

Department of Fine Art

BA Project in Fine Art

Statement and Thesis

BA Project in Fine Art

Ieva Grigelionyte

Spring 2017

Department of Fine Art

Dry Language

The Attempt to Create a System

BA Project in Fine Art – Statement

Ieva Grigelionyte

Kt.: 060687-3829

Supervisors of BA Project: Bjarki Bragason, Carl Boutard,

Hekla Dögg Jónsdóttir

Supervisor of Statement: Jón Proppé

Spring 2017

Dry Language (Figures 1- 5) is a piece which is trying to be a system of communication based on the found script which consists of a collection of drying rack images. I invented this system to contemplate upon one of the most complicated structures - language. The beauty of it is how much we depend on a language and how little attention we have to pay to its use once we get proficient at it. You don't have to look far for a proof, most of us think in a way that follows the structure of language by composing mental sentences. But how much do we actually think about the structure itself? We could imagine similar scenario observing our own bodies how easy is to miss such a big processes like blood pumping or breathing. It comes naturally enough for us, we don't have to monitor any of our organs and we become aware of them in case of something going wrong. Almost same with language. The focus is most frequently on what certain word signifies or what concept it refers to than what form the word or signifier takes itself. Unless it's misspelled or in general we don't understand it. To talk about such a transparent idea of transition from abstract symbol to mental image that written language enables I chose the method of working backwards from the point of this invented script towards the meaning of the symbols. I have started by defining the symbols from found script as system and then sculpting them in order to learn them. In my research I have come across that severe dyslexic kids are taught alphabet by sculpting letters in clay. By creating the conceptual picture on a table top, with a clay model, and making the sound of the word, the person gains the ability to think with that word or symbol in both verbal and nonverbal modes. It seemed logical to use welding for my process since it has its delicate side of it, almost like stitching with a needle and thread or handwriting. Finally I have composed structures in the space so it would resemble text and fit into my idea of object choreography which is also written language of movement.

The process of creating the system of these symbols was highly influenced by my interest in mundane environment that everyone could relate to. My long lasting obsession to collect things has taken me to appreciate unexpected objects that are odd on their own, but also the ones that gain the same oddity when put together in big numbers. I particularly enjoy the ones that are not registered as designed objects per

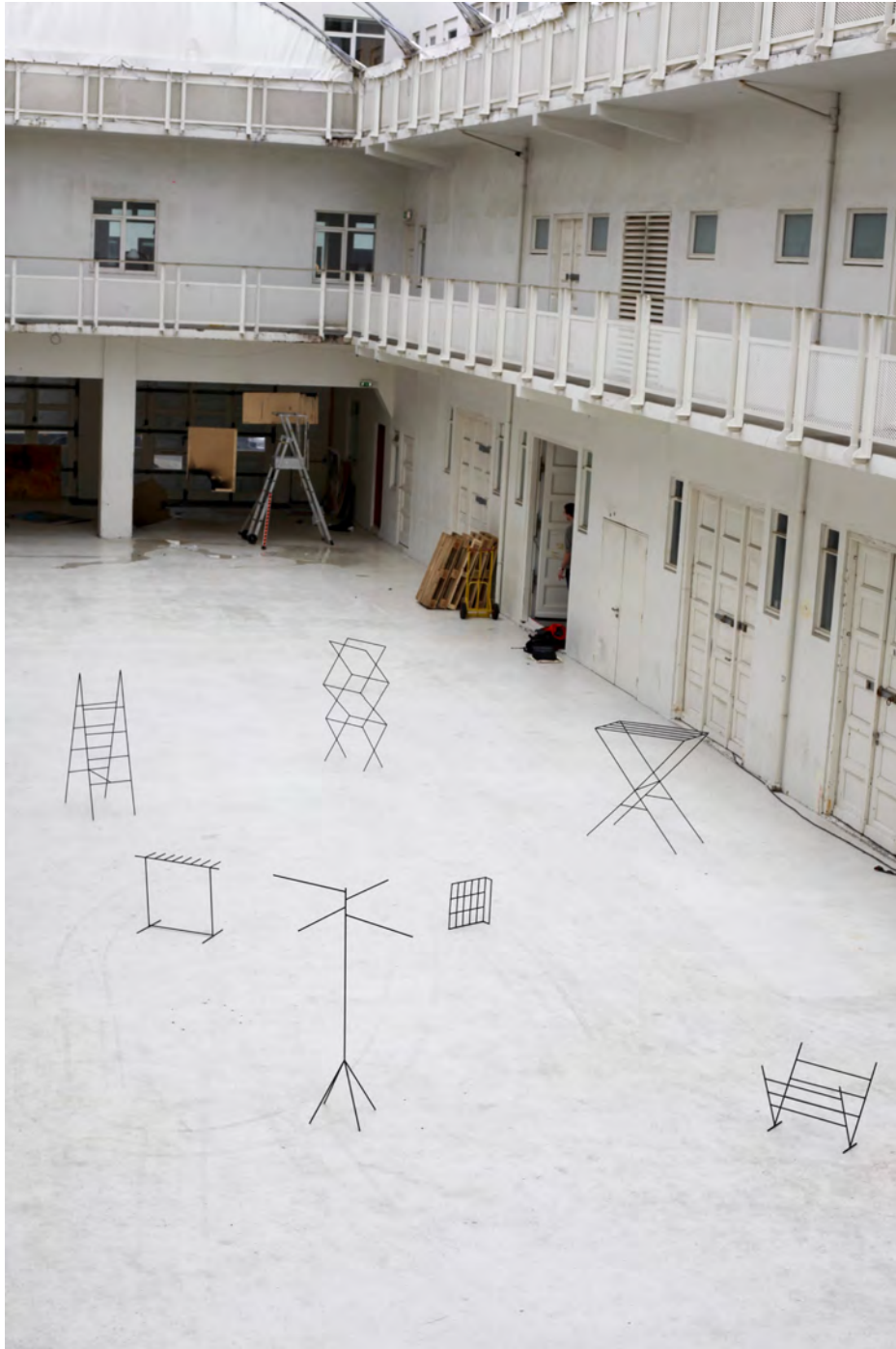
se and does not arise any interest at the first glance. Drying racks, take away coffee lids, tires or mattresses, they don't qualify as beautiful objects although just as other things they were brought into material world by putting an effort to design them. It is hard to appreciate something that is utilized and mainly valued in a relation to its function. This realization has directed me to put a the same link between language and words. It is rarely that someone would appreciate the graphics of the word without thinking of their meaning. Once we see the word we instantly receive a mental image of something that stands it for, nondistracting nature of the words facilitates its incorporation. As Drew Leder put is 'The written word thus has no three-dimensional depth, takes up little space, and usually evidences no outstanding beauty in its shape. The spoken word is even more transparent, for it asserts no visible presence and fades away as soon as it is uttered.'¹ Just like drying racks are folded and put aside once the drying mission is accomplished.

¹ Leder, D. *The Absent Body*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 122.

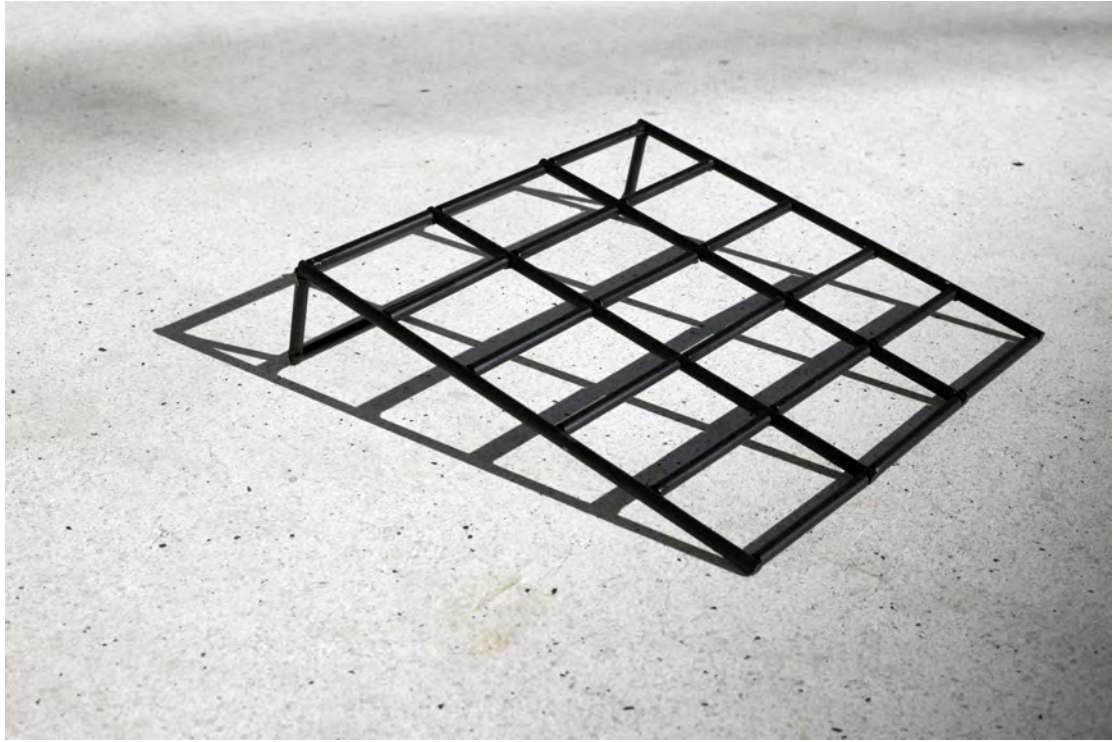
Bibliography

Leder, Drew. *The Absent Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

Figures 1 - 5







Department of Fine Art

BA Project in Fine Art

Thesis

BA Project in Fine Art – Thesis

Ieva Grigelionyte

Spring 2017

Department of Fine Art

DANCING (WITH) THE OBJECTS

Choreography and Collecting as the Creative Process

BA Project in Fine Art – Thesis

Ieva Grigelionyte

Kt.: 060687-3829

Supervisor Jón Proppé

Spring 2017

Abstract

Curiosity is not only a good spice to sprinkle on most activities. Sometimes it can prove to be the main meal itself. Such is the case here. Collecting may more accurately be claimed to be the prominent feature of the creative process, and indeed has a long history within the arts and humanities, stretching back to the *Wunderkammer*, curiosity is the driving force. Whilst it often involves paying very close attention to and care for small things and details easily missed, part of the curious process is the simple ability to notice some wonder in the everyday. This poetics of noticing purports to universality, but I would suggest it is more closely modelled on the mind of a collection than on the average observer of objects. The collector is able to animate their objects through the belief that they have a life of their own beyond our comprehension, and that they contain stories and experiences which can only be brought to the surface through silent reflection and careful display. My work has been greatly influenced by the things I have collected personally as part of the constant thrust of my creative process. But in the end, the composing aspect of my work is just as important collecting. Once I have accrued a large store of ideas and objects, I look for connections between them – what is it that draws me to this particular group of things? Eventually these thoughts and patterns solidified into what I call *Object Choreography*. This is both the attempt to choreograph objects in a space as if they could respond to me, and my own movement around them, as if we were partners in a dance.

Table of contents

Introduction	1
I ON CURIOSITY	2
II THE POETICS OF NOTICING	5
III ON COLLECTIONS	9
IV OBJECT CHOREOGRAPHY	13
Conclusions	15
Bibliography	17
Appendix	20

Introduction

I am not a tidy person. To look at me as I go about my flat rearranging things on the table or adjusting the angle of a shoe, you might be fooled, but it's true. Tidying, according to my domestic philosophy, is a brutal operation. There is much potential for dominant tendencies to show themselves: for example, is there a more fascist way of ordering your clothes than fold them neatly on a designated shelf? I care greatly about what goes where but have no end-state in mind. There is no final composition. In its place, a shady method. This is best described as listening to the objects, taking in their silent desires and arranging them thus. It is as if I place items according to some hidden grammar, in a language of space. This language appears to me naturally enough, like it were my mother tongue; I have not learned it and nor could I teach it. It is a quiet impulse that guides my hand. This philosophy is applied to both my creative and living spaces. I carry it around all day long. Even hanging laundry on a drying rack for me requires careful staging in order that the clothes can coexist in visual peace.

Eventually these thoughts and patterns of behaviour solidified theoretically into what I call Object Choreography. This is both the attempt to choreograph objects in a space as if they could respond to me, and my own movement around them, as if we were partners in a dance. This simple concept is a composite of different ideas which begin long before the first steps of the dance begin.

One of the first tools I employ in my creative process is the gathering of objects, which goes hand in hand with my passion for observing items, seeing them in different imaginary situations, listening to them. There is a slight paradox to this collecting: for all the spiritual intuition required to notice objects and see them as collectables, there is an undoubtedly material aspect. We do, after all, take things into private possession when we add them to our collection.

Different art is fed by different ways of collecting. Or, at least, that's how I see it. A few hundred years ago painters may have wandered the streets sketching phenomenal

faces or interesting clouds - now they have moved on to flea markets, the internet and God-knows-where. In this thesis I would like to present my idea of Object Choreography and submit that collecting is a method allied to the creative process as much as any other.

ON CURIOSITY

Curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back. While the first part of this phrase flies around regularly and is known by most people, its rejoinder is rarely invited to the party these days and on the occasion of its appearance changes the message drastically. Once it shows up, the risk of the task seems suddenly minimal in comparison to the alluring call of curiosity and the promise of grand rewards. This would also give a little bit of understanding why pioneers in the old days left the comforts of home to go live in unfamiliar, unpredictable and physically dangerous environments.¹ A glimpse of this curious madness is beautifully illustrated in *Terra Incognita*, a short story by Vladimir Nabokov. Although the main character is ‘shivering all over and deafened by quinine’ and in the depths of some serious hallucinations, he still goes on collecting nameless plants while his companion, though fully realising the danger of their situation, continued catching butterflies and diptera as avidly as ever.²

Needless to say, curiosity has long been a theme for artists as much as travellers, scientists, philosophers, writers and even cabinets. The phenomena of *Wunderkammer* or the ‘cabinets of wonder’ that flourished throughout Europe in the sixteenth century

¹ Mark Dion et al., *Mark Dion* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), 22.

² Vladimir Nabokov, “Terra Incognita” in *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 297-304.

and remained in fashion for over two hundred years, were assembled collections often placed in one room or ‘cabinet’ by wealthy members of society for the sake of their own entertainment, amusement and ego. These collections of evocative fragments would most often be described as precious, rare, protean and bizarre.³ There is no need to add more superlatives to the list, except to note that these oddities have covered an impressive spectrum of natural curiosities as well as art objects. This cacophony of objects was often arranged according to what Mark Dion, contemporary American artist, calls the ‘I forgot to clean my closet’ or ‘bunch of stuff’ method.⁴ Although these methods might sound like total strangers to any kind of order the truth is that the cabinets strove symbolically to reveal the oneness of the world as one great unbroken chain, in which elements echo each other.⁵ Apparently this way of viewing proved itself in time and we still hear echoes of it whenever we come start talking about collecting. For instance, cubists in the beginning of the 20th century employed found objects in their collages, which are itself works of different collections put, glued, fixed to one. And of course I ought not to forget surrealists, those great dreamers of the twentieth century. In the 1920s, André Breton and his fellow artists visited Paris flea markets to purchase strange objects that seemed to speak to them, to personify hitherto unrecognised longings.⁶ These artists transformed collecting into artistic practice, and collecting as such became itself part of the creative process. Or, indeed, was it always there, just in a different form? What of

³ Dagmar Motycka Weston, “Worlds in Miniature: some reflections on scale and the microcosmic meaning of cabinets of curiosities” in *Architectural Research Quarterly* (2009): 13, accessed November 28, 2016, doi: 10.1017/S135913550999008X.

⁴ Mark Dion et al., *Mark Dion*, 135.

⁵ Dagmar Motycka Weston, “Worlds in Miniature: some reflections on scale and the microcosmic meaning of cabinets of curiosities”, 41.

⁶ Jonathan Jones, “Hoarders or collectors? Our frightened society has forgotten the difference”, *The Guardian*, July 27, 2016, accessed December 8, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2016/jul/27/the-keeper-new-york-museum-collecting-hoarding>.

sketching, for instance? There are stories that Leonardo Da Vinci walked the streets, stalking beauty's opposite. Hideous, deformed faces with sagging skin, bulbous noses and elephantine jaws were something that he was interested in and carefully collected from his everyday life.⁷ Da Vinci, like other Florentine artists, did not paint directly from models but from black-and-white studies.⁸ It is known, for example, that Mona Lisa posed for the head alone – ‘her’ torso and hands were drawn from the other sitters. All this makes us think that hers is a collaborative portrait, or a collection of different people and ideas fused together for display.

The presentation of randomised collections is a favoured way of reflecting a delight in nature and in human existence by contemporary artists too.⁹ For instance, Mark Dion creates authentic display cabinets, and in this way he reminds us that archaeology was born of display, of the passion for collecting.¹⁰(Figure 1) And he is not the only one. My piece *I Chew Therefore I Am: collection of thoughts* is an assembled library of chewing gum pieces placed on different cards. (Figures 2, 3) I displayed my collection using library card drawers in order to reflect the sense of curiosity cabinets in my piece, not to mention the contents being of a rather curious manner themselves. This awkward way of documenting the mind emerged from the idea that our brain processes are far too complex and expansive to ever be adequately and fully represented, either in writing or some other form. Trying to write down and record our thoughts, for instance, will only ever result in a small fraction of them being represented. It will never come close to the whole thing. Indeed, for some of these thoughts it may not even be possible to convert them into words at all. So, by

⁷ Jonathan Jones, “The marvellous ugly mugs”, *The Guardian*, December 4, 2002, accessed November 10, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2002/dec/04/art.artsfeatures>.

⁸ Thomas Craven, *Men of Art* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1933), 106.

⁹ Siân Ede, *Art and Science* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 22.

¹⁰ Mark Dion, *Archaeology*, ed. Alex Coles and Mark Dion (London: Black Dog, 1999), 17.

collecting and preserving the teeth marks made whilst chewing gum, I have developed a different way of documenting a thought or series of ideas running through my head.

Mark Dion tries to utilise the method of the archaeologist, but the display cabinets he creates would not be welcome in any archaeological museum.¹¹ Similarly, I approached my work here striving for consistency of method, but my output would be of little interest to any scientist. I think it is enough to say that curiosity is just a good start - there are no rules which direct it. Or, as Erwin Chargaff so wonderfully puts it: ‘Our understanding of the world is built up of innumerable layers. Each layer is worth exploring, as long as we do not forget that it is one of many.’¹² I take from this that every enthusiasm for collecting should be given a chance and every idle curiosity the opportunity to be fulfilled.

THE POETICS OF NOTICING¹³

While curiosity often involves very close attention to and care for small things or details, part of process is the simple ability to notice some wonder in the everyday. The poetics of noticing are a spiritual endeavour, a broth of visual awareness and calm alertness that allows one to feel attuned to the space around you at a given time. American conceptual artist Allen Ruppersberg offers instructions on how to steer your attention and equip yourself with superior noticing skills in *Fifty Helpful Hints on the Art of the Everyday*.¹⁴ He explores the simple ideas such as ‘The ordinary event leads

¹¹ Mark Dion, *Archaeology*, 17.

¹² Erwin Chargaff, *Heraclitean Fire: Sketches from a Life Before Nature* (New York: The Rockefeller University Press, 1978), 87.

¹³ ‘The Poetics of Noticing’ title is drawn from the book *The Everyday. Documents of Contemporary Art*.

¹⁴ Stephen Johnstone, ed., *The Everyday. Documents of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008) 54-56.

to beauty and understanding of the world' or 'The ordinary and the rare, their interconnectedness and interchangeability'. Ruppertsberg also urges us to 'collect, accumulate, gather, preserve, examine, catalogue, read, look, study, research, change, organise, file, cross-reference, number, assemble, categorise, classify and conserve the ephemeral'. Later on, he adds 'Use Everything. The artist is mysterious entertainer'. Among these mysterious entertainers is Gabriel Orozco, who operates between the mundane and the mysterious, making very peculiar movies whose content he describes as 'things I normally look at when walking down the street'.¹⁵ As Orozco points out himself, he is after a liquidity of things, looking for how one thing leads him on to another. Clearly, this is a matter of noticing and collecting images, of recording small discoveries and creating art that celebrates them.

JanFamily are an artists' group who has slightly different approach to the everyday life, and it is them who I find myself artistically closer to. They explore the things that surround them, and together they create alternatives to everyday routines by offering solutions to problems such as 'How to soften a challenge' and 'How not to do what you did yesterday'.¹⁶ (Figures 4, 5) I often wonder how much we relate certain objects to their specific usage (e.g. combs with brushing hair). When caught in the experimental moment I find myself drawn to random objects, things that seemed at first glance to be unrelated but in fact they share some non-obvious qualities. This can be illustrated by the video works *Ironic Breakfast* and *Cleaning the Vacuum*. (Figures 6-8) To create these illogical events I chose to focus on domestic appliances because most often they have a singular function which is rarely ambiguous in everyday life. These short sketches portray a male character living in a mixed up world. His day begins with breakfast cooked on the iron. The piece has a slightly surreal or post apocalyptic feel, and the viewer wonders if the man is trying to survive

¹⁵ Johnstone, *The Everyday*, 135.

¹⁶ JanFamily. *Janfamily: plans for other days* (London: Booth-Clibborn, 2005), 11.

under difficult circumstances through creative means. It also begs the question that perhaps it is the protagonist who is odd rather than the world, something further suggested when we see him engaging in more senseless activities like vacuuming the beach. Available to the viewer are a whole host of subjective interpretations, from the ridiculous to the sophisticated, and these are never confirmed or denied. Just like Sigurður Guðmundsson in *Situations*, the man is caught in world of dreams and objects, where humorous photographs at the same time could be viewed as a sample of wordless existential philosophy.¹⁷ (Figure 9) Is the vacuum cleaning man warning us about our relationship with the environment? Is he an obsessive neurotic? Maybe the beach needs a good clean. The sculpture that I constructed to accompany this piece consisted of a pair of male shoes of 46 size, iron, rocks and coffee maker. (Figure 10) These objects meet each other by the light of a Duchamp ready made, its creator another great *object choreographer* as I like to call him, who inspired a few more conceptually-oriented works I produced under the title *Chronicles on the Absurd*. The series involved experimental ready made sculptures set in contexts through which they would reveal an absurd mood, for instance bananas lined up on the pedestrian crossing or antlers put on the office chair. (Figures 11,12)

Noticing in the art world is almost like water on Earth - it is vital to the success of the organism as a whole. Without it, art would cease to exist. Noticing can also be placed centre-stage for the audience. For instance, in my installation *Melting the Horizon*, I created a living room atmosphere in an industrial, working environment. (Figures 13, 14) This was an attempt to engineer an opportunity for those passing to notice and pause by simply putting something to look at (a frozen television) and a place to look at it from (a sofa) in an unusual setting. The installation was on the end of short pier and was not that much visible from the main road which was adding to my idea of creating experience of discovery for the audience. Nevertheless, curiosity is naturally piqued by such odd arrangements. Along with the use of ice it suggests temporality

¹⁷ Sigurður Guðmundsson, *Situations*, ed. Saskia Kluyfhout. (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 2000).

and the unique feeling that comes from knowing you were in the right place at the right time.

The poetics of noticing purports to universality, but I would suggest that it is more closely modelled on the mind of a collector than that of the everyday observer of objects. In the opening lines of Sontag's *The Volcano Lover*, her protagonist muses obsessively on collecting as he wanders through a flea market and I think this highlights the distinction between the collector and a mere browser: 'But there may be something valuable, there. Not valuable exactly. But something I would want. Want to rescue. Something that speaks to me. To my longings. Speaks to, speaks of. Ah...' - This is not the thought process of an ordinary market-goer, but rather a different class of person entirely.¹⁸In fact, to the uninitiated it might appear quite mad: this man speaks a different language, talks to objects, rescues them from their fate (whatever that may be). But is this actually such strange behaviour? Could it not be viewed as a meditative ritual similar to, say, hunting? In both cases, the object of desire hides amongst things of lesser interest, camouflaged, waiting to be uncovered, to be found. In both cases a (one-sided) dialogue exists between hunter and prey, collector and object. Both are saying: 'I know you're out there. When I find you, I will have you'. Inherent in this is the giving of life to objects that most would regard as void of spiritual meaning. The collector animates their items through the belief that they have a life of their own beyond our grasp, that they contain stories and experiences which can only be brought to the surface through silent reflection and careful display. For an object to talk, someone has to be listening.

This is not to deny the material nature of collecting: a collection must be gathered from the physical world, perhaps being taken into private ownership and arranged by hand or tool according to individual stipulations. Each has their own way of doing this. For instance, Freud started dinner each day by first bringing his beloved antique

¹⁸ Susan Sontag, *The Volcano Lover* (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 3.

statuettes to the dining room table so he could admire them during his meal.¹⁹ Then they would be transferred to his office, where he would greet them each morning as he came into work. Belk describes this as the alchemy of transforming an acquired object into part of a collection, but I would take this comparison and stretch it further. The alchemy of object assimilation is akin to the chemistry felt between two friends or lovers. Some items seem to feel, despite superficial differences, like they belong together.

As Susan M. Pearce puts it, objects are not inert or passive: ‘we engage with them in a complex interactive or behavioural dance in the course of which the weight of significance which they carry affects what we think and feel and how we act’.²⁰ In other words, though we may feel as if we are in total dominance over the objects we surround ourselves with, their ongoing presence in our lives shapes us in turn.

ON COLLECTIONS

There are so many ways to talk about collecting. I could try to trace the outline of the obsession or other madness involved in it, or I could count the collectibles themselves; I could try to talk about the possible cultural value, I could also try to examine the adventures that were met in the process. Or I could be boring and talk about money. Instead, I would like to propose the collection of a few collections that I find inspiring. Because after all they are put together so we could read them as a book, enjoy while looking and observing, with the possibility of withdrawal, taking some spiritual experience with us as we go.

To begin with, I have great admiration for a certain type of collection that involves a relationship between a collector and a collection which I describe as a ‘diary’. The biggest role in this type of collection is given to time and selection. The beauty of this

¹⁹ Russell W. Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 74.

²⁰ Susan M. Pearce, *On collecting : an investigation into collecting in the European tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 18.

diary is that it can be written in so many ‘languages’. Some of them are very literal, and this method is beloved by Fluxus related artists, a few of whom were seemingly suffering from obsessive hoarding. I shall ignore the temptation to try and draw sharp lines between ‘collecting’, ‘accumulating’ and ‘hoarding’. All might appear under the same flag of artistic arrangement and all may be related to the creative process. As James Putnam notices, the ‘artist’s urge to accumulate objects in the studio is part of the age-old human impulse to gather and hoard.’²¹ Personally, I have always been much attached to my own bank of ‘found’ objects and for years have admired Fluxus leader George Maciunas for his passionate collecting. Even when an item got damaged he would simply change the label on the box from ‘Bottles’ to ‘Broken Glass’ and still keep the contents.²² And he is certainly not the only one who employed the collecting in his artistic practise. Icelandic Swiss artist’s Dieter Roth kept diaries, but he kept everything else too. He couldn’t throw anything away.²³ Even after facing health risks and other inconveniences caused by this obsession he kept on documenting his life. A similar but less extreme example would be Daniel Spoerri and his collection of food remains after breakfast or dinner, where the items are not as important as the actual attempt to perform some simple magic and display time frozen solid. (Figure 15)

Some of us don’t see ourselves as collectors and yet still might accumulate many objects, whether they are train tickets or shop receipts. There is no question that some collections are more bizarre than others, and as we put objects or ideas next to another one they tend to gain momentum and become independent organisms. The thing that I find interesting about collecting is that it can be anything - literally anything. From

²¹ James Putnam, *Art and Artefact: Museum as Medium* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2009), 12.

²² Jurgis Maciunas, *Mr. Fluxus : a collective portrait of George Maciunas, 1931-1978*. Based upon personal reminiscences gathered by Emmett Williams and Ay-O, and edited by Emmett Williams and Ann Noë (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998).

²³ Duncan Macmillan, “Dieter Roth: Diaries” in “Visual Art Reviews”, *The Scotsman*, August 23, 2012. accessed 11 November, 2016, <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/art/visual-art-reviews-dieter-roth-diaries-cast-contemporaries-1-2483568>.

cut off nails to Chinese vases with feet, there is always the invisible line that one might accidentally cross. All of a sudden you find yourself with a collection. These thoughts led me and another artist Valgerður Ýr Magnúsdóttir to collaborate on a project *Pocket Gallery* where we collected the contents of other people's pockets. (Figures 16-19) All these items were accommodated in small attic based space, the shape of a triangle tube. Visitors were invited to crawl through small door and experience being inside a big pocket of the house. Just as in previously mentioned *Wunderkammers* the exhibition consisted of both art pieces and simply found objects in the pockets, like a pen, a note, some rubbish. Along with that there were video work introducing to one man's pocket, pile of receipts, some rocks, The Pocket Act and many more. This experimental exhibition also confirmed what interesting collectors are to be found among children. The impulse to pick up something from the ground and put in your pocket confirms the theory by Baudrillard that, for children, for whom the world is vast and confusing place, collecting is a rudimentary way of mastering their environment.²⁴

Some collections may appear as statements, cogent and whole, bigger than the sum of their parts. For instance, in 1909, Gustav E. Pazaurek, director of Stuttgart's State Crafts Museum, opened his *Cabinet of Bad Taste* for which he had collected over 900 ugly objects. Writing in the *Journal Der Kunstwart* in 1899, Pazaurek explained that every museum should have a torture dungeon or chamber of horrors, in order to educate those with a thick aesthetic skin.²⁵ Some collections concern the way that people live, as with Jean-Paul Sartre's Antoine in *Nausea*. Whenever he reminisces about his romantic relationship with Anny, the first thing he always remembers about her is the way she has always looked for 'perfect moments' in life.²⁶ Some refer to

²⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (New York: Verso, 2005), 93.

²⁵ Stephen Baylay, *Ugly: The Aesthetics of Everything* (New York: Goodman Books, 2012), 225-227.

²⁶ Jean Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions, 2007), 107.

rivers as collectors, containing a collection of material finding its way into the river, where it is sorted and classified according to the river's own internal physical dynamics, those of transport and deposition, tide, current and flow.²⁷

I could not imagine being a collector and not crashing against the walls of practicality - for instance, space. Collections have a tendency to grow and therefore space to shrink. As Breakell puts it, 'selection is inevitable, however problematic'.²⁸ During my creative process I came up with a new solution. I decided to use objects which are out of reach, something that I desire to possess and yet have no access because of physical distance. For my work *Dear Wilson* I was researching on tennis ball manufacture and spotted this distinctive green fluorescent welt which after the needed amount is cut out becomes like a beautiful patterned material itself. My first instinct was to somehow possess this object, but later on I realised that I am using it already without owning it. This pattern of thought became like a code, which I challenged myself to unlock and convert to art piece. As Daniel Deneett has argued, our creative powers have been immeasurably boosted by mind- tools that we have gathered around us, such as the alphabet, musical and mathematical notations, shopping lists, computer software, the calendar, visual art and so on.²⁹ And to certain extent this "found but not picked up" material became a mind-tool for me to guide myself in the creation process. So along with physical collections, abstract, poetic and what not collections I greatly admire data collections. Or as in the mentioned *Dear Wilson*, knowing what tennis ball leftovers look like.

²⁷ Mark Dion, *Archaeology*, 77.

²⁸ Sue Breakell, "The Archival Impulse: Artists and Archives", *Tate Modern*, November 16, 2007, accessed October 22, 2016, <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=archives-nra;d78c4a65.0711>.

²⁹ Martin Kemp and Deborah Schultz, "Us and Them, This and That, Here and There, Now and Then: Collecting, Classifying, Creating." in *Strange and Charmed, Science and the Contemporary Visual Arts*, ed. Sian Ede. (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2000) 87.

OBJECT CHOREOGRAPHY

The composing part in my work is just as important as collecting. Once I have accrued a large store of ideas and objects, I look again for connections between them - what is it that draws me to this particular group of things? Some modern scientists say that objects have their own memory or that the matter has consciousness which leads me to wonder about these things as I am grouping them and adds to my feeling that when I collect things I am repurposing them and they are gaining a new identity.³⁰ This way I chose to see objects and refer to them is strongly influenced by magical realists such as Gabriel Garcia Marques or Jorge Louis Borges, who have also written of inanimate things awakening in some form or other. Inspired by Borges' thought that all the things which are next to each other, we call the universe, Gabriel Orozco reveals that 'It's this "being next to each other" that appeals to me'³¹. I too feel the draw of such a thought, and I add to it the idea that in order to place one thing next to another, a consultation of some sort is required. This object choreography is a concept that I have been employing not only as a guiding principle but also a source of ongoing inspiration. I think of artist's libraries and archives when I read the passage, and when Borges writes 'to locate book A, consult first book B which indicates A's position; to locate book B, consult first a book C, and so on to infinity...'³² I am drawn to the image of an artists' Babel, a great gallery where one piece cannot be understood fully without first consulting another. In other words, objects create their own relationships. Collectors, should they be sharp-eyed enough, can identify these relationships and work to expose or express them through words or arrangement.

³⁰ Tara MacIsaac, "Do Inanimate Objects Have Thoughts and Feelings?", *Epoch Times*, 5 August, 2013 accessed 9 October, 2016, <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/845646-do-inanimate-objects-have-thoughts-and-feelings/>.

³¹ Johnstone, *The Everyday*, 135.

³² Jorge Luis Borges, "The Library of Babel" in *Ficciones*, ed. Anthony Kerrigan (New York: Grove Press, 1994), 85.

There could be envisaged three ways in which to think about *Objects Choreography*. First of all comes my movement, as someone who creates composition while shifting places of objects. It is no secret that before the final position of installation or any other display that deals with physical space is arrived at, there are numerous attempts and changes made before things find their own, eventual resting spot. You pick up one thing, go across the room with it, let it stay for a while, pick it up again, go back where you came from, pick up another thing and do the same. I call this dancing with objects. Although it may seem like an almost mechanical method it actually involves intuitive reading into objects. I have been doing it long enough to notice that some objects prefer specific objects more than others. Once I discovered these natural tendencies in something we think we have total control over, it led me to try and let the objects be the way they might have preferred instead of strictly directing their movements and positioning. The nature of many events in magical realism are immune to explanation and taken as self-evident, and this applies to my idea of why objects actually are able to express their desires. But it is not always the case in my choreography. In one of my video pieces, titled *Snail Porn*, I collected snails from a park so they could perform my written choreography. (Figures 20, 21) Obviously that they are not themselves objects although for the video I created costumes and fashioned a set so that they could be more taken as such. The piece is an experimental project trying to measure unknown realities behind the scenes of the fantasy world. It is also suggestive of Mike Mills animal rights manifesto, where he states that animal rights is about not only protecting animals from suffering or refraining from treating them as property - but how the ultimate goal should be that they are regarded as people.³³ Therefore my proposal is that the snails need porn. And the best way to picture it I could think of was through the employment of performing snails.

And of course the last aspect of *Object Choreography* is the way things are set in the space which choreographs the audience - how they are directed to move in the space where the art piece is set. Although for the viewer it is not always clear that she or he

³³ Mike Mills, "Humans" in *Manifesto Project*, accessed 3 January 2017, <http://www.manifestoproject.it/mike-mills/>.

is carefully following a predetermined, thought through route (or is choreographed as I like to say), but nonetheless the artist does stretch out this invisible hand and points where to go even if this strange traffic direction is hidden in the most unexpected ways.

One way or another choreography is ever-present while working with objects, though it is up to us whether we see them as performers. It may as well just be a dream or a colourful bit from one of Alejandro Jodorowsky's movies, but there is a small chance that while someone appears to just be folding their laundry, it is actually a strange dance.

Conclusions

*“Take a thing and put it on one thing
Take a thing and put it on the 2 things
<...>
Take a thing and put it on the 7 things
.....
Sell any time”³⁴*

³⁴ Dieter Roth, *Da drinnen vor dem Auge* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005), 160.

Whilst many people associate collecting with the acquisition of luxury goods, artists seem to be attracted to all sorts of things which others see simply as rubbish. This kind of creative collecting can get dangerously close to hoarding. The assembling of things is driven by a compulsion and the thought of throwing something away gets thrown out itself. Everything is useful. Or might be. Of course this is not necessarily always true. Collecting as a creative process may be as boring and staid as collecting stamps or coins, or as gripping and exciting as extracting the content from a vacuum cleaner.

Collecting as methodology for making has been around for quite a while. While some artists juxtaposed their collectibles in one sculpture and others filled their shelves, Dieter Roth put it his idea in recipe/poem form. The essential ingredient here is time. Roth knows probably better than anyone else that collecting has no beginning or end. It goes on and on. It is part of our everyday lives, in tandem with *noticing*. Its end might be defined by the moment when someone is interested to buy the thing we have arranged or interested in displaying it. Otherwise we keep on collecting parts of the everyday and converting them into art.

I suppose collectors and artists could be compared with tourists and travellers. Some of them go and discover things under a carefully planned schedule while other just wander around without a particular destination. But despite the differences they have something in common which is this: one rarely decides to collect something, collecting simply happens. I feel that this is the point which I as an artist find most attractive. My task becomes much simpler. It ceases to matter if there is no purpose for collected item, because eventually it may start to speak for itself from a shelf and this would be when our dance begins. *Object Choreography* helps me deal with any space and find novel relationships between objects. 'Dancing' is something that marks that the actions are not a mechanically performed routine, but something that requires mind's full attention and a passionate companionship with the objects themselves.

Bibliography

Baudrillard, Jean. *The System of Objects*. Translated by James Benedict. New York: Verso, 2005.

Baylay, Stephem. *Ugly: The Aesthetics of Everything*. New York: Goodman Books, 2012.

Belk, W., Russell. *Collecting in a Consumer Society*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Library of Babel" in *Ficciones*, edited by Anthony Kerrigan. New York: Grove Press, 1994.

Breakell, Sue. "The Archival Impulse: Artists and Archives", *Tate Modern*, November 16, 2007, accessed October 22, 2016, <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=archives-nra;d78c4a65.0711>.

Chargaff, Erwin. *Heraclitean Fire: Sketches from a Life Before Nature*. New York: The Rockefeller University Press, 1978.

Craven, Thomas. *Men of Art*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1933.

Dion, Mark. *Archaeology*, edited by Alex Coles and Mark Dion. London: Black Dog, 1999.

Dion, Mark, Lisa Graziose Corrin, Miwon Kwon, Norman Bryson. *Mark Dion*. London: Phaidon Press, 1997.

Ede, Siân. *Art and Science*. New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005.

Guðmundsson, Sigurður. *Situations*, edited by Saskia Kluyfhout. Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 2000.

JanFamily. *Janfamily: plans for other days*. London: Booth-Clibborn, 2005.

Johnstone, Stephen, ed. *The Everyday. Documents of Contemporary Art*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008.

Jones, Jonathan. “Hoarders or collectors? Our frightened society has forgotten the difference”. *The Guardian*, July 27, 2016, accessed December 8, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2016/jul/27/the-keeper-new-york-museum-collecting-hoarding>.

Jones, Jonathan. “The marvellous ugly mugs”. *The Guardian*, December 4, 2002, accessed November 10, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2002/dec/04/art.artsfeatures>.

Kemp, Martin and Deborah Schultz, “Us and Them, This and That, Here and There, Now and Then: Collecting, Classifying, Creating.” in *Strange and Charmed, Science and the Contemporary Visual Arts*, ed. Sian Ede. London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2000.

MacIsaac, Tara. “Do Inanimate Objects Have Thoughts and Feelings?”, *Epoch Times*, 5 August, 2013 accessed 9 October, 2016, <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/845646-do-inanimate-objects-have-thoughts-and-feelings/>.

Macmillan, Duncan. “Dieter Roth: Diaries” in “Visual Art Reviews”. *The Scotsman*, August 23, 2012, accessed 11 November, 2016, <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/art/visual-art-reviews-dieter-roth-diaries-cast-contemporaries-1-2483568>.

Mills, Mike. “Humans” in *Manifesto Project*, accessed 3 January 2017, <http://www.manifestoproject.it/mike-mills/>.

Nabokov, Vladimir. “Terra Incognita” in *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.

Pearce, M. Susan. *On collecting : an investigation into collecting in the European tradition*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

Putnam, James. *Art and Artefact: Museum as Medium*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2009.

Roth, Dieter. *Da drinnen vor dem Auge*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005.

Sartre, Jean Paul. *Nausea*, translated by Lloyd Alexander. New York: New Directions, 2007.

Sontag, Susan. *The Volcano Lover*. London: Penguin Classics, 2009.

Weston, Dagmar Motycka. "Worlds in Miniature: some reflections on scale and the microcosmic meaning of cabinets of curiosities." *Architectural Research Quarterly* 13 (2009): 37-48. Accessed November 28, 2016. doi:10.1086/599247.

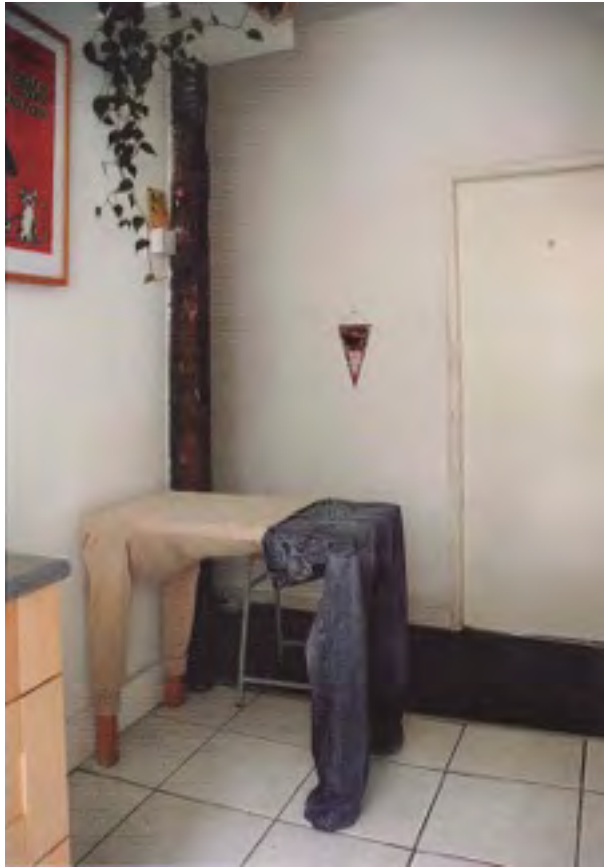
Appendix



Figure 1. A cabinet view from installation *Travels of William Bartram Reconsidered* by Mark Dion, 2008.



Figures 2, 3. An Installation view, *I Chew Therefore I Am: A Collection of Thoughts*, 2016.



Figures 4, 5. JanFamily, Plans for Other Days, 2005.

Figure 6. Video work, *Cleaning the Vacuum*, 2015.

watch online here: <https://vimeo.com/139720059>

Figure 7. Video work, *Ironic Breakfast*, 2015.

watch online here: <https://vimeo.com/145199019>



Figure 8. Still shot from the video works, *Ironic Breakfast* and *Cleaning the Vacuum*, 2005.



Figure 9. *Dancing Horizon*, Sigurður Guðmundson, 1977.



Figure 10. Ready made sculpture from the video work, *Ironical Breakfast*, 2015.



Figures 11, 12. Ready made sculptures from series *Chronicles on The Absurd*, 2015.



Figures 13, 14. Installation view from *Melting the Horizon*, 2015.



Figure 15. Daniel Spoerri, *Kichka's Breakfast I*, 1960. Wood chair hung on wall with board across seat, coffeepot, tumbler, china, eggcups, eggshells, cigarette butts, spoons, tin cans, and other materials.



Figures 16, 17, 18. Exhibition view from *Pocket Gallery*, 2015.



Figure 19. Still shot from the video work, *Snail Porn*, 2016.

Figure 20. Video work, *Snail Porn*, 2016.

Watch online here: <https://vimeo.com/213521047>