not teach us? If discipline can reside in the sensibilities of the artist, and be formed by those we work with, then perhaps discipline can emerge, inform, and operate in other ways too.

The more we try to pin down what discipline *is* and *how* we might language it, the more elusive it becomes. This underscores that thinking of discipline as a unified or cohesive *field* is absurd. It also makes room for us to consider a range of possibilities for conceiving and encountering discipline through practice. Practice, for us, includes acts of forming comradic bonds with ideas and experiences, as well as with living and seemingly inactive collaborators. So perhaps discipline

²¹ Also, the idea of breaking boundaries—paradoxically—requires the re-articulation of the borders it seeks to transgress. The dividing lines need to be read and understood in order to be problematised. Thus, boundary breaking becomes ensnared in the very structure it is hoping to overcome.

might reside where we encounter it. It could emerge in unexpected moments of collaboration with ideas or matter. Discipline could also be conceived as a residue (as in our embodied touch) that exists in a range of situations, histories, or ideas. Or maybe discipline can be conceived as material, where we might work with it, generating possibilities and productive oppositions. Through imagining these multiple ways of *encountering* discipline within the kindred relations of practice, practice is no longer required to locate itself *in, on, between, across, or above* a disciplinary landscape.

This paper is one attempt to find another way—or multiple ways—to approach disciplinarity without theorising boundaries, or territories and their rupture. Through seeking to encounter discipline where we experience it—in practice—we have come to recognise the potential of *friendship*. Friendship, for us, acknowledges what we have long felt in practice: that the work of practice is occurring *with* others, and *within* a making ecology. Enmeshed within this milieu, we form connections that are porous and open to change, as the bonds of friendship are known to be. Holding ourselves in friendship, and in constant and ethical relation to others, offers a de-centring of Western notions of authorship, and underscores co-production. If intimate bonds are allowed to develop with kindred collaborators, new possibilities for engaging in and producing creative work can emerge. Being open in friendship also resists the confining activity of boundary making. Thinking beyond boundaries, discipline could be something that an artist *encounters* and *retrieves* in practice, not a vast field into which they are subsumed. Discipline may then assume more varied and protean forms—as a material, residue, and sensibility. It might also be afforded renewed critical potential.

When we are compelled by fellowship as artists, we might flourish in the entanglements.

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Renée Ugazio is a Melbourne-based artist and scholar whose practice engages craft, spatial practice, and theory, informed by her practice of origin as a metalsmith. Renée has exhibited internationally, notably at the Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts (Taiwan) and the Galerie Marzee (Netherlands), and widely in commercial galleries and public venues across Australia. However, Renée also regularly exploits opportunities to undertake unauthorised projects in public spaces all over the world. Renée Ugazio holds a PhD from RMIT University and is currently a lecturer at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne.

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IMAGE GALLERY



Figure titles and information

Figure 1: Renée Ugazio, *Gesture of Time*, 2015, digital image, variable dimensions. Photography by Kate Mollison.

Figure 2: Renée Ugazio, *Nocelle*, 2013 (process images), digital image, variable dimensions. Photography by Kate Mollison.



Figure 3: Clare Humphries, studio progress shots. Photography by Matthew Stanton and Bronek Kozka.

Figure 4: Clare Humphries, I have never been able to bury her, 2013 (details), hand-burnished and linocut print, 67 × 97 cm