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# **JR<sup>2</sup>: An Exploration of Space and Material**

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
Practice-Led MA By Research Fine Art

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School Of The Arts

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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JR<sup>2</sup> = JONES REED (squared)

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JR<sup>2</sup> = Collaboration between myself and Phoebe Reed

**Abstract: JR<sup>2</sup>: An Exploration of Space and Material**

The purpose of this text is to articulate the research dimension of our collaborative practice, focusing on the significance of space and material. Our interdisciplinary collaboration comprises of myself (Grace Jones) and Phoebe Reed, we predominantly focus on sculpture, alongside aspects of drawing, painting, and film. Placing an emphasis upon sculpture, as our ever-changing modes of working are informed whilst still 'thinking sculpturally' (Day, 2012, P.5). The research aims to uncover the complexities we share surrounding space and material, whilst consistently drawing back to the way in which the work is made and why it is made. To uncover our thinking of space and material, there will be an exploration of artists and art movements which excite our collaborative practice. There will be reference to Arte Povera, Phyllida Barlow, Marcel Duchamp and Tracey Emin, identifying their ways of working, noting the gap the precedents left, that we felt had to be filled. In turn, the research aims to explore the way in which we work with materials as a collaborative that is unique to others, and why we feel the work needs to be made. This document is accompanied by an extensive body of images alongside a video documentation, showcasing the work we have created during our MA and highlighting the true nature of our making.

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## Introducing JR<sup>2</sup>:

JR<sup>2</sup> is the name in which myself and Phoebe Reed practice under, we are a Fine Art collaborative duo established in York, United Kingdom in 2019. To us, the definition of collaboration involves two practising artists / friends working alongside one another, simultaneously, on the same piece. Both contributing equally, allowing each other freedom to explore, an 'interaction of different personal styles', drawing upon our own individual strengths, whilst supporting one another as a collaborative (Tait, 2009, P. 26). We strongly believe that our collaboration offers more than our solo practices ever have, which will be made evident throughout this research (Tait, 2009, P.9).

Our interdisciplinary collaboration formed through chance. Phoebe and I met during our undergraduate degree having shared a studio space the preceding two years. We were unknowingly influenced by one another; I had primarily worked in sculpture whilst

Phoebe focussed upon drawing and painting. Prior to the collaboration, I needed assistance whilst casting. We instinctively used an old poster tube, plaster, and red spray paint in order to produce *Red Line* [Figure 1] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2019). My minimalist use of the tube shape and Phoebe's graffitied bold red line demonstrated two individual practices meeting as one. It was clear from the creation of *Red Line* [Figure 1] that there was an unspoken agreement upon our decision



Figure 1: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Red Line* [sculpture] 2019.



Figure 2: JR<sup>2</sup>, *d00r* [painting] 2019.

making (2019). These decisions came through fluidity and immediacy within the practice alongside a similar aesthetic value.

Initially we focused upon working with found materials; these were often doors, metal objects, and domestic furniture. Phoebe and I have specific qualities and aesthetics we look for within a material. If these qualities aren't present, we won't bring the material back to the studio. The decision to take or leave these objects will be further explored.

The certain material qualities we search for show signs of use and wear such as: chips in the paint, cracks in the wood/glass, these are then seamlessly integrated into our work. We find a peculiar interest in the material, finding humour in no one else wanting it, but to us it's a one-off treasure. Alongside these reasonings, the most significant, is the logistics and accessibility of found material either being free of charge or very cheap. The found material is often salvaged from skips, car-boot sales, and the streets of York. Finding the material is reflective of our immediacy, by never knowing what we will discover.

To our collaboration the finding and collecting of our materials becomes 'the birthplace of art', a term used by Daniel Burren in the essay *The Function of the Studio* (2012, P.12). In this quote Burren is referring to the studio, which to many artists is understandably the true 'birthplace of art', however to us the place in which the material is found is rightfully the 'birthplace' (2012, P.12) And once the material has been found, there is an understanding of these materials having a life prior to the studio. The found materials are then brought to the studio, where they are explored. We will scour the front, back, sides, insides and anywhere else the material presents to uncover. In



Figure 3: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Wedding PIC* [painting] 2021.



Figure 4: Barlow, P. *frontier* [sculpture] 2021.

order to mark the material, we use seemingly conventional mediums in an unconventional manner. We'll create a textured-like-pink paste, by using a ready-mix acrylic paint and grout, like that seen in *Wedding PIC* [Figure 3] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). Without measuring we will add roughly one part acrylic paint to three-part grout, which is then mixed and spread upon the material using a palette knife. This combination of the industrial (grout) and the domestic (acrylic paint) medium is seen in works by artists such as Phyllida Barlow. In Barlow's exhibit *frontier* [Figure 4], she combines concrete slabs with draped fabrics, which in turn explores these tensions of such different textures and their contrasting material properties (2021).

Within our practice, we frequently return to casting, using materials from the studio such as: bin bags, rubble sacks, and occasionally a sweet packet. The outcomes of these casts range in size, but all resemble heavy 'blobs', like that seen in *Blob 23 & 24* [Figure 5 & 8] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2020).

These blob-like shapes were created using a clear bin bag and parcel packaging. The way they were left to set causes folds and creases, almost appearing soft in touch but instead they are incredibly hard. The piece holds a great sense of weightiness: they appear as these solid mounds of stuff, still and heavy. But equally, the plastic of the bag on the right has a light, airiness to it, contrasting the solid mound of plaster



Figure 5: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Blob 23 & 24* [sculpture] 2020.

that fills half of the bag. Another contrast one may note with this piece, is the ability of the plastic that is not filled with plaster is able to change, one could flatten, scrunch, or wrap the plastic. Whereas the plaster within the bag has created its own form, only so much can be manipulated, ultimately the plaster will spread and fill each crevice it possibly can. The application of the duct tape wasn't due to aesthetic purposes but functionally due to the plaster leaking out of a small hole [Figure 8] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2020). The work retains these gestures of plaster being everywhere, that it wasn't a simple, smooth pouring of plaster, instead it was chaotic



and messy, but equally the marks remind us of the humour experienced whilst creating the piece. Without the tape the plaster would continue to drain from the hole until it eventually set.

Another important aspect to note from the piece, *Blob* 23 & 24 [Figure 5], is its use of a real-life material, perhaps there is a sense of appropriation here (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2020). By appropriation in terms of art, one is referring to the use of pre – existing objects/found materials or images with little to no transformation applied to them (Tate, 2021). The green parcel packaging, used in the blob-like shape on the left, has only been slightly altered. The address sticker and the way the bag was initially ripped open is visible in the piece. The only alteration comes from the plaster leakages and the tape which stopped this. Artist Walead Beshty works in a similar notion to our collaboration. He includes the delivery address and original Fed-Ex box in his work, *FedEx Sculptures* [Figure 6] (2021). This excites our practice as there is a sense of humour we find in Beshtys' pieces, due to the object inside the Fed-Ex box often being smashed or damaged in some way.

In more recent works there has been a greater focus on material which was not found on the streets, but instead either made ourselves or bought from a store, such as large-scale canvases and ceramic tiles. However, there is still an essence of accessibility to these materials, we choose cheaper, damaged material or create the material ourselves in order to



Figure 6: Beshty, W. *FedEx Sculptures* [sculpture] 2021.



Figure 7: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Candy N* [painting] 2021.

keep to a tight budget. We still hold an excitement towards found material, but by focussing solely on finding materials would only limit the output and quality of the work. This is due to

not always finding the 'right' found materials, sometimes we can go weeks without finding a material to work upon. As a collaboration, we have an unspoken bond over which found materials are 'right' to us, although it is hard to summarise which objects are worth picking up. We tend to gravitate towards objects in which we won't have trouble applying our mediums to, such as, wooden, metallic, or ceramic objects. Shying away from soft material objects such as sofas or beds, not only because of the way they tend to reject paint mediums, but also due to transporting issues. However, soft material objects which do not require large transportation, such as pillows, rugs and duvets do interest us.

When we begin to make marks upon the material, there is a silence, almost as if we are pausing time itself, what is made in this time is otherworldly. This time of silence is significant to the practice, these pauses allow the duo to 'rest their mind... ideas sort of come, start building up and questions start coming from that silence' (Fisher, 2013, P.83). This silence is natural, allowing time for enquiry. We will then continue to work upon the material, everything is done collaboratively, although there is no mention of what one will create. There is an ongoing conversation happening upon the work, drawing upon specific moments and memories we share. Poking fun at each other, scrawling over what the other has painted, trying to make the other laugh: this is what creates an immense immediacy to the work. Collaborative artists Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat were seen to have 'physical conversation happening in paint instead of words', which to an outsider these bouts of text will make no sense, so out of context the viewer can decide to either enquire or accept (Kelly, 2012). Perhaps 'the way conversation drives collaboration, and the ways in which collaboration challenges discursive structure' is significant in multiple collaborations (Tait, 2009, P.26). Whether these conversations are happening verbally or within the work, they are driving forces. One could see a collaboration having 'discursive structures' as challenging or problematic, but for our practice the ability to have two minds moving from subject-to-subject is needed.

The way we work with a sense of immediacy, reflects this notion of 'Thinking through Making' (Ingold, 2013, P.6). Being present with the materials, following the 'material flow' alongside our relationship as a collaboration, allowing for an incredibly playful practice (Institute for Northern Culture, 2013, 07:18). Ingold's 'Thinking through Making', to be clear, is referring to the significance of 'improvisation... every thought is just a passing moment in a process of thinking that continually carries on' (Institute for Northern Culture, 2013, 05:55). It is the understanding that 'making is an ongoing binding together of material flows and sensory awareness' (Institute for Northern Culture, 2013, 07:18). The term refers to a very natural process of enquiry, allowing the thinking process to come and go whilst the material is freely explored, discovering its inherent properties, and pushing those properties in an exchange of process and material.

In order to give some contextualisation to our collaborative practice, we consider ourselves to hold a DIY (do-it-yourself) aesthetic. An aesthetic which reached its peak during the 1990s, and has continued to grow since (Triggs, 2006, P. 69). The aesthetic can be characterised by fanzines, these zines are 'homemade, A4, stapled and photocopied fanzines of the late 1970s fostered the 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) production technique' (Triggs, 2006, P.69). There are many similarities in the way these zines were created and the work we produce as a collaboration. These zines were created in order to emulate the experience of seeing punk rock live, to communicate the same 'sheer energy, excitement and enthusiasm' as artists did on stage (Triggs, 2006, P.70). As JR<sup>2</sup>, we are creating work which encapsulates the process of making, the excitement, the highs, the mistakes, the way it feels to create the work. We do this through pure trial and error, we don't often hide the mistakes we create, alike the fanzines. Where text was often 'written with grammatical and punctuation corrections made visible in crossing outs... stressed the immediacy of its production' (Triggs, 2006, P.69). Perhaps this is where we as a collaboration see the largest similarity, this importance placed upon immediacy. In both regards to our work and the zines created, it is about getting a message out. Whether

this was about a new band the zines were pushing or whether it's us relaying a story to one another. This is to be done with immediacy, never losing this pace, this fluidity.

This thesis will also have an underlying theme of sustainability, purely through the work we create. This is due to us very rarely creating something 'new', we are often finding, reusing, altering, remaking materials into different forms, and these forms are ever changing in order to create more works. Corbin states in *Why Materials Matter* that materials 'do so much for us, we rarely pause to marvel them' (Corbin, 2018, P. 6). As artists who work closely with found material, we are constantly admiring them. Appreciating how they drive our practice, being mindful about them.

There will also be reference throughout this thesis to the importance of play. We believe that art and play come hand in hand, especially within our collaboration. Both terms involve 'imagination, surprise and non-predictability', all of which are factors that are heightened whilst working as a collaborative (Dissanayake, 1974, P. 211). In Dissanayake's *A Hypothesis of the Evolution of Art from Play*, she states that there isn't one simple definition of play, that in fact play holds many different characteristics. In order to help refine the list of characteristics, I will only refer to those which relate to our collaboration. Perhaps the most relatable being 'play usually involves more than one participant' (Dissanayake, 1974, P. 212). Having both held individual practices prior to our collaboration, we know that play is possible independently. However, quite often the individual play felt restrictive, there wasn't another person to question the 'what-if and why-not' aspect of play (Dissanayake, 1974, P. 213). Which is perhaps the most rewarding aspect of being a collaboration, we are able to push each-others play, inviting each-other to be more playful, open, and curious whilst practising.

Whilst creating the work there is a mutual understanding, unspoken, about whether the work works, or simply doesn't. This could be shown through gesturing to one another, taking a break from the piece or by over laying the work in different mediums. Ultimately, we are to give the object one last lease of life, before it is gone forever.



Figure 8: JR<sup>2</sup>, *B10b 23 & 24* [sculpture] 2020.

## Space and JR<sup>2</sup>:

It has been apparent from the beginning how important space was and continues to be within our collaboration. There are several ways to explore the term space, but for research purposes this thesis will examine the term from two different aspects. The first being the space in which the work originates, both in the space the material is found and the studio, exploring how significant these spaces are to our collaboration. The second aspect being the space after the studio, whether this is site-specific work or work which is placed within the gallery setting. Alongside the notion of thinking of space as a physical, specific place, there will also be an in-depth analysis into how places feel different from the usual environment of the studio.

We find placing work outside of the studio environment incredibly exciting but equally alarming. Perhaps we become too comfortable in our usual habitat, so when the work is moved to a different space, it is almost as if the work is being encountered for the first time. Sculptural artist Phyllida Barlow, states that ‘some of the best times I’ve had was just taking the work to places so I could have a different relationship with it’ (Art 21, 2020, 11:33). This is a notion which we feel we share with Barlow; however we also allow the work to change its relationship towards us.

To begin an exploration into the work and its relationship within different spaces, it is important to acknowledge the studio. Although this isn’t the first space we encounter the found material, that being the street, it is the second step in the materials journey, at this second step a sense of appropriation is about to happen. The studio is pivotal to our practice, we feel as though the studio environment is often reflected in the work we create. This reflection comes from the physical demands of the studio, in which we have recently felt a shift. Previously our studio was three by three metres, which is shown through the smaller scale work we created, like that of *tiLE 1* [Figure 9] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2020). A



Figure 9: JR<sup>2</sup>, *tiLE 1* [sculpture] 2020.



piece measuring 60cm by 60cm, suggesting that the 'physical limits of the studio as the work's determine factor' (Fisher, 2013, P.74). Interestingly, the studio is perceived as 'the first frame, the first limit', we felt that with this small, dimly lit studio we weren't able to create the work they aspired to, placing limit and constraints on our practice (Buren, 2012, P.83).

However, in early March we moved to a larger, brighter, more open studio space which quickly started to be reflected in the work. We were able to be more ambitious, not only in scale but by having several projects ongoing. These projects in mention range from the three 6-by-6-foot canvases, one is ratchet strapped to a breezeblock and the others are works in progress [Figure 10] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). There has also been multiple ceramic tile works produced and a variation of yellow drawings. The studio is a place

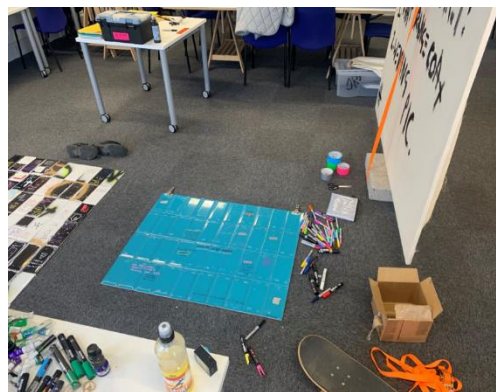


Figure 10: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Works in Progress* [mixed media] 2021.

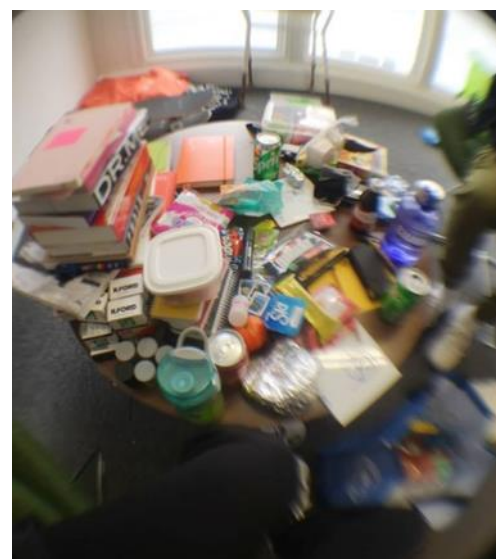


Figure 11: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Studio View* [mixed media, fisheye photograph] 2021.

where ideas, materials and mediums are able to flow freely. It is a place in which these encounters with material and matter can be thoroughly explored, without fear of judgement or mistakes.

Furthermore, the studio not only offers a supportive, comfortable atmosphere for us, it also highlights this other reality we share once in this space. We view the studio as other worldly, not in an 'ivory tower' way, where the work is locked away from the outside world (Buren, 2012, P.83). But in the way it has become a secure place for the us, a place where we can not only create work, but also a social space. We want to emphasise that we do not consider the studio as a place where one can 'enclose and constitute the work of art' (Burren, 2012, P.83). The studio is only a passing phase for the work. A place to host the found materials for

a short while, to then be able to be played with and manipulated, and once the playing has finished, the work is sent back out into the real world, to hold another life to the viewer.

This section of text will often refer to Daniel Buren's essay, *The Function of the Studio*, in which he discusses the studio and how problematic it can be. Firstly, Buren rules three functions of the studio:

'(1) It is the place where the work originates.

(2) It is generally a private place, an ivory tower perhaps.

(3) It is a stationary place where portable objects are produced.' (2012, P.83)

One could presume that for the majority of artists, the first function holds truth, however to our collaboration this is only partly true. As discussed previously, our work originates from where the objects are found, from the moment the found material is spotted, to then being carried to the studio, this journey is pivotal to the practice. The objects have a life prior to us, this is often reflected in their tired, battered states that they are usually received in. We seem to reject the notion of higher art materials. We choose the found materials because of their tired, worn states, instead of an object that is pristine, clean, with no previous life.

With the second function of the studio, one would have to discover the differences in our version of a studio and the one discussed in Buren's text. There is no notion of our studio being perceived as an 'ivory tower', in fact we would like to perceive it as the opposite (Buren, 2012, P.83). This is reflected in the physical nature of our studio and our attitude towards this space, whether this be the studio located at York St John University [Figure 12] or our current studio at Art Happens Here in Malton [Figure 13] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). If one was to isolate the fact that the studio at York St John University is a part of an institution, it would be appropriate to perceive this space as an 'ivory tower'. (Buren, 2012, P.83). But looking physically at these spaces, they aren't the typical 'Parisian studio... large... characterized primarily by its high ceilings' (Buren, 2012, P.83). The spaces are small, modest, and quite frankly unimposing places for another artist or outsider.



The third function, stating that the studio is a 'stationary place where portable objects are produced' perhaps holds some truth to us (Buren, 2012, P.83). The studio is stationary, a place where the transformation happens to the materials and mediums. However, the aspect of the objects being portable, in ways is correct, every object we have found, made, or collected can be portable, but maybe some more than others. For example, although the 6-by-6-foot canvases are easily lifted, they are not as easy to transport. The portable aspect of our work is perhaps a second thought, we will often create something with only the process in mind. It then becomes apparent that we'll struggle to transport this piece, however, more often than not, the struggles we have in the transportation make for inspiration in our next works. Such as, carrying three 6-foot canvases through the centre of York at mid-day during the summer, makes for great writing inspiration [Figure 14] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021).

In *The Function of the Studio*, Buren states:

'The work must be isolated from the real world. All the same, it is in the studio, and only in the studio, that it is closest to its own reality... it is therefore only in the studio that the work may be said to belong' (Buren, 2012, P.85).

This statement presents numerous questions: why must the work be created in isolation to the real world? Does being away from the real-world mean going to an isolated place physically

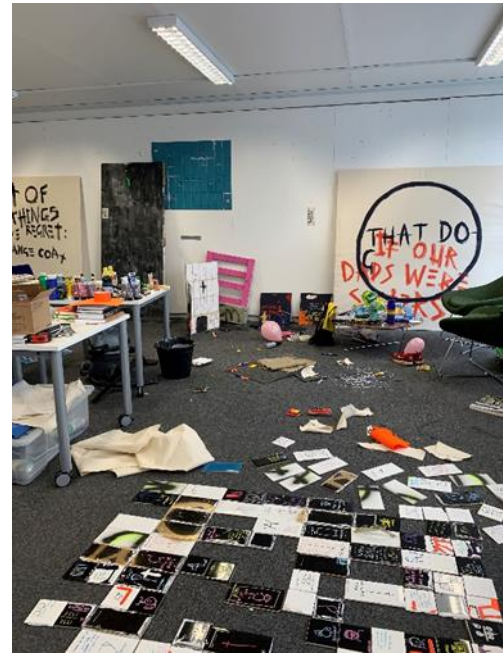


Figure 12: JR<sup>2</sup>, York St John Studio [mixed media] 2021.

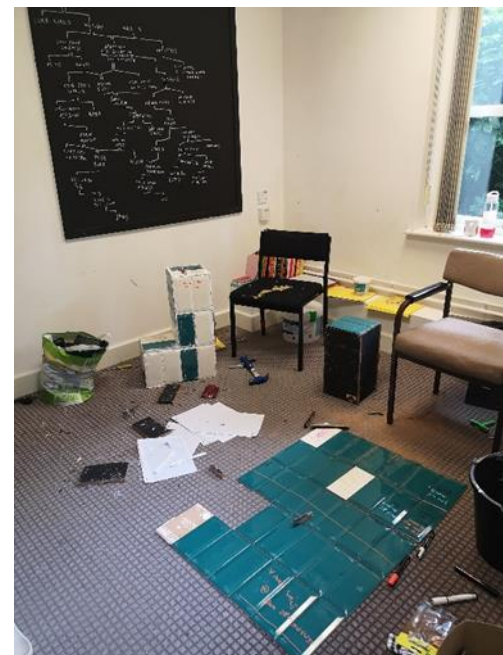


Figure 13: JR<sup>2</sup>, Art Happens Here Studio [mixed media] 2021.

or switching off mentally from the world around? This notion of the 'real world' and the studio holding its own reality is somewhat questionable to our practice (Buren, 2012, P.85). Firstly, can anything be isolated away from the real world when our practice involves bringing the real world into the studio? By bringing in found materials to the studio, alongside the conversation we hear outside, we are in turn working with the real world. Leaving one to question, is it in the studio where our work is 'closest to its own reality'? (Buren, 2012, P.85).



Figure 14: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Canvases on Route* [photograph] 2021.

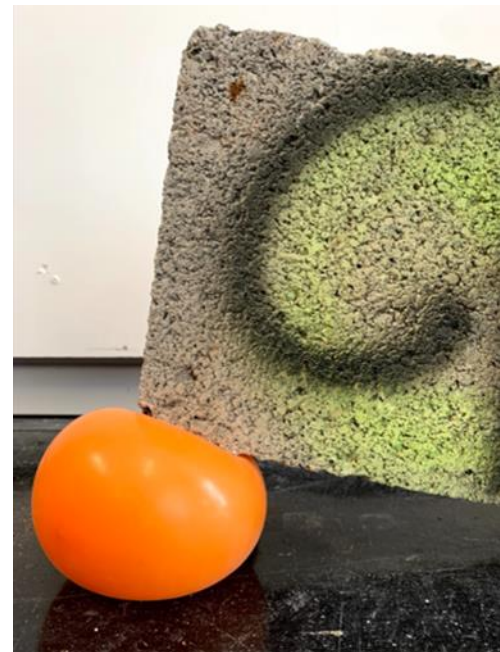


Figure 15: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Balloon* [sculpture] 2021.

To continue with Buren's statement, this term of isolation, questioning whether isolation allows the artist to take time to be with the materials, reflecting upon the work and allowing 'Thinking through Making' to occur (Ingold, 2013, P.6). Improvising with the materials and mediums is perhaps key to reaching this other reality, accepting that the 'creativity of thinking through making lies in the improvisation rather than the innovation' (Institute for Northern Culture, 2013, 06:08).

Through improvisation, we are able to stretch and push materials whilst accepting that 'whatever you want is the basis, but you have to adjust' (Olch Richards, 2004, P.7). In the work *Balloon* [Figure 15], we were able to manipulate the balloon to withstand the force and weight of the breezeblock, through the support at the back of the piece (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). This support is hidden in the image, we decided to crop the image so that the viewer would only be able to see the balloon and the breezeblock, nothing else. The viewer can then see this tension, this weightiness and precariousness that the image unfolds. Even though we know the piece has a support, we can feel this sense of anxiety in the image, which seems to be a

waiting game for the breezeblock to slam on to the floor as the balloon pops. This piece wasn't created without failure, the balloon had popped twice before we were able to succeed. This work, alike others, created this other reality in which the traditional, conventional uses of materials are compromised, manipulated, and adjusted.

Furthermore, this sense of 'isolation from the real world' relates back to a previous statement, this notion of otherworldliness, and the play we encounter whilst creating in the studio (Buren, 2012, P.85). We need the studio to hold another reality, another realm, so that we can play with materials and space. Artist Marcel Duchamp, whose work will be thoroughly explored in the next chapter, experienced the studio as 'an atmosphere in which space, and indeed reality, could be thought of differently' (Molderings, 2007, P. 75). This is what we encounter as a collaborative, the space is a place for playfulness, to make mistakes, free from pressure.

This concept of the studio having its 'own reality' is a term referred to by Phyllida Barlow, except this other reality is also felt through the sculpture itself (Buren, 2012, P.85). Barlow states that a sculpture 'has its own reality, I think for me that is very much what sculpture is about. About not quite knowing where its reality is and being able to play' (Bloomberg Markets and Finance, 2017). As a duo, we share this perception upon reality, acknowledging that there is a different realm entered when in the studio. The studio becomes a part of our lives so separate from everything else, yet reality weaves itself into the work we produce. This is observed in the written text that are painted or drawn on to a material. These words are drawn from the conversations myself and Phoebe have heard outside of the studio, joining the fragments of the studio and the outside world. This can be suggested as once a work is complete, 'it is a thing on its own, apart from you... when I've finished, it's telling me something' (Fisher, 2013, P.76). This is perhaps something that is unique to us, because only we can share this reality, only the two of us can be present in this other world. The finished work holds remnants of this other reality, and once we have left this reality, we can then begin to analyse.

Reflecting upon Buren's statement, the latter half, that 'it is therefore only in the studio that the work may be said to belong', does not apply to our collaborative practice (Buren, 2012, P.85). We aren't making work that has no life outside of the studio. We are collecting found material from the outside world, playing with it within the studio, and then be pushing it back out into the outside world. Perhaps the work only ever truly belongs in the place in which it is found, not in the studio in which it is taken to. Or perhaps, if the found material has been displaced for such a long period of time, being moved from place-to-place, it doesn't truly belong anywhere. The material is portable, and intends to remain portable, in which it can continue being displaced amongst different spaces.

Furthermore, the 'isolation' Buren states is a similar concept presented within John Baldessari's statement (Buren, 2012, P.85). Baldessari states the studio is a place in which 'one must choose self-imposed exile' (Fisher, 2013, P. 73). However, could this statement be true of our practice? How can one be completely isolated or exiled when in a collaboration? If we were to be completely isolated from one another, there would be no collaboration. The notion of an artist choosing 'self-imposed exile' appears limiting, the studio isn't just a space to create work (Fisher, 2013, P.73). It is a social space, a place to meet people, somewhere that has multiple projects working alongside one another. A similar notion shared in Andy Warhol's factory, a studio working upon a much larger scale but still reflecting the need for the space to be a 'teeming hive' (Cappock, 2012).



Figure 16: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Community Fair* [still from video] 2021.

Through reading Daniel Buren's essay upon *The Function of the Studio* it is evident that Buren is not interested in studios that sole purpose is to feed their work into the market, that the studio becomes a 'convenience for the organizer' or 'a boutique where we find ready-to-wear art' (Buren, 2012, P.84). Buren is more interested in what happens beyond the gallery, site specificity and different audiences. This notion of thinking we take great interest in, the playing of different works in different places, other than the studio or the gallery. During our second



residency at Art Happens Here (Malton) in May 2021, we decided to play with the notion of taking the art out of the studio, and then putting it out or back into the real world. This piece of work was titled *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [Figure 17], a vintage large-scale sign with red vinyl stickers (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021).

Initially the sign was used for a community fair sale, however we added their own stamp onto the sign. Using the limited letters, we began to rearrange the letters into sentences, concluding on *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [Figure 17] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). One could presume there was an autobiographical turn to this text-based piece. And whilst thinking about autobiographical text, one thinks of Tracey Emin, an artist showing how 'confessional truth-telling can be, and often is, a form of storytelling' (Smith, 2017, P. 296). Emin states 'I think every artist has a backbone to what they do... photography, painting... but for me it's writing' (Brown, 2006, P.53). This is evident in her practice and her use of autobiographical subject matter into text. Such as, Emin's piece *Everyone I Have Slept With 1963-1995* [Figure 18], a tent with



Figure 17: JR<sup>2</sup>, *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [sculpture] 2021.

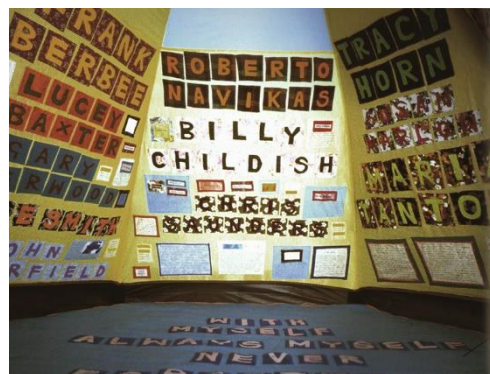


Figure 18: Emin, T. *Everyone I Have Slept With 1963-1995* [installation] 1995.

102 names sewn in textiles, all of which Emin had slept with as of 1995 (Emin, T. 1995). The tent was misinterpreted as a euphemism for sexual partners, when in fact this was not the case. (Brown, 2006, P. 83). Some of the names were people Emin had simply slept alongside, 'like my grandma. I used to lay in bed with her and hold her hand' (Didcock, 2006).

There is a level of autobiographical to our practice, in a vast majority of the work produced, the pieces are inspired by life events which are often seen in bouts of text or through images. These can be seen in works such as *pets past and present* [Figure 19], a work which as the

title suggests, lists the names of pets we have had within our life (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2020). However, there are some pieces which do not relate to our collaborative or personal life's, such as *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [Figure 17] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). We do not in fact know anyone named Tony or his mum. Through having some pieces be truly autobiographical, and others not, it keeps the

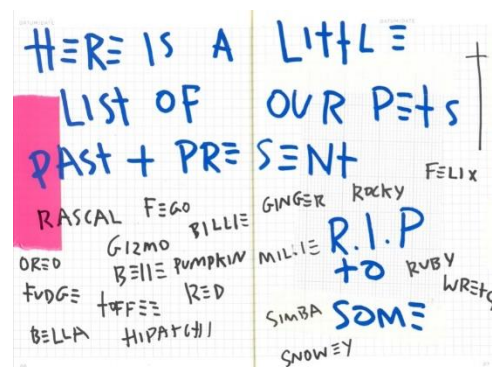


Figure 19: JR<sup>2</sup>, *pets past and present* [drawing] 2020.

viewer intrigued and questioning which they believe to be true or false.

To continue, once *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [Figure 17] felt as though it was finished, we took the work from the studio and brought it back into the real world, tied between two tree's in the car park (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). This changed the notion of the piece, the feeling, the way in which it was encountered. Whoever saw the piece will have stumbled upon it, so out of context, that perhaps it wouldn't feel real to the viewer. However, these are the kind of encounters we aspire the work to have, these raw reactions, from people who perhaps don't particularly have interests in art. As often we feel that if a piece of work is placed within a traditional gallery setting, where the work is fitted 'according to the whim of some departmental curator', it loses some of its relationship between the work, the artist, and its place of origin (the found material, the outside world) (Buren, 2012, P.88). This relationship 'between the work and its place of production' was a key aspect to artist Constantin Brancusi's work (Buren, 2012, P.88). He challenged the notion of exhibiting work inside the gallery, where to Brancusi, the gallery/museum would go to 'great lengths to conceal: the banality of the work' (Buren, 2012, P.89).

In turn, Brancusi preserved this relationship by presenting his 'work in the very place where it first saw light', the studio (Buren, 2012, P.89). Reiterating this importance of the space, especially when trying to preserve this truthfulness of the work, the process, and the materials. We try to achieve this in the way we exhibit work, especially whilst in a gallery setting. By incorporating certain aspects of our making, process, gestures, and the studio into the final

curation of the work. Having works placed directly onto the floor, instead of a plinth, reflecting the notion of how it was created and rejecting the traditional forms of curation. This will be further explored within the last chapter of this thesis, our exhibition *carpenterS & carpetS* (2021).

To conclude this chapter, *JR<sup>2</sup> and the importance of space*. There has been an interesting discovery, that being the realization that the work we produce does not belong in the studio, in the long term and neither does it originate there. That in fact the studio, is a passing phase for the work, the found materials originate in the outside world. It have a life, stories, and details from this outside world, this is where the objects truly belong. So, the studio becomes a small phase, a place to slightly alter the work, to then be pushed back into the real or outside world. The chapter has also reflected the significance of space as providing different contexts for the work. The studio could perhaps be seen as a comforting environment our collaboration, in which it should be. Where the work is stored, played with, a space allowing time for enquiry. However, by placing the found objects within a different setting, this also alters the context of the work. For example, *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [Figure 17] or *Crap Tea* [Figure 20], by bringing these works outside of the studio, into the outside world (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). They seem to revert back to the found objects they once were, by removing the studio, the pieces revert to being vintage signs or discarded pull curtains. Overall, it is clear how important space is and continues to be within our practice, it is something that we are in a constant play with.





Figure 20: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Crap Tea* [painting] 2021.



## Materials and JR<sup>2</sup>:

This section of the thesis will focus upon the materials used within our practice, gaining a further understanding into their importance. In order to do so there will be reference to both the Arte Povera art movement and James Elkins text *On Some Limits of Materiality in Art History* (2008). Both topics will be helpful in pinpointing the relevant contexts which have inspired our collaborative work, whilst paying 'critical attention to the materiality' discussed by Elkins (P.5, 2008).

To begin, there will be a short insight into the Arte Povera art movement, the movement originated in northern Italy cities during 1967-1972, the word Arte Povera translates to 'poor art' (Christov-Bakargiev, Celant, 2002, P.11). The word 'poor' relates to the movements material choice, instead of creating works with bronze, clay, marble, and oil paint on canvas, the artists encouraged the use of unconventional/everyday materials and techniques. These everyday materials ranged from industrial construction objects, rags, bricks, and readymade objects, to then be transformed into strong sculptural pieces. The radical art movement pushed new boundaries in both practice and material, reinventing

and questioning different ways of working and thinking. In turn, the movement 'expanded the fields of painting, sculpture, drawing, performance, and photography, often moving from one medium to another without concern for a 'signature style' (Christov-Bakargiev, Celant, 2002, P.11). This statement is pivotal whilst thinking of our collaborative practice, we are often



Figure 21: JR<sup>2</sup>, LSV [painting] 2021.



Figure 22: JR<sup>2</sup>, G [multi-media] 2021.

working with multiple materials, within multiple different fields. We explore this by using a paint brush to apply layers of plaster or grout onto a painting. We intend to question the boundaries of said fields, by using materials in an unconventional manor.

Whilst considering art movements, Arte Povera could be closely associated with our practice. We seek inspiration from many artists of this time, including Alighiero Boetti, Eliseo Mattiacci and Marcel Duchamp. These artists were key to the movement, they reinformed materials and played with notions of space, materiality, found object and exhibiting works. We also find inspiration in more contemporary Arte Povera artists, such as, Sarah Lucas and Walead Beshty. There will be a thorough insight into how this movement informed our practice, how we play with material, the readymade, and the found material.

The Arte Povera movement continuously explores this questioning and playfulness of everyday material, taken from the real world and then placed within the gallery setting. If a found material is consciously and aesthetically placed within a gallery setting, does this change how the piece is perceived? Marcel Duchamp played with this notion in numerous works, most famously *Fountain* [Figure 23], this piece involved a porcelain urinal, placed upon its back, with the words 'R. Mutt 1917' painted in black among the front (Cabanne, 1997, P. 114) (Duchamp, M. 1917). This readymade was then 'pseudonymously submitted to (and rejected by) the Society of Independent Artists for exhibition in 1917' (Lehman, 2020, P. 350). The work was rejected by the committee as they stated a urinal was 'by no definition, a work of art' (Naumann, 2012, P. 72). Even though the readymade work was



Figure 23: Duchamp, M. *Fountain* [sculpture] 1917.

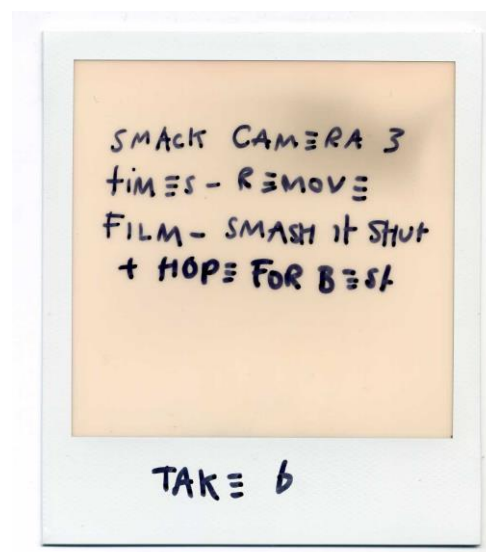


Figure 24: JR<sup>2</sup>, *TAKE 6* [photograph] 2021.

so 'alienatingly displaced', the piece still intrigued the viewer, as it was remarkable (Hoffmann, 2012, P.75). Interestingly, Duchamp stated that by changing the title of the piece, and relocating it outside of its normal context, this 'created a new thought for that object' (Reed, 1985, P. 224). This notion of thinking is reflected in the piece *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [Figure 17] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). By placing works within a different context, the thought for the object changes, presenting it in a different light. By placing an object within the gallery setting, one may see the object placed on a pedestal, but by placing the work outside, the object reverts to its original mode.

To continue, Duchamp's *Fountain* [Figure 23] excited our practice, not only in his use of the readymade but also his play with words (1917). Using text as a material to be played with is a notion which sits closely to our collaborative practice. The words written along the front of the urinal are 'R. Mutt 1917', presenting numerous questions and possibilities to the viewer. Firstly, the name 'R. Mutt', was used as an alias, so that Duchamp could submit this piece to a committee in which he was on (Naumann, F, 1999, P. 114). This ensured that there was a true response to the piece, without knowing it was Duchamp's work (Reed, 1985, P. 223). Secondly, the name on the work could be a homage to the place that the urinal was made, J. L. Mott Iron works 'a large sanitary equipment manufacturer', a slight alteration from Mott to Mutt, perhaps for the name not to be too obvious (Camfield, 1989, P.23). Or perhaps the play with 'R. Mutt' could be a translation to Readymade due to the use of the R and the M. Fourthly, there is suggestion that 'R. Mutt' came from the 'daily cartoon strip Mutt and Jeff' (Camfield, 1989, P. 23). All of these presumptions, which in ways all could be true, or false, seem to highlight Duchamp's humour.

Another piece from the forefront of the Arte Povera movement was Eliseo Mattiacci's work *Tube* [Figure 25] (1967). The piece was created using a singular yellow 'nickel-plated iron pipe', measuring 150 metres



Figure 25: Mattiacci, E. *Tube* [sculpture] 1967.

long (Giovanni Aloï – Artifact, 2020). The tube is present in both the inside and the outside of the gallery space, exploring this in-between space of the art world and the outside world. The viewer can admire the tube from both perspectives, perhaps one sees the tube differently outside the gallery than they do inside. This is possibly true, with a lot of Arte Povera work, the setting/gallery space, is the most effective tool. Without the gallery space, the work could perhaps be overlooked, as it is traditionally unsuitable for that space. This is a similar notion shared in contemporary sculptor Phyllida Barlow's work, her pieces are often deemed 'inappropriate for that setting' (BBC Newsnight, 2019, 02:17). *Tube* [Figure 25] is placed directly onto the floor, meaning the work interrupts the space, one has to be wary of its location, this wariness is exonerated by the tubes colour (Mattiacci, E. 1967). The vibrant yellow allures the viewer to think of construction, and the need to make something visible. The tube may have been used previously for extraction; in this case the owner needs to know its whereabouts. The work is minimalist, and for this reason, it can be translated into many things, a snake, a line, a tube, a continuous loop, a never-ending thing.

To continue, this aspect of the gallery being an important part of the Arte Povera movement, once the work is inside the gallery, there is a certain notion that attaches itself, a certain respect and seriousness. These notions come from sculptures history of using 'precious metals and stone', and specifically art galleries history, being associated with plinths, bronze, and marble, putting the works on a pedestal of importance (Day, 2012, P. 1). So what happens when these elements are taken away from the gallery setting? When sculpture isn't placed upon a plinth? Or is made with unconventional sculptural material? In our piece *Top Dog* [Figure 26], this 35mm image captures the truthfulness of the work (2021). A battered studio chair becomes the stage for



Figure 26: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Top Dog* [sculpture] 2021.



the work, the piece is created using damaged ceramic tiles, grout, Posca pen, and pink acrylic paint. The wooden frame underneath the tiles were created using off-cuts from a wooden wardrobe we'd found two months prior. We attempted to measure the wooden panels to fit the scale of the tiles perfectly. However, some parts of the wood overlapped or created gaps. This is where we had to be generous with our application of grout, in order to disguise but also emphasise the mistakes. *Top Dog* [Figure 26] as an image provides an insight into our ways of working, the processes, and the reality of the materials we work with (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). This can be seen with the sawdust produced by the wood, which is present in the bottom right-hand corner of the image. Additionally, the paint tubs are taped shut to avoid spillages or drying out.

The image also allures to our art inspirations with the capturing of a collection of books in the foreground. One of which is Phyllida Barlows who may have subconsciously inspired the curation of the 35mm image. *Top Dog* [Figure 26] was merely placed upon the chair for easier access (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). However, in retrospect the image holds similar qualities to *Objects for an Armchair* [Figure 27] (Barlow, P. 1994). In both images, that being ours and Barlow's, there is a lot happening in terms of material. The work itself, the chairs, and the life around, these all compromise of different textures, surfaces, and marks. Both images suggest a level of the domestic, more clearly in



Figure 27: Barlow, P. *Objects for an Armchair* [sculpture] 1994.

Barlow's image, but also in our piece, the use of the chair, the books, the paper, even the central heating pipes on the right-hand side. These materials, acting like back drops to the pieces themselves, are so critical in supporting the piece. To reiterate they show the materials process, the ways of working, the materials properties.

It should be noted that throughout the mention of the Arte Povera movement, the artists and our collaboration, the connecting factor is the use of found material. Found material always remains pivotal to our practice, whether the found material is the base, like that of *Top Dog* [Figure 26], or whether the found material is the canvas in which the work happens upon, like that of *Phillip WORM* [Figure 28] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). In the piece *Phillip WORM* [Figure 28], we used a wardrobe door as the surface, where the paint was applied directly to the found material, embracing the wear, tear, marked or scratched surface (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). This can be seen in the marks among the material, how in some parts the paint has worn off, the unpredictable scratches, the duo work with these scratches in order to carve 'Phillip Worm' into the piece. All of these qualities come from the found material, these are signs of a previous life, which are embraced.

We work with found material in several ways, one of which is through additional, smaller materials, such as door hinges, pieces of glass and other metal objects.

These additions may be added to other found or newer material, such as, a cushion piece *With Full Fat* [Figure 29], a piece which had been in the studio for several months, was combined with a newer piece *It MIGHT* [Figure 29] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). This combination of the found and new material, this clash of soft and hard surfaces, worn and new, sculpture alongside elements of painting, textiles, drawing and text. Suggesting and showcasing how 'categories



Figure 28: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Phillip WORM* [painting] 2021.



Figure 29: JR<sup>2</sup>, *With Full Fat, It MIGHT* [sculpture] 2021.

like sculpture and painting have been kneaded and stretched and twisted in an extraordinary demonstration of elasticity' (Krauss, Michelson, 1978, P. 31). In this quote, Krauss is referring to sculpture and paintings ever-changing boundaries, and perhaps how material and medium is ever shifting. Our practice has consistently involved experimentation, one could suggest that we continuously float between different boundaries of practice, often combining them together. For example, in the piece *With Full Fat* [Figure 29], a second-hand cushion cover, with the words, 'With Full Fat' cut out of orange felt, which was then stuck to the cushion cover (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). Alongside *It MIGHT* [Figure 29], a ceramic piece, with grout and posca pen, stuck to an L shaped wooden base (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). There is a mixture of several types of media present. The cushion cover suggests an element of textiles, the ceramic L-shaped object suggests sculpture, and the heavily applied grout alludes to a form of painting.

In order to gain a further understanding into the significance of material in our practice, there will be an exploration into James Elkins text, *On Some Limits of Materiality in Art History* (2008). The text will give insight into the role of materiality, whilst thinking of our collaborative practice. To begin, Elkins second chapter, *The Fear of Materiality*, suggests how the "purely" or "merely" physical or material is conceived as a domain that is somehow outside of historical interpretation' (Elkins, 2008, P. 5). The chapter title, this fear of materiality, implies this daunting feeling one encounters when explaining a pieces materiality. To take a piece of work and focus solely on the material, thinking about *each* brush stroke, each mark, each tone, the scrapes of paint, the intentional and the unintentional marks doesn't come without difficulty. However, this is where one wants to question, why should writing about materiality come at such difficulty? Perhaps this comes from a fear of the unknown, this is something artists encounter daily, but perhaps not so much a fear, more of an acceptance. For most artists, 'the not knowing is crucial... without having the possibility of the mind move in unanticipated directions, there would be no invention' (Fisher, 2013, P.8). Maybe this notion of creating work, the feeling of the unknown, is a similar unknown an art historian feels when encountering and

writing about materiality. This isn't something to be feared, but to be accepted, something to take with a certain aspect of slowness, which Elkins discusses (2008, P. 5).

This aspect of slowness, in terms of materiality, is something one has to experience, perhaps not just in the final form a piece may take, but in its process of making. Elkins discusses in his final chapter, *The Slowness of The Studio*, how academia is 'very fast paced' in comparison to the slowness of the studio, and ultimately the making of works (2008, P.5). He makes clear the physical demands of the studio and of the work, how 'objects get in the way: large things are difficult to move' (Elkins, 2008, P. 6). This aspect of slowness within our practice work is true, perhaps the main reason our time in the studio is slowed down. The moving of heavy objects is something we have to take time to organise and think through. Elkins continues by stating:

'Artists have two fundamental choices: either they optimize their methods and media so they can make things more efficiently, or they stick with what they have and learn to think at its level.' (2008, P.6).

Perhaps every artist, at some point in their practice, has had to think about their methods of working or their material choice. The second choice seems to sit closely to our practice, this notion of: 'stick with what they have and learn to think at its level' (Elkins, 2008, P. 6). We have through trial and error, learnt to think at the level of our materials. An insight into this thinking comes from our ceramic tile pieces, which initially refused to stick to the wooden boxes. The first time we tried to stick the tiles to the wood, we used grout, but the tiles continued to fall off the box. After several efforts, we used hot glue, in a large quantity, allowing the tiles to stick for a period of time, then to secure, we used grout in the gaps. This process, this figuring out of materials took about one week to master, and then there was the waiting time for the grout to dry. This notion of working may seem slow to an academic, perhaps this is due to the



Figure 30: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Tile & Grout* [photography] 2021.



unknown surrounding the ways of working. Why is it important that we stick these tiles to an L-shaped box? We aren't sure of our reasonings, which is fine, but these unknowns can offer difficulty to an academic. This way of working as artists, 'does not yield many ideas per page or per day' for art historians (Elkins, 2008, P.7).

Overall, this chapter has made clear how important material is within our practice, it has also provided context and perhaps the main source of inspiration we have concerning material. The Arte Povera movement, Tracey Emin, Walead Beshty and Phyllida Barlow, all of which inspire our practice, due to their use of material. All of their practices come with a sense of accessibility whether this is due to use of found material, lower costing materials, or their motivations to work with what's readily available. There is also an aspect of play with a majority of their practices and processes. These two aspects of play and the found material are pivotal in our collaborative practice. The chapter has also given insight and discussion into the 'fear of materiality' (Elkins, 2008, P. 3) and the 'slowness of the studio', both in regards to material and process (Elkins, 2008, P.5). When applying these notions to our practice, one may notice this occurring theme of the not knowing. Not entirely knowing why materials work in a certain way, why sometimes one may be successful with materials and sometimes not. This acceptance of the slowness of material, being patient and accepting that there will always be a level of not knowing. To take away from this chapter are three major aspects of our materials, firstly, the importance of found material, secondly, an acceptance of not knowing, and thirdly, being as playful as possible.

**carpenterS and carpetS and JR<sup>2</sup>:**

Exhibition details and blurb:

‘JR<sup>2</sup>

carpenterS & carpetS (2021)

mixed media installation

JR<sup>2</sup> are a multidisciplinary, Fine Art duo founded in York, UK.

JR<sup>2</sup> + charity shops + bad DIY + found material + few canvases = carpenterS & carpetS

carpenterS & carpetS centres the collaborations playfulness with found material, text, space and the readymade. Conversations, out of context humour and the absurd is present throughout this body of work, informed by a visual language constructed through the duo's working relationship. This language is grounded in the mundane day-to-day in which JR<sup>2</sup> position themselves and resource their material investigation. This new body of work, incorporating sculpture, painting, and installation, has been developed through the research the duo have undergone this past year during their Master of Arts.’

In order to conclude our research we held an exhibition at the Vessel Gallery at York St John University, naming the exhibition ‘*carpenterS & carpetS*’ (2021). The exhibition aimed to tie in these important aspects of material and space, paying particular attention into how the work was encountered by the viewer and by the artists themselves. By changing the materials setting, which in turn seemed to alter the context of the work. We also aimed to curate the exhibition in a way in which gave insight into our processes, the gestures of the work, giving space for our interests in precariousness, weight, and gravity to push through.

The exhibition consisted of nine works, ranging from sculpture to the readymade to paintings upon canvas [Figure 31] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). In order to choose which nine works would be in the exhibit, we brought all the work from the studio, into the Vessel gallery space. This part of the decision making is often challenging, and this challenge comes from the moment the work is

moved from studio to gallery space. This transition of site, often to a site of a much larger space, makes our work feel small. However, by the work initially feeling small, it allows for space and enquiry, we have often felt that our work in a gallery space is better suited to a more minimalist approach. That less is more.

Before delving into specific works in the space, it is important to learn that as a collaboration we intend for the installation of the work to reflect our processes of making. We allow chance happenings, experimenting through trial-and-error, and working upon the pieces in the gallery space whilst installing. Fundamentally we are trying to give the viewer an insight into JR<sup>2</sup>, pieces reflecting our humour and the memories we share, a small snippet into life as a collaboration.

The centre piece to the exhibition, the piece which ties the exhibits name into the show, is *carpetS* [Figure 32] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). A 6-by-6-foot canvas with the words ‘when did carpenters stop making carpets?’ drawn on with white chalk. The idea for this work came to us after a discussion they had over dinner, joining these important aspects of practice, conversation, and process, and also this joining of the art and outside world. Perhaps what is most significant about this work, and its reasoning for being in the exhibit was its

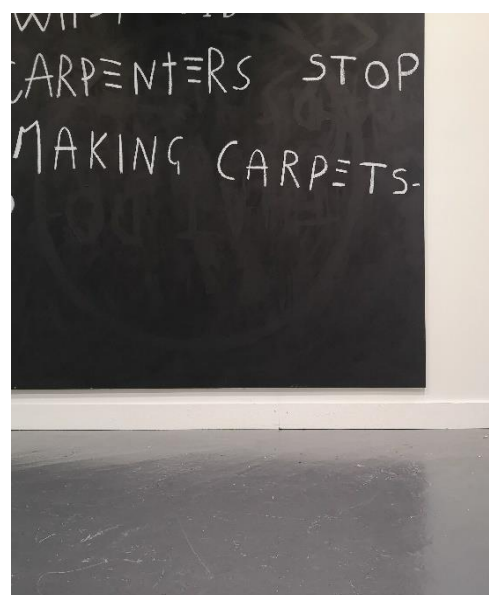


Figure 32: JR<sup>2</sup>, *carpetS* [painting] 2021.

retained gestures from its previous life. As is made clear throughout this research, is our ability to reuse and recycle materials, continuously giving works another life beyond their ‘final’ form. These gestures come through the painted marks underneath the painted surface. Originally the canvas was made for an exhibit we had in July 2021, however, after this exhibition the work was stuck in the studio. That was until we decided to reuse the piece, we repainted the surface with black house paint, intentionally placing the canvas upside down, so the viewer couldn’t fully distinguish the words that were previously on the canvas. These gestures, marks,

textures, all of which we want the viewer to encounter, reflect their notion of the studio and perhaps the found materials we work with. Even though the canvas wasn't a found material, it had a life before the exhibition.

In the piece, *carpetS* [Figure 32], there wasn't just interest in how the work retained the marks and gesture from its previous life, there is also this sense of the unknown as previously discussed in this research (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). We made the decision to cover the canvas, without knowing how the paint would conceal the previous work, not knowing the texture the surface would present. Interestingly, this unknown presented an almost two-in-one aspect to this piece, from certain angles, the piece has these previous gestures [Figure 32], and from other angles, these textures and marks couldn't be seen [Figure 33] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). This is something we did not know would happen, with every piece created, we often 'start from a place of openness or unknowing when it comes to working with materials' (Sillars, 2021, P. 8).

For us and likewise other collaborations (such as Julia Crabtree & William Evans), the use of gestures, physical materials, the unknown and the 'placement of objects is another way for us to try explain things to each other' (Sillars, 2021, P.2). We work in a very visual way, in order for us to explain something to one another, in terms of exhibiting or in our processes, we have to physically move and place the pieces to show the potential of the work to the other. This occurred



Figure 33: JR<sup>2</sup>, *carpetS* [painting] 2021.



Figure 34: JR<sup>2</sup>, *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [sculpture] 2021.

during the hanging of *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [Figure 34], the curation of this piece was thought of by Phoebe. We had difficulty explaining how we imagined the piece to be displayed, this was until Phoebe physically began hooking the fishing wire over the above beam, hoisting the banner five foot from the ground.

To continue, *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [Figure 34], a large scale (4-foot by 8-foot) sign, hung from an overhead beam using fishing wire, held in place by a breezeblock (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). The piece evokes a sense of tension, the way in which the solid, dense breezeblock clashes with the lightness of the banner, alongside the ongoing tension the viewer (and artist) feels towards the tightly strung fishing wire. There is always this fear that the wire could snap, a waiting game, alike the piece *Ball00n* previously mentioned [Figure 15] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). The fishing wire evokes questions: do we want to conceal the way in which we have hung the piece? Do we want it to appear as floating? As a collaboration we enjoy this play we have with the viewer, because at a distance the piece does appear to be floating, however from a closer view the audience will see the fishing wire. They will be able to witness the true nature to how the piece was hung, the tight fishing wire, the excess of wire wrapped around the breezeblock, the knot where the two materials join.

There is a journey which this piece has taken, from found material, to studio, to an outdoor site piece, and then into the gallery. To reiterate, this notion of gestures, through the folds and creases of the material, as seen in *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [Figure 35] and *Yesterday's Find's, Spider and Freya* [Figure 37] suggests an immediacy in the way we work (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). These folds hold remnants of these spaces, these gestures have formed through its previous life from the studio, its storage, its transformation, and its movement. Not only do we



Figure 35: JR<sup>2</sup>, *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [sculpture] 2021.

enjoy the gestures of the work, but we also wanted to translate the feeling of the outdoors, when the piece was hung between the trees [Figure 17] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). We chose to suspend the piece in a similar notion as a homage to this. The weightlessness, peacefully moving with nature, was reiterated in the gallery, the piece slowly moved as a door opened or as someone passed the work, gently blowing. This piece never remains static, even if only slightly, it is moving, it is foldable, transformable, its shape shifts.

Another piece, retaining gestures, whilst also being an autobiographical piece is *Yesterday's Find's, Spider and Freya* [Figure 36] a small tablecloth found in a charity shop, with the poem 'Freya, Freya, Freya's mum all got in the big blue car to pick up Bob R. But unfortunately they got lost on M62 near THAT HOUSE' cut out of orange felt (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). This was the second time we have worked with orange felt – the first being in *With Full Fat* [Figure 29] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). The decision to work with



Figure 36: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Yesterday's Find's, Spider and Freya* [sculpture] 2021.

orange felt came from the inability to work with paint or pens upon the cloth, because they would have bled through, not creating this block writing that we intended. The orange felt is thick in texture, it lifts from the cloth, in the same way a heavily textured painting lifts from the canvas. We wanted the piece to have this tactile nature to it, the desire to run one's hand along the surface, feeling each letter. It was also important for us to create this poem in a bright material, so that the writing was brighter than the table frame and cloth. Both these objects hold a sense of home which is interrupted by the brightly coloured, out of context

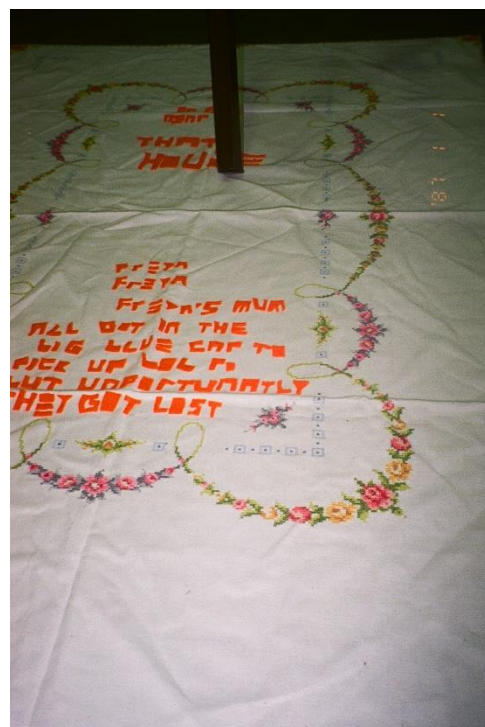


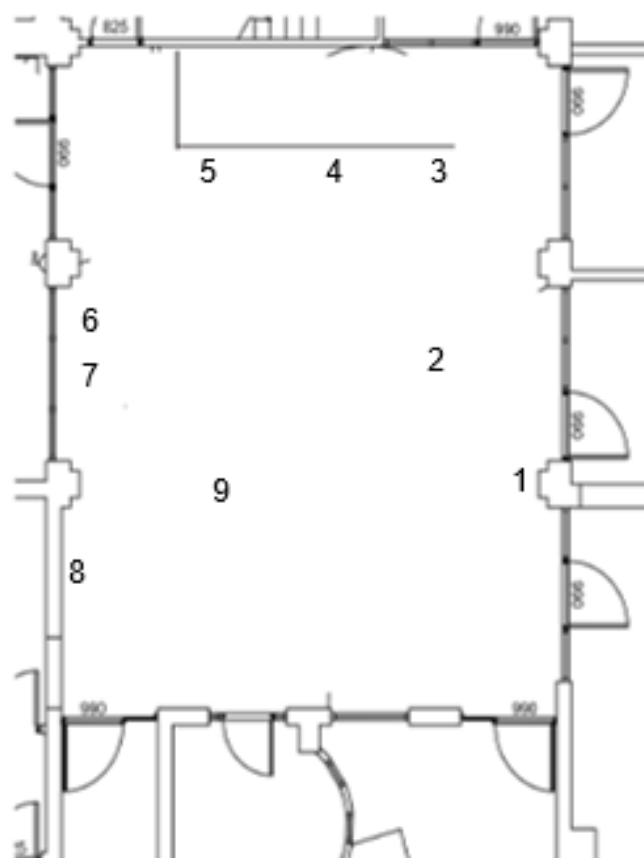
Figure 37: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Yesterday's Find's, Spider and Freya* [sculpture] 2021.



poem [Figure 37] (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). Partly on top of the tablecloth is the metal frame of the table, in which two of the legs are bent inwards, the frame appears squashed, rigid.

Both of these found materials hold gestures, the tablecloth suggests these in the cloths folds and creases, and the frame in the worn joints of the legs. The viewer can relate to the material in this way, the folds, suggest that the tablecloth has been stored away for months, only to be brought out on special occasions. We wanted to approach the work with a sense of playfulness and humour. The sense of irony of having the tablecloth placed onto the floor, with the table frame on top of that, one would presume the objects would be the opposite way round. We were thinking about Duchamp's studio, how 'everyday objects populate a room, the coordinates of which are upside down' (Molderings, 2007, P.73). Notably, this wasn't the only reason for curating the two pieces in this way, we were keen not to cover the table frame. Enjoying this clash and tension between the two textures, one being soft, foldable, having the ability to manipulate the cloth into many different forms. Whereas the table frame, hard, firm, static, and hard to operate.

Overall, this opportunity to exhibit work in a different space that was not the studio or the outside world, allowed our collaboration, JR<sup>2</sup>, to question our own work in the gallery setting. Questioning whether the materials setting affected the context of the work, which one believes it did. As mentioned previously on page 27 there is a certain aspect of seriousness attached to the work once placed in the gallery setting. An artist is inclined to refine their work, selecting work to be chosen, or equally denied. This exhibition allowed us to combine key pieces into one show, showcasing our research into space and material, our significant use of humour, found material and conversation. Allowing the making to be present in the gallery, by creating works whilst installing, absorbing every moment of the process. The conversations that were had, then translated onto works such as *Yesterday's Find's, Spider and Freya* [Figure 36], this is perhaps what is so immediate and unique to our practice, this ongoing conversation as collaborators, present verbally and in the work (JR<sup>2</sup>, 2021). We are a team, an art collaboration, a friendship.



Vessel Gallery:

1. *Roast Dinner Stand*, ceramic tile, wood off cut, grout, ratchet strap, door hinge. 2021.
2. *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's*, vintage sign, vinyl stickers, fishing wire, breezeblock. 2021.
3. *Top Dog*, ceramic tile, wood off cut, grout, posca pen. 2021.
4. *Carpets*, 6-by-6-foot canvas, house paint, chalk. 2021.
5. *Untitled*, found wooden off cut. 2020.
6. *With Full Fat & It MIGHT*, pillowcase, felt, hot glue, ceramic tile. 2021.
7. *BIG reward*, 4-by-4-foot canvas, house paint, chalk. 2021.
8. *Miss PKSR AND Mrs GET*, 4-by-4-foot canvas, house paint, chalk. 2021.
9. *Yesterday's Find's, Spider and Freya*, metal table frame, tablecloth, felt, hot glue, posca pen. 2021.

Figure 31: JR<sup>2</sup>, *Floor Plan for Vessel Gallery*, 2021.



**Extensive Body of Images:**

Alongside this research, there is an extensive body of images available on the attached PowerPoint file. These images highlight multiple aspects of our work, from the process, the making, the studio, the exhibiting of works and others. All of which have been photographed, and created from August 2020 to November 2021, during the course of the Practice-Led MA Research Fine Art programme.

**Video Documentation:**

The research will also be supported through a 12-month documentation video, captured on our dash cam recorder. The footage will show the true nature of our making and life, showcasing all aspects of the studio, the work, the processes, life outside of the studio and the relationship we share.

To view the video documentation click the link below:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lvPusr4ZbHaJ3Cs93ZLN1gMmia1C-Yvb/view?usp=sharing>

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## Image References:

Listed in order of appearance:

Figure 1: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2019) *Red Line* [sculpture] York, York St John University.

Figure 2: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2019) *d00r* [painting] York, York St John University.

Figure 3: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Wedding PIC* [painting] York, York St John University.

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Figure 5: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2020) *BlOb 23 & 24* [sculpture] York, York St John University.

Figure 6: Beshty, W. (2021) *FedEx Sculptures* [sculpture] Leeds, Henry Moore Institute.

Figure 7: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Candy N* [painting] York, York St John University.

Figure 8: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2020) *BlOb 23 & 24* [sculpture] York, York St John University.

Figure 9: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2020) *tiLE 1* [sculpture] York, York St John University.

Figure 10: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Works in Progress* [mixed media] York, York St John University.

Figure 11: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Studio View* [mixed media, fisheye photograph] York, York St John University.

Figure 12: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *York St John Studio* [mixed media] York, York St John University.

Figure 13: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Art Happens Here Studio* [mixed media] Malton, Art Happens Here.

Figure 14: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Canvases on Route* [photograph] York, York Centre.

Figure 15: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Ball00n* [sculpture] York, York St John University.

Figure 16: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Community Fair* [still from video] Malton, Art Happens Here.

Figure 17: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [sculpture] Malton, Art Happens Here.

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Figure 19: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2020) *pets past and present* [drawing] York, York St John University.

Figure 20: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Crap Tea* [painting] Malton, Art Happens Here.

Figure 21: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *LSV* [painting] York, York St John University.

Figure 22: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *G* [multi-media] York, York St John University.

Figure 23: Duchamp, M. (1917) *Fountain* [sculpture] [Internet] Available from:  
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Figure 25: Mattiacci, E. (1967) *Tube* [sculpture] [Internet] Available from:  
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Figure 26: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Top Dog* [sculpture] Malton, Art Happens Here.

Figure 27: Barlow, P. (1994) *Objects for an Armchair* [sculpture] [Internet] Available from:  
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Figure 28: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Phillip WORM* [painting] Malton, Art Happens Here.

Figure 29: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *With Full Fat* and *It MIGHT* [sculpture] York, Vessel Gallery.

Figure 30: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Tile & Grout* [photography] York, York St John University.

Figure 31: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Floor Plan for Vessel Gallery*. York, Vessel Gallery.

Figure 32: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *carpetS* [painting] York, Vessel Gallery.

Figure 33: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *carpetS* [painting] York, Vessel Gallery.

Figure 34: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [sculpture] York, Vessel Gallery.

Figure 35: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *SH\*T DAY AT Tony's Mum's* [sculpture] York, Vessel Gallery.

Figure 36: JR<sup>2</sup>. (2021) *Yesterday's Find's, Spider and Freya* [sculpture] York, Vessel Gallery.

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