

**Hybrid Residues: Exploring experiences of  
displacement through active participation in  
art practice.**

**Alissar H. McCreary**

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School of Art and Design  
Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment  
Oxford Brookes University

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis explores and examines reciprocity between art practice, active participation, and traced memories of displacement. I review the significance of the active participation of the viewer with artwork which embodies personal experiences of war and displacement, with the aim of promoting what David Abram calls 'sensorial empathy' (1996).

At the outset I formulated my hypotheses which I list below, along with their related questions:

**A. The first hypothesis** infers that active participation is a tool that can be utilised as a form of communication to imply, indirectly, experienced situations of conflict and displacement. To test this, the following questions are raised:

A1. How can the phenomenon of active participation, requiring the haptic perception, inform or affect the experience of embodied artwork?

A2. How can an object embody an experience of displacement or conflict?

**B. The second hypothesis** proposes that active participation of the viewer with artwork can help promote or facilitate sensorial empathy. To test this, the following questions are raised:

B1. How does sensorial empathy affect the viewer's perception on the subject of displacement?

B2. How can the sensorial empathy of the viewer provide insight into my experiences of war and displacement?

In the thesis I have appropriated the term 'sensorial empathy' and use it to refer to a form of silent connection, or knowing, that can manifest phenomenologically between artist, artefacts, place and audience. I

investigate how and when sensorial empathy takes place, and how it might affect the viewer's perception of the concept of displacement.

My methodology consists of five main methods of inquiry: active participation, residues, autobiographical narrative, remembering and embodiment. My experiments with the active participation of the viewer have centred on the idea of the audience participating with the artefacts, both as a way of sensing and sharing my memories of experiences of displacement, and also to encourage in the viewer a sense of concern for the issues that initiated the work. Inquiry led active participation has been responsible for the artwork's transformation, relocation, and possibly, reconstruction or destruction. In experimental presentations of my artwork, this process of participation has been effective in promoting or instigating sensorial empathy, phenomenology, and existential awareness.

Embodiment of the artefacts with memories of displacement was implemented through an intuitive approach, using metaphor and symbolism. Reflections on the effectiveness of active participation were drawn from analysis of audience feedback and used to modify and develop the artwork further.

My intention is to show that active participation of the audience with immersive art, embodied with my experiences of displacement, can lead to sensorial empathy between the audience and these experiences in turn promoting a connection and understanding with each other that may help to overcome cultural barriers.

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## LIST OF TERMS

**Active participation:** To be consciously involved together in a setting primarily related to art<sup>1</sup>. This involvement includes touching, seeing, sensing (nonphysical such as emotional or spiritual), and understanding the artwork. The term active participation has been used widely in many disciplines (e.g. health and social care, education, politics, religion, etc.) beside art, but my intention is to review the significance of the active participation of the viewer with my artwork, which embodies personal experiences of displacement, in the hope that this activity might result in the promotion of what David Abram (1996) calls 'sensorial empathy'. I am interested in how and when sensorial empathy takes place, and how it might affect the viewer's perception on the subject of displacement which is happening every day to millions of people in the world.

**Affect:** Which is manifested in the form of emotions and empathy towards embodied artwork related to experience of war and displacement; Affect here also pertains to emotions, affective expressions, language, embodied experiences and tone of voice (Hegarty 2007).

**Affective playful hybrids:** This is a term I devised to describe sensory perception that consists of two or more opposite elements embraced in the artwork that are at play against each other, or a sense of dichotomy of opposing sensations that can be perceived by the viewer. Examples of these are immersive elements such as specific safe and unsafe smells, tactile mediums, motions and sounds.

**Embodiment:** How we attain perception and knowledge through our body, mind and the senses. (Maurice Merleau-Ponty 1968)

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<sup>1</sup> I have derived this meaning from some of the writings describing 'active participation' by the three philosophers Heidegger (1962), Sartre (1938) and Merleau-Ponty (1945).

**Embodied artefact:** This refers to the essences of the artwork which is my lived childhood experience of war and displacement. The embodied artefact, being in a concrete world of material, is designed to provoke the need to touch; a closer examination of the artwork can lead to the realisation and the sensing of my embodied emotions, which in turn provides the chance of allowing sensorial empathy to be achieved.

**Flesh:** Refers to the intertwining relationship between the body and the world, and the 'between space' (Merleau-Ponty in Ladkin 2012) of enacted relations. The relationship between subject and object and the space in between which can be our thoughts, perception, energy, the sense of proximity or depth. It can also refer to invisible influences of our surrounding environment such as the quality of air we are inhaling, smells, temperature, sounds and sonic influences etc.

**Inquiry led active participation:** The use of the process of active participation of the audience with the artwork as a method of inquiry was an early cornerstone of this PhD. One of the earliest pieces I presented to investigate this process was *Scrolls* (2012-13, chapter 1, 2, 3; pgs. 17, 23-28, 44-49, 51-55, and 77). I noticed that the audience picked up closely examined and even to unfurl the scrolls, not just because the interesting sound and texture they were made of, but because also because they wished to actually understand the indecipherable information written upon them. I noticed that their natural sense of inquiry caused them to actively pursue reading the scrolls, and decided henceforth to call this process inquiry led active participation. This term relates only to my own artwork process and bears no relation to any other history. As I demonstrated in chapters 2 and 3, and as a consequence of peer feedback, reflective and critical analysis, and both contextual and theoretical review, I developed a participatory process that explored artwork that can be touched and felt, heard and smelt, and, in some cases, destroyed and



reconstructed by the viewer. This participatory process helped me understand and further develop the dichotomy of opposing emotions and sensations that I was exploring in my art.

**Interaction:** Interaction differs from active participation in the sense that interaction refers to a reciprocal action or influence which indicates a two way flow between people or things, whilst active participation can be a one way process. Interaction will not be the subject of discussion.

**Intuitive Rhythmic scribbling:** A form of automatic writing I developed in order to recollect individual incidents from my childhood which were related to the war. I proceeded to scribble words that are not legible, intuitively following the rhythm of my unconscious as I did so.

**Knowing:** Is the beyond words experience or the 'tacit' or 'intuitive knowing' notion that Donald Schön (1991 p. 277) described in his writings.

**Marketing my emotions:** This term is related to both the idea, and the process of packaging my artwork, specifically in the *Artefact of Loss* (2015) exhibition in which I used a gazebo as a market stall and placed price tags on the packaged art. I wanted my emotions, embodied in the artwork, to be marketed in a similar way to that in which newspapers (containing stories about people going through war and displacement) are sold. I wanted to emphasise the great contrast between the low monetary values of the goods when compared to the immense importance of the experiences they communicate. I intended my installation to raise awareness of my own experience of displacement, and to evoke questions and perceptions on the value of human suffering.

**Presencing:** Is related to my memories being made present through meditative process I called *Intuitive Rhythmic scribbling* for the purpose of embodying the artwork. This process (in the long run) helped in achieving

sensorial empathy with the audience, thus leading to the acknowledgment of the existence of my experience of displacement. (Heidegger, 1962, Otto Scharmer 2016)

**Primordial sensing:** Our capability as human beings of intuitively knowing and sensing the world around us. (Abram p. 9)

**Reciprocity:** Here is used as being the opposite of isolation. It is the mutual and sensorial connection between two entities. (Abram 1996, p. 52)

**Sensorial empathy:** I have appropriated this term from David Abram's (1996) writings, using it in my research to refer to the intertwining relationship between artwork, audience and place. I perceive this relationship as a silent connection, or a knowing, that we intuitively recognise but cannot always articulate or express with words.

**Sensorial perception:** David Abram discerns that participation lies within the act of perception, which is an intertwining between the body and the sensory system that allows for an experience to happen. (Ibid, p. 62)

# HYPOTHESIS AND QUESTIONS

**A.** The first hypothesis infers that active participation is a tool that can be utilised as a form of communication to imply, indirectly, experienced situations of conflict and displacement. To test this, the following questions are raised:

**Questions:**

**A1.** How can the phenomenon of active participation, requiring haptic perception, inform or affect the experience of embodied artwork?

**A2.** How can an object embody an experience of displacement or conflict?

**B.** The second hypothesis proposes that active participation of the viewer with artwork can help promote or facilitate sensorial empathy. To test this, the following questions are raised:

**Questions:**

**B1.** How does sensorial empathy affect the viewer's perception on the subject of displacement?

**B2.** How can the sensorial empathy of the viewer provide insight into my experiences of war and displacement?

# INTRODUCTION

## I. Navigating grounds

### a. Stating the case

In 'Returning to Our Senses', the words of David Abram's were interpreted thus:

...these days we tend to be locked into a scientific view of the world which makes us spectators and observers rather than participants in a web of relationships. [He] encourages us to return to our senses, and to relate to the world as a web of animate and sentient beings of which we are an integral part. (Molloy 2003)

In this Hybrid Residues thesis, I agree with Abram that we need to return to being active participants and sentient individuals in order to relate not just to the world around us but also to each other, through sensorial empathy. To go one step further, I am specifically interested in how this sensorial connection may be provoked, from a phenomenological point of view, between audience and embodied artwork. In order to pursue this I decided to use my own autobiographical narrative from which I extracted the memories with which I intended to embody my art.

The most influential aspect of this autobiographical narrative is the fact of my growing up in Lebanon during a period of conflict and the repeated displacement my family and I suffered as refugees because of this. As a consequence of this childhood experience, my art has always been

profoundly influenced by the issue of displacement; an issue that I believe is still of great global significance in the present day.

## **b. Practice and theory**

My childhood experiences in Lebanon dictated the direction of both my theoretical and practical research. War time experiences of displacement, turmoil and shifting national boundaries, influenced this thesis's pursuit of a sensorial perspective with regard to identity, tacit communication, belonging and sensorial empathy. My research involved the development of artwork in conjunction with the examination of active participation, embodied art, affiliation to a place, concepts related to sensorial perspective, a sense of marketing my emotions (see list of terms, chapter 2 and pgs. 64 and 93), and the affective and playful. Experience of displacement and a sense of fragmented identity are reflected closely in my work. Also influential was my critical investigation of artistic practices that show a diverse use of active participation as a means of social connection, concepts of displacement, and the mapping of memories and place.

I developed four chapters and a series of sequential artwork as well as three exhibitions, five art videos, a catalogue and a memoirs book, all of which collectively embodied my existential emotions due to my sense of displacement, and examined ways of achieving sensorial empathy.

## **II. Findings and Contribution**

Through my use of autobiographical narrative as a mode of inquiry, I developed a methodology which involved active participation, temporality in presencing past experiences of displacement, embodied artefacts,

sensorial empathy and the voice<sup>2</sup>. (Chapters 3) In doing so I was able to generate a sensorial language and sensorial empathy which helped to create an intertwining relationship between the audience and my emotional experiences of war, and displacement from a place of affiliation.

I was also able to develop a participatory process that explored materials that can be sensed, destroyed and reconstructed by the viewer. This process became what I called inquiry led active participation. Further investigations into this process and the implications the artwork had for the audience, led me to discover a playful element in the artefacts which encouraged the audience to participate with the artwork suggesting the initiation of sensorial empathy. I learned that the sensual perception of the traumatic experience, affiliation to a place, and affection towards embodied artefacts can be achieved through play within the art context. (E.g. *Artefact of Loss* 2015, chapters 2, 3) This process could be considered as the development of an affective playful hybrid designed to implement the sensing of embodied art and the breaking of limiting barriers in order to allow sensorial empathy to be achieved through sensorially immersive art.

### **III. Survey of thesis and context**

#### **a. Ingredients**

*Hybrid Residues* is a practice-based research project that has unfolded through a qualitative and hermeneutic methodology. I used active participation as a method of inquiry in relation to 'Existential

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Hegarty explains that, 'Voice has a claim to transcendence that has not gone away since Kant and Rousseau. It represents the supposed interior life or existence of the speaker, and therefore has a link to the ideal, to contemplation, rationality, self-reflection and acknowledgement of the other'. (P. 30)

phenomenology' (Martin Heidegger 1962)<sup>3</sup> in order to instigate a sense of embodied experience within my artwork. This philosophy, which influenced my thinking, creative processes and techniques, also instigated the creation of my book *Memoirs* (2012-17) (figs. 1 and 7) (Appendix II). *Memoirs* helped me articulate my present emotions and to link them to past memories of home and childhood. This process was often useful in developing the art as a sequential autobiographical narrative. *Memoirs* was written as a series of recollections and memories, forming part of the methodology of practice. My experiences of the war took place during my childhood and I therefore decided to write my recollections in a natural style true to the way I remember these events. I used a style of font<sup>4</sup> for *Memoirs* that might be perceived as light hearted or perhaps childish, in deliberate contrast to the serious content within. This parallels the sense of opposites or to the dichotomy that is a reoccurring theme throughout this project.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Consciousness is existence in and toward the world through the body. While Husserl's phenomenology is oriented to transcendental essences, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is existential, oriented to lived experience, the embodied human being in the concrete world.' (Manen 2011)

<sup>4</sup> The original *Memoirs* was a series of hand written records in a notebook and I was strongly inclined, at first, to present it in this form. On reflection, however, issues of confidentiality regarding personal details of some of the people described necessitated a small amount of editing and this, combined with the simple problem of legibility, persuaded me to present it in a typewritten form.

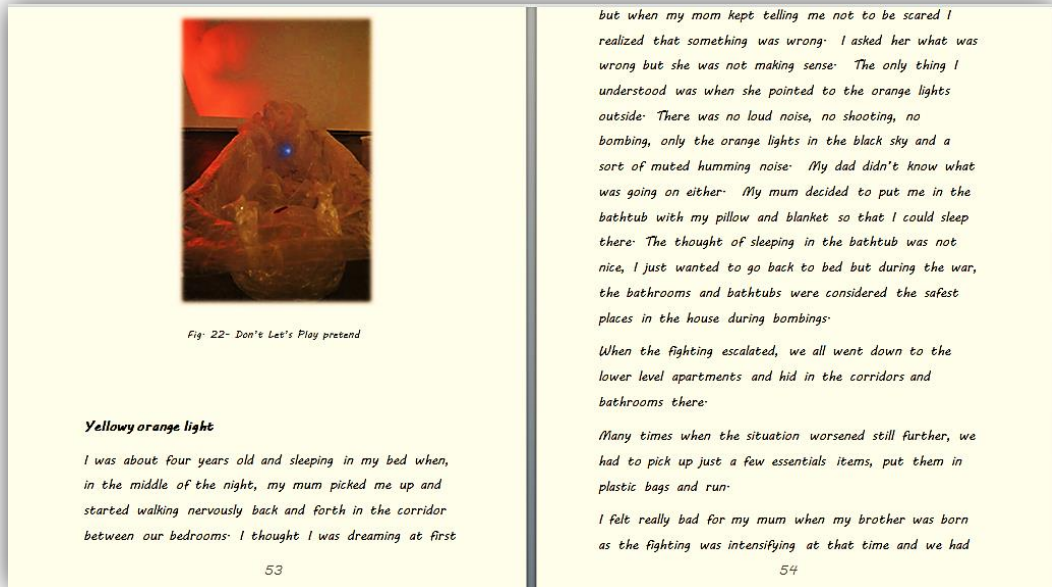


Fig. 1 | Alissar McCreary | *Memoirs* | 2012-17

To answer my questions and test my hypotheses, I employed and utilised the following specific, main and sub methods of inquiry, which I refer to as ingredients. These ingredients, which are discussed fully in chapter one (Methodology), are as follows:

**a. Active participation:**

Pertaining to: touch, sensing, the immersive, reconstruction, reciprocity, and phenomenon.

**b. Residues:**

Temporality and my memories of emotions embodied in: Artefacts, identity, emotions, disconnection, presence, absence, and the flesh (Merleau-Ponty 1962).

**c. Autobiographical narrative:**

In relation to: Memories, emotions, childhood, and the sensorial.

**d. Remembering:**

Retrieved through: Mapping, presencing, sharing, intersubjectivity, created awareness and mindfulness.



**e. Embodiment:**

Sensed through: Tacit communication, visceral intuition, the sensorial, artwork, sensorial perception, sensorial empathy, symbolism, metaphor, and the affective.

While experimenting with technology and responsive materials, I have documented and recorded processes, outcomes and feedback, in my journals (e.g. figs. 2, 3) for the purposes of reflection and further development by myself and others. Schön's (1991) methods of reflective practice were a key to this process not only through his idea of 'reflection in action' but more importantly, for me, his notion of 'knowing-in-action' and tacit knowing (Ibid, p. 52-3) which helps bridge the gap between practice and research.

The research questions predominantly emphasise the idea of the active participation of the viewer promoting sensorial empathy with traumatic experiences. In response to this I chose to look at the work of artists who have utilised active participation in their work, which influenced the background and context of my research. The main artists whose work I used as my point of reference were: Jean Tinguely (*Homage to New York* 1960), Max Ernst (*Dada-Early Spring exhibition* 1920) Mona Hatoum (*Measures of Distance* 1988, *Home* 1999, *Over My Dead Body* 1988, *Witness* 2008), Eva Hesse (*Studiowork* 1960's), and George Maciunas (*Flux Year Boxes* 1967).

My experiments with active participation of the viewer have centred around the idea of the audience<sup>5</sup> touching, holding or collecting a part of my sculpture, both as a way of sensing and sharing my memories and experiences of displacement, and also to encourage in the viewer a sense of responsibility for the issues that initiated the work. Inquiry led active

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<sup>5</sup> Audience strictly consisted of my university colleagues and peer group

participation has been responsible for the artwork's transformation, relocation, reconstruction and, possibly, destruction.

Answering my questions (A1, B1) on affect<sup>6</sup> entailed making video art, such as the *Calling Home* series (2014-15), *Overwhelmed* (2014), the *Behind Clear<sup>7</sup> Walls* series (2014-17), and *Nausea* (2015), and initiating performances such as *Scrolls* (2014) and *Disconnect/Displace* (2015). (See appendix I - catalogue) This helped me identify and explore different strategies (discussed in chapters 2, 3, and 4) in order to promote sensorial empathy through affective expression (Lusebrink 2004). Through peer feedback of these videos, I learned (chapter 3 and 4, pgs. 77-83) more about the affective-ness<sup>8</sup> of the embodied subject with an affiliation to a place, and also about the difference in perception of a traumatic experience (Ex: *Disconnect/Displace*).

I investigated my hypotheses and questions through an intuitive approach which is both experimental and didactic: developing, testing, refining and documenting through the use of photography and video work for the purpose of reflecting, evaluating, discovering hidden elements, sharing knowledge, making the 'invisible visible' (Chapters 1,2,3,4) and exhibiting my work (*Artefact of Loss* and *disPLACED*).

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<sup>6</sup> Affect: which was manifested in the form of emotions and empathy towards the embodied artwork related to my experience of war and displacement; affect here also pertains to emotions, affective expressions, language, embodied experiences and tone of voice.

<sup>7</sup> Inspired by *On the Other Side* 2013 piece, (see appendix I - catalogue p. 22).

<sup>8</sup> See list of terms.

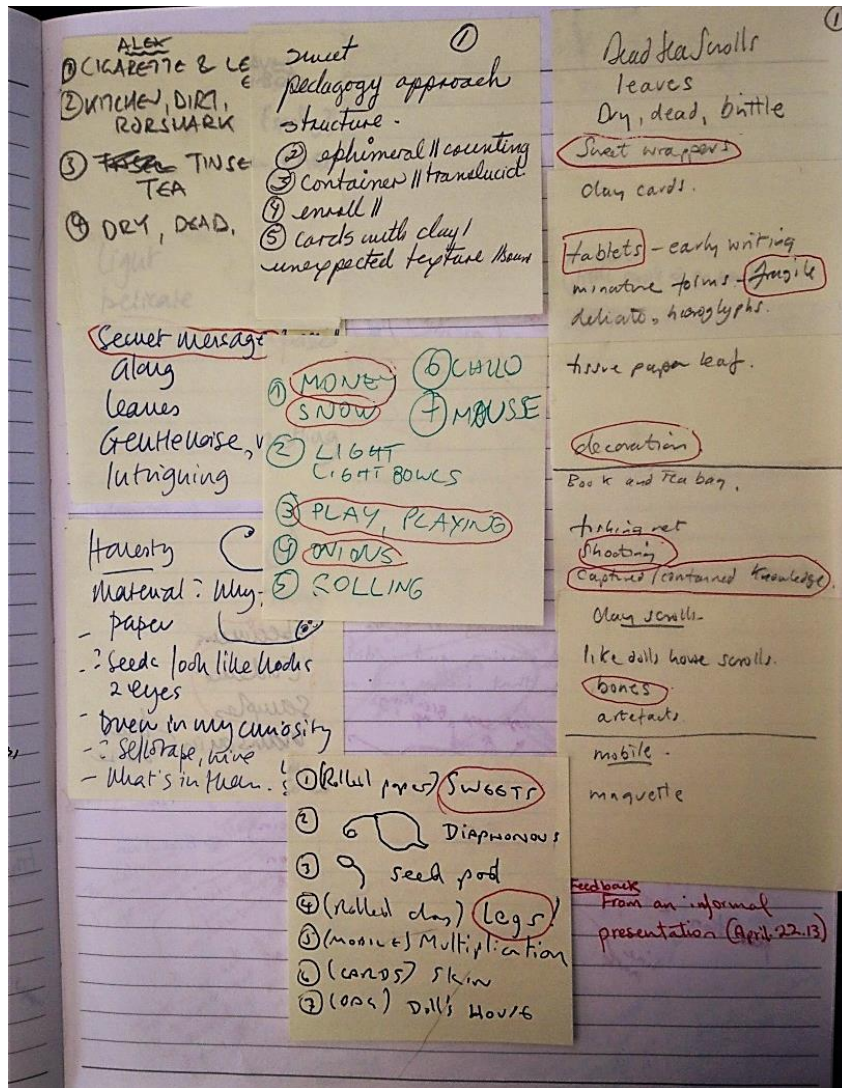


Fig. 2 | Alissar McCreary | Peer feedback on Scrolls | 2013

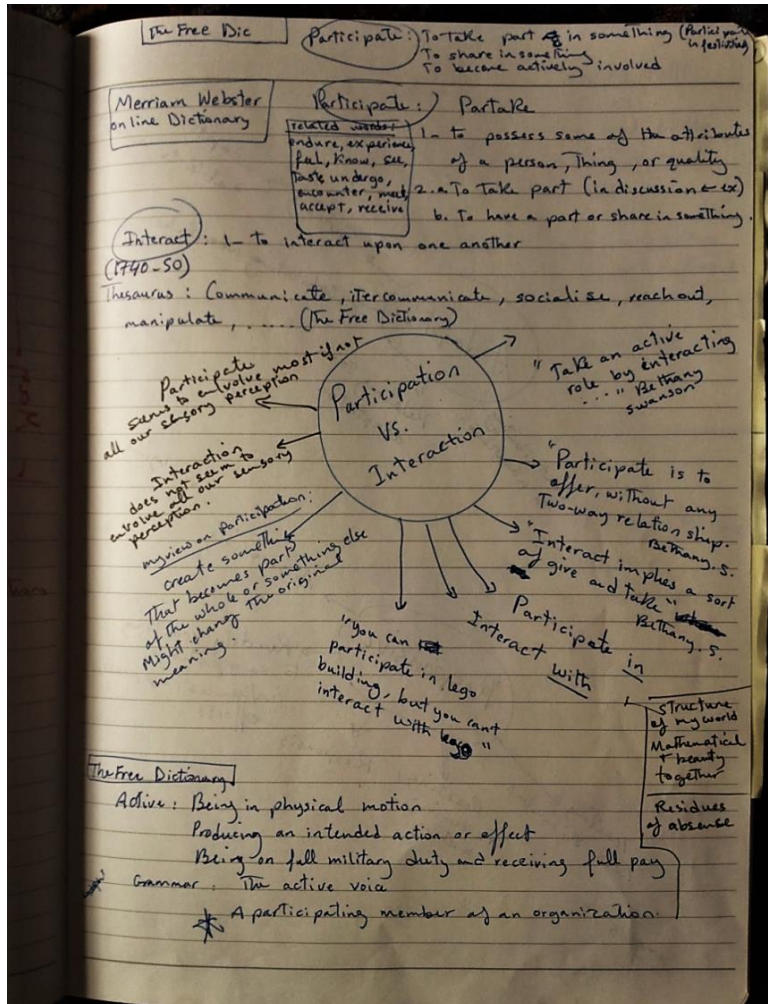


Fig. 3 | Alissar McCreary | Details from Journal | 2012

## **b. Theoretical and contextual background:**

In this section of my research I investigated the artwork of several specific artists in order to explore, to better understand and to realise my hypotheses (and their related questions). This provided me with a valuable opportunity to deliberate on how the phenomenon of active participation can effectively affect or inform the audience's experience of embodied artwork. Learning to instigate active participation of the audience with the artwork entailed the development and merging of a number of processes which are designed to affect the audience's sensorial perception, and to encourage them to participate. These processes include: a) provoking the audience for the purpose of having them destroy or reconstruct the artwork, b) eliciting sensorial empathy, c) presenting past memories and feelings, d) evoking perceptions on the value of both life and things (stuff) (specifically by using noise, tone of voice, and packaging); e) in addition I learned about the shift of responsibilities of the audience towards the artwork. Studying the work of these artists helped me develop the steps necessary for my discovery of what I call affective playful hybrid.

I initially examined the work of three 20th century artists namely, Jean Tinguely *Homage to New York* (1960), Max Ernst *Dada-Early Spring exhibition* (1920), and Marcel Duchamp *Rotoreliefs* (1935), whose work predominantly utilised active participation to place emphasis on the audience relationship with, and responsibilities towards, the art in order to complete its spatial image/meaning. This enabled me to gain insight into developing a variety of stimulating participatory methods<sup>9</sup> in order to evoke a reaction from the audience. (*Scrolls, Disconnect/Displace, Sounds of Memories* (2014)).

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<sup>9</sup> These participatory methods were used in every piece of artwork that required active participation.

In 1920, Max Ernst was one of the first artists to initiate the idea of the viewer's active participation in exhibitions. At the *Dada-Early Spring exhibition* Ernst, along with other artists, rented a space in the backyard of the Winter Brewery (Brauhaus Winter) in Cologne for the second Dada exhibition. The exhibition created uproar and was viewed by some as shocking because the artwork, mounted in a pub, was accessed via the urinals (Dinkla 1996). The work included an axe, which was mounted next to a sculpture, inviting the public to destroy the artwork if they did not like it. Although the axe seemed to invite from the audience an active declaration of opinion, it remained purely contemplative as the axe remained unused and the sculpture unchanged.



Fig. 4 | Alissar McCreary | *Scrolls* | 2014 |  
Video  
<https://youtu.be/WORIs-yvkmI>

Influenced by these artists, I investigated the concept of provocation in order to study the manifestation of spontaneous active participation; for example, in two performance<sup>10</sup> pieces called *Disconnect/Displace* (fig. 15) and *Scrolls* (fig. 4), I placed potentially destructive tools alongside my artefacts in order to explore the response of the audience. (Chapter 2)

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<sup>10</sup> My artwork has some elements that pursue performative methodologies, particularly in my video work, and I believe that performance art may well be a strong future aspect of my work.

Duchamp had to abandon his original project for the exhibition 'Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme' (1938) due to technical difficulties he encountered when he and the organizers (a team of artists) failed to develop a light sensor to illuminate the exhibited paintings. The light sensor was supposed to illuminate the paintings when activated by the motion of the viewer. Instead, the viewers were provided with hand held lamps so they could illuminate the paintings themselves. Unfortunately the artists had to go back to using traditional lighting to illuminate the exhibition because the hand held lamps were, in turn, stolen. The exhibition was designed to re-examine Ernst's idea of presenting a challenge to the viewers, namely the provocation to touch or destroy the artwork. (Dinkla 1996, p. 280) Duchamp's viewers, on the other hand, had to actively participate with his artwork in order to even perceive its existence.

I began to think about the idea of the audience's responsibility for, influence on, sensorial perception of, and reaction towards my artefacts.

A significant shift away from the traditional notion of the authoritative position of the artist and the artwork was developed when Duchamp made his *Rotoreliefs* (a series of six discs that produced spiral images when rotated on a turntable) which placed the core emphasis on the 'technical transfer of perception' (Ibid, p. 280). The perceptual process was activated by the motion of the *Rotoreliefs* as well as the perception of the beholder. This activated perception was equally reliant upon the artist, the motion of the artwork and the viewer to help complete the spatial image of the spiral.

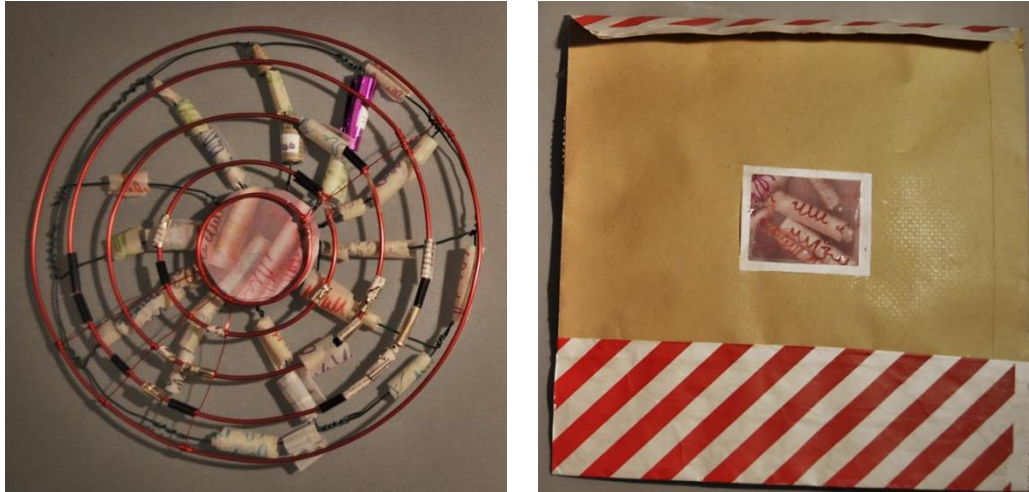


Fig. 5 | Alissar McCreary | *Sounds of Memories* | 2014

From the idea of the *Rotoreliefs* I developed *Sound of Memories* (fig. 5), using mixed media with aluminium wire, coiled in the shape of a disc to resemble the idea of vinyl records<sup>11</sup>. I was thinking of my memories as objects attached to coiled wire records that make an incomprehensible noise<sup>12</sup>. This noise was made by small scrolls covered with scribbles<sup>13</sup> of my memories, which can be touched and moved around the wire. When the records were touched, the small scrolls hung around the wire shifted and collided against each other creating a hollow crackly noise, which I call 'the noise of my memories'. In this case the perceptual process<sup>14</sup> of my work was activated by the audience handling the record. The idea behind the visual process of perceptual activation was similar to that of *Rotoreliefs* but with the addition of the tactile process of active participation.

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<sup>11</sup> They resembled vinyl records in the sense that the sound waves here depended on the aluminium wire (its diameter and texture) which slid through the different wax paper scrolls in order to obtain the desired sounds; in vinyl records, sound waves and clarity depended on design and quality of the needle, and the thickness and materials the discs were made of.

<sup>12</sup> Incomprehensible noise: The noise sounded of whispering or a shuffling but did not contain words

<sup>13</sup> Scribbles of my memories consisted of the automatic scribble based on the rhythm of my emotions

<sup>14</sup> The perceptual process here is about an automatic and continual process of taking in information or provocation from our surroundings and turning it into meaning. As Abram explains it, our sensory perception is an active process which is constantly '...improvising its relation to things and to the world'. (Ibid, p. 49)



Experimental participatory art forms and events such as ‘Happenings’ during the fifties and ‘Fluxus’ during the sixties and seventies, both introduced slight shifts and redefinitions of the audience’s responsibilities and relationship with the art. My fascination and focus progressed towards the ideas of George Maciunas’s *Fluxus 1* (Artist’s Books) (1961), *Flux Year Box 2* (1967) and *Fluxshops* (1963-65). Fluxus was described as an ‘intermedia’ (Ken Friedman 2012, p. 13) for its involvement of individuals from different interdisciplinary backgrounds including artists. The works mentioned above were made by contributors from different artistic media all associated with Fluxus (between the sixties and seventies), who collaborated and deliberated upon the role of art in society and the interaction between artists and audience, as well as focussing on the making (process) of art rather than the finished product. Maciunas’ work inspired both my early sketchbooks and a later work, the installation *Artefact of Loss* which developed the notion of packaging, pricing and the creation of space such as the setup of an outside gazebo/market stall for embodied artwork, inside a gallery. It became a displaced market for artefacts which themselves, in turn, embody displacement. (Chapters 2, 3)

To explore and understand further how sensorial empathy could affect the viewer’s perception on the subject of displacement, I investigated artwork that I felt had experimented with sensorial empathy (e.g. Antony Gormley’s *Field* 2004, Anselm Kiefer’s *Secret Life of Plants* 2004, Michal Rovner’s *View* 2014, Wafaa Bilal’s *The Ashes Series* 2003-2014, Jananne al Ani’s film *Shadow Series II* 2011, Marina Abramović’s *Rhythm Series* 1973-74, and many more), but I decided to concentrate my investigation on the following artists because I felt that their active participation with the audience (or the public) was more intuitive and less contrived. I was

intrigued with Tinguely's artwork<sup>15</sup>, specifically his 'self destroying work of art' (Sillars, p. 30) which inspired my *Scrolls* (2014), *Disconnect/ Displace* (2015) and *Artefact of Loss* (2015), and which I believe gave me a clear example of how to activate in the audience a desire to participate in moving, destroying or reconstructing the artwork.

While spectators were still digesting the new technologically enhanced environment of active participation events such as *Happenings* (1960's) and *Nine Evenings* (1966), Robert Rauschenberg was paving the way for the evolution of interactive environments with his work *Soundings* (1968). *Soundings*, was a visual reactive environment that relied on the sound of the viewer's steps and the tone of their voices in order to be illuminated. It responded to the viewer's movement around the room to light up and reveal a series of silk screened images of chairs. The piece was made of a sequence of smoked Perspex panels, mirror like, which appeared silent and dormant until activated by the viewer. *Soundings* was an example of the promotion of active participation because it actually enabled the viewer to be involved in a dialogue-like interaction with the artwork. The end result of researching these works of art made me realise the need for sound in my art, not necessarily activated by the audience but to activate sensorial empathy in the audience.

I drew on the philosophical writings of Jean-Paul Sartre (in particular his novel *Nausea* 1965), Merleau-Ponty's idea of 'Phenomenology of Perception' (1945) and 'Flesh' (1959), and Abram's notion of 'Sensorial Empathy' (1996), and both Heidegger (1962) and Scharmer (2016) on notions of 'Presencing', in order to understand how to utilise both active participation and sensorial empathy in my work.

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<sup>15</sup> I was also fascinated by Billy Klüver and Jean Tinguely's collaboration in 1960 which inspired and influenced the organisation E.A.T (Experiments in Art and Technology). (Sillars 2009, p. 20)

### **c. Chapter synopsis**

#### **1. Chapter one**

This outlines my methodology. I investigate how I employed and utilised active participation as a phenomenon and draw on the methods used which I refer to as critical ingredients. These ingredients are active participation, residues, autobiographical narrative, remembering and embodiment. I also explain how I used these ingredients alongside a body of theoretical, contextual and practical reviews that helped answer the questions which stemmed from the hypothesis of this thesis.

#### **2. Chapter two**

I address my first hypothesis and the questions related to its content. I explain the objective of utilising active participation as a tool and refer to my development of 'inquiry led active participation' and the bridge it created in order to reach a connection, harmony and sensorial empathy with others. I draw parallels between selected works by Mona Hatoum and my own art in order to show how artists from displaced backgrounds are able to embody their artwork with their memories.

#### **3. Chapter three**

I set out to answer my second hypothesis and explain my exploration of methods that allowed me to map my memories in order to embody them in my art. I draw parallels between the work of both Mona Hatoum and Eva Hesse with my own art and discuss their influence on my artefacts and video work. I review my development of the sensorially immersive quality of the videos and explain how feedback suggested the manifestation of sensorial empathy with my memories of displacement.

#### 4. Chapter four

In the conclusion, I explain my findings in relation to each hypothesis. I list the main elements that I used in order to realise these hypotheses, and include a rationale and a discussion section in which I reflect on my results and achievements.

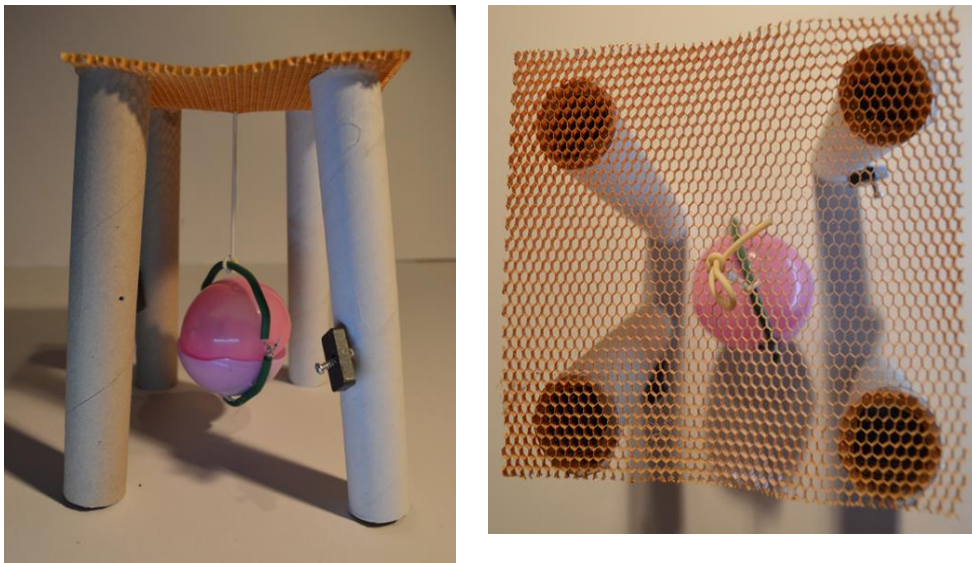


Fig. 6 | Alissar McCreary | *State of Limbo* | 2015 | Sizes: 13.97 x 10.16 x 13.97cm

# CHAPTER ONE

## Methodology



Fig. 7 | Alissar McCreary | Details from *Memoirs* book | 2012-17 | A2, A5

To explore my first hypothesis, which *infers that active participation is a tool that can be utilised as a form of communication to imply, indirectly, experienced situations of conflict and displacement*, I investigated active participation in different fine art/studio art settings and in selected writings closely relevant to my hypothesis. My exploration consisted of careful observations of active participation of the audience with my work, as well as a careful examination of its meaning and implications, specifically in relation to notions of conflict and displacement.

Our PhD seminar sessions at Oxford Brookes University, led by Professor Ray Lee, made the process of presentation, peer participation, reflection and feedback very effective and engaging. These seminars were made up of between seven and fourteen PhD candidates from different disciplines (e.g. architecture, media, performance art, sound art, visual art, etc.). The variety of the student's backgrounds seemed to encourage a challenging approach and stimulating dialogue, providing in turn valuable feedback. Each of us had our own style of presenting our work, constrained however, by a set of rules that we followed rigidly. For instance, presenting the work

without introduction, gave a better chance for more intuitive and intersubjective feedback. The audience (in this case PhD students) were allowed to ponder and reflect (verbally or in writing) on what they perceived but not to ask any questions until everyone had provided their feedback. This strategy gives the presenter a chance to note valuable input from the dialogue and have time to reflect before answering questions at the end of the presentation. This process was also valuable in helping the development of ideas for writing commentary, journals and theses. My presentation of *Scrolls* (2014) (fig. 4; catalogue pg. 58) began with a performance piece aimed at provoking the active participation of the audience. Once the audience started participating I stood back, observing the audience's actions, taking notes, filming, and preparing questions for the audience to analyse further issues raised by the presentation. The filming of the presentation, which comprised of the student's actively participating with the artwork, was played in the next session in order to elicit a group reflection on their own actions, the actions of others, and to provide a final feedback on the project/artwork in the form of a dialogue.

I explored active participation in relation to trauma and embodiment, which informed my second hypothesis which *proposes that active participation of the viewer with artwork can help promote or facilitate sensorial empathy*, in the work of the artists Mona Hatoum and Eva Hesse. Hatoum's artwork helped me realise the importance and the dominance of domestic settings, embodiment and the body in my artwork specifically in *Overwhelmed* (2014), *Calling Home series* (2014-15), *Behind Clear Walls* (2014-17) and *Don't Lets Play Pretend series* (2017).

Hesse's work helped me deliberate the idea of display which, in turn, morphed into the idea of the playful hybrid (chapter 3, figs. 37 and 39) later in *Hybrid Residues series* (2011-15).

To build an effective methodology, I drew on a diverse body of theoretical, contextual and practical reviews in the quest to inform my understanding of ways of utilising active participation as a tool in order to communicate embodied artwork. I experimented with the employment of active participation as a phenomenon which necessitated a number of critical ingredients that harmonised with, and completed, each other. These ingredients are active participation, residues, autobiographical narrative, remembering, and embodiment.

### **Active participation as a method of inquiry**

When I started to utilise active participation as a method of inquiry, I created a number of small pieces, of which the unfinished nature, size, and embodied meaning of the ruinous effect of war, led me to name them artefacts. In the *Hybrid Residues* series, I wanted the viewer to sense the art in terms of the material it was made of, its texture, smells, and particularly, the size of the work and how it sat in the palm of the hand. In the initial stages of my exploration of active participation, with works such as the *Hybrid Residues* series, I presented the artefacts individually on a pedestal or a small table. Feedback suggested that the audience were reluctant to touch these artefacts because of a fear of destroying them. I deduced that the traditional gallery style presentation of each artefact on its own pedestal gave the impression of preciousness to the artwork with the unwritten implication that it should not be touched.

In later presentations of the *Hybrid Residues* series (Figs. 9, 11, 23, 24), (and *Artefact of Loss 2015*, (fig. 31, p. 59) the process of the audience 'touching' the artefacts became more effective due to my experimenting with different strategies of presentation.

For example, the artefacts were grouped together, packaged in a variety of ways, and presented in a less formal setting (figs. 9, 11, and 20). I

presented the artefacts in these ways on successive occasions. In each case the revised presentation encouraged the audience to readily handle the artefacts, thus actively participating with the artwork. These strategies, I believe, were successful (e.g. *Scrolls* 2011-12 and 2014, *Artefact of Loss* 2015, *Disconnect/Displace* 2015) at promoting or instigating sensorial empathy, phenomenology, and existential awareness<sup>16</sup>. My reflections on the effectiveness of active participation and the 'touch' were drawn from analysis of feedback from the viewers (colleagues) and used to modify and develop the artwork further.

Peer feedback, observations and analyses suggested that active participation of the audience with my artwork has been a key element in my research. According to David Abram, perception can manifest itself through the participation between the body and the world, as well as through the participation of various sensory systems of the body. In his book, *The Spell Of The Sensuous*, under the chapter titled: 'Perception as participation', Abram articulates,

If we wish to choose a single term to characterize the event of perception, as it is disclosed by phenomenological attention, we may borrow the term "participation," used by the early French anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl. [Abram explains] Some insight into the participatory nature of perception may be gleaned by considering the craft of the sleight-of-hand magician. For the conjuror depends upon this active participation between the body and the world for the creation of his magic. (Abram 1996, p. 57)

My experiments with active participation of the viewer have centred on the idea of the audience touching, holding, collecting and reconstructing or

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<sup>16</sup>Existential awareness here is in relation to temporal awareness of my body and death.



destroying my artefacts, both as a way of sensing and sharing my memories of experiences of displacement and also to encourage in the viewer a sense of responsibility for the issues that initiated the work. Active participation has been responsible for the artwork's transformation, relocation, and possibly, destruction.

Through active participation, the act of touch becomes important. David Abram defines the idea of the touch in the following way:

Touch is an active and a passive sense, for to touch is to be touched, as Merleau-Ponty recognized: 'The presence of the world is precisely the presence of its flesh to my flesh'.... it is possible to expand upon Merleau-Ponty and to say that 'we are organs of this world, flesh of its flesh, and that the world is perceiving itself through us. (Ibid, p. 68)

Abram believes that this simple yet profound recognition of touching and being touched could be the foundation for a new 'environmental ethic' that can come through a new attentiveness, a 'carnal, sensorial empathy' (Ibid, p. 69). Abram's philosophy resonates with a teaching of a knowledge that he thinks we already know but have forgotten to exercise. Such knowledge is the knowing touch and sensorial empathy which emphasises our spiritual and sensuous engagement with our world.

## **Residues**

When I came to live in England, in 2000, the idea of the residues and excavation in my paintings, as a metaphor for my search for identity, continued to develop. The characteristics of the artefacts in *Hybrid Residues* (small enough to hold in the palm of the hand, numerous in quantity and often damaged or broken) were closely inspired by a

collection of small, ancient artefacts that my father showed me when they were retrieved from the sea in my home town of Tyre in Lebanon.

I enjoyed handling these little artefacts, feeling the texture of their surface, sensing the temperature of the material they were made of, and wondering about the circumstances of the person who made them. One of these artefacts, a small figurine (10cm tall) representing a roman soldier which accompanied me on my journey out of Lebanon, acquired particular significance for me (see appendix I - catalogue). I sense in this little soldier the embodiment of not only a lost civilization but also a shared place of origin and subsequent displacement from that place. He feels, to me, like a personal monument commemorating my displacement from home and my memories of family.

This roman soldier was the instigator of the concept of the series I made starting with *Shedding Skin 2D* and *Shedding Skin 3D1* (fig. 16) and also influenced the *Scrolls* (figs. 4 and 20; catalogue pgs. 9 and 58) pieces. The sense of embodiment that I felt in these small man-made artefacts<sup>17</sup> motivated me to make three dimensional studies that would fit in the palm of the hand (fig. 10 and 20) Most of them are remnants or broken parts of whole objects which resonates with my displacement. The artefacts persistently intrigue me, and I intuitively observe in them an inexplicable presence which strongly, though ambiguously, connects them to my memories of the war.

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<sup>17</sup> My father's artefacts remind me of an interview given by the philosopher and ecologist David Abram on the relationship between humans and objects: 'In relation to certain human artefacts, particularly the mass-produced objects, it is difficult to make contact with and feel the unique life of that presence. Yet one can find that life is pulsing, most readily, in the materials of which that artefact is made. In the wood of the telephone pole, which was once standing in a forest, in the clay bricks of the apartment building, even in the smooth metal alloy of the truck door that you lean against -- there, in those metals originally mined from the bones of the breathing earth, one can still feel the presence of patterns that are earthborn, and that still carry something of that wider life. But if I look at the truck purely as a truck, what I see is not something that is born, but something that is made. And there is surely an important distinction between the born and the made. But even with that distinction, the made things are still made from matter, from the flesh of a living cosmos.' (David Abram interviewed by Derrick Jensen)

These artefacts reminded me of myself.

The small bronze soldier that my father gave to me stands just 10cm high, with an indistinct uniform and a prominent shield. My intrigue in his presence, size and ambiguous past, and my feeling of great privilege at being able to touch him, made me decide to give my artwork the same qualities. He became a primary influence, for me, on a concept to turn visual perception into participatory perception.

### **Autobiographical narrative**

I explored the idea of the 'Flesh'<sup>18</sup> (or invisible space) in-between my memories and the artefacts<sup>19</sup> in order to gain an in depth understanding (chapters 2, 3) of the active participation of the audience, using the insights thus gained to adjust the content and presentation of the artwork to ensure that this state of connection and harmonisation with others does manifest itself (e.g. *Scrolls*, *Disconnect/Displace*, *Artefact of Loss*). I examined the way in which I perceive both memories and time as landmarks, and in re-presenting these landmarks in my work (e.g. *Mezza* 2013, *You Wanna Peace of Me* 2015, *State of Limbo* 2015) I have endeavoured to create awareness of the significance of using active participation as a bridge to synchronize sensorial empathy with personal experiences of conflict and displacement.

Although my research methodologies were informed by personal experience<sup>20</sup> of displacement through war, making the artwork followed an

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<sup>18</sup> Flesh is the invisible space in between the body and the world. (Merleau-Ponty, 1959)

<sup>19</sup> The art work materialising from the memory of the conflict

<sup>20</sup> 'Narrative is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience'. (Connelly and Clandinin, cited in American Educational Research Association 1990, p. 1)

intuitive path<sup>21</sup>. (E.g. Intuitive rhythmic scribbling, chapters 2, 3) The research methodologies used to develop my practice were diverse due to the use of theoretical material relating not only to art, but also drawing on aspects of fields such as **a)** philosophy (Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Heidegger, and Abram), **b)** metaphysics mindful techniques used for memory recollection (Breton 1933)<sup>22</sup> **c)** psychology (e.g. sensorial empathy), all of which are discussed throughout this paper in relation to specific artwork.

### **a) Philosophical Context: How to Achieve Sensorial Empathy**

I researched Heidegger's notion of empathy as an 'ontological bridge' (1962, p. 162) to gain an understanding on how the idea of the 'ontological bridge' might be applied or developed through my art (chapter 2 and 3). I also looked at Sartre's novel *Nausea* to extend my understanding of the reason why we humans have the need and the desire to participate in situations and with each other. My interest in the idea of the 'knowing touch' led me to examine David Abram's concepts of the 'Sensuous' and 'Sensorial empathy' discussed in his book *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996). The 'knowing touch' essentially explores the human experience as a pre-conceptual (or pre-lingual) experience similar to 'intuitive knowing' (Schön 1991).

These ideas resonated with my approach to this project in which I pursued the notion of embodying my own experiences in my artwork (e.g. *Scrolls* and *Artefact of Loss*).

### **b) Metaphysics context: How to achieve mindful techniques**

I looked at aspects of surrealism in order to acquire a more detailed understanding of some aspects of metaphysical mindful techniques

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<sup>21</sup> By interactively reflecting on my artwork as I create it, as well as reflecting on the outcomes, this process of making is intuitive. (Schön 1991 p. 56)

<sup>22</sup> Maev Kennedy (2008) author of an article published in *The Guardian*.

(Breton 1933) such as automatic writing, or 'Automatism', which I utilised for the purpose of recalling childhood memories and which, then, expanded further into what I termed intuitive rhythmic scribbling<sup>23</sup>.

### **c) Psychology context: How to achieve sensorial empathy**

The Phenomenon of sensorial empathy is based on physical sensation and an intuitive awareness. It could be related to enactment, a concept proposed in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis (2006): 'Sensory empathy has to do with that instrument described by Freud as pertaining to the unconscious of any human, which enables one person to interpret unconscious communications of another person.' (Zanocco, de Marchi and Pozzi 2006)

Research into this personal narrative involved a subjective process of the interpretation of emotional memories and experiences (*Memoirs*), and their synthesis with the creative capabilities of body, mind and spirit. Many of these memories were painful to me and therefore in recalling them I utilised methods such as mindfulness and *automatic scribbling/writing*<sup>24</sup> (described in chapter three) before the materialisation<sup>25</sup> of the memories into the artefact.

The comparison between my work and that of specific artists with similar experiences (such as Mona Hatoum, and Eva Hesse), formed a body of qualitative research that provided me with authentic information as a basis for making sense of experiences of displacement and trauma. I wanted to explore how these artists have embodied their experience of displacement in their artwork in terms of both materials and the space they have utilised.

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<sup>23</sup> See list of terms.

<sup>24</sup> Automatic scribbling/writing: processes related to meditative exercises intended to enhance creative engagement with the physical, spiritual, intellectual and sensorial self.

<sup>25</sup> Materialisation here means when abstract ideas are made into or represented in material objects.

Finally, storytelling, for me, stems from how people communicate in Lebanon and has traditionally been used as a way of attaining affective transmission of embodied experiences and wisdom. It was the usual way for my mother to communicate with me, especially when I was a child.

### **Remembering as a method of inquiry**

The process of remembering my childhood experiences of the war became central to my methodology. At first I created a progressive series of sketches, which assisted me in recalling memories of emotions that I then utilised in the process of making my embodied artefacts and in writing a journal (*Memoirs*). To write my journal I used a strategy of reflecting on daily activities that aroused emotions in me which I then compared to memories of emotions I felt during the war. This strategy helped me to retrieve and utilise painful memories in my artwork, and to retain the intuitively cyclical process of my research which sustained its progress and development. I first produced sketches which revealed emotions to me, many of which are hard to live with even now. Next, I made artefacts that embodied different emotions depending on their characteristics. Finally, after analysing the sketches and the objects, I was able to record my memories in my journal. One revelation that manifested itself was the sequence or the narrative quality that my work possessed. For instance, each memory of an emotion had its own sketchbook (e.g. *Mahkzan*, fig. 13) in which it went through a progressive cycle of shifts and transformations, after which I was ready to make my artefacts. Each artefact went through the same kind of narrative process, with each subsequent object created being informed by the previous object, each thereby seeming to complete the other. My journal also takes on a story telling or narrative process which seems instinctive, since I am, essentially telling my story.

## Embodiment as a method of inquiry

Embodying my experiences of displacement in the artefacts was an essential process to keep my memories of childhood, homeland and place of belonging, alive. The embodied artefacts provided a tacit communication or a kind of visceral knowing, that allowed a sense of understanding of another's emotional situation almost without the use of words. (Figs. 8, 9, 10, 11, and appendix I- catalogue)



Fig. 8 | Alissar McCreary | *Purge* | 2015 | Mixed media | Size:  
12.7 x 8.89 cm

## CHAPTER TWO



Fig. 9 | Alissar McCreary | *Embodied* - details from *Hybrid Residues* series | 2013 | Mixed media | size: 4 cm

**The first hypothesis infers that active participation is a tool that can be utilised as a form of communication to imply, indirectly, experienced situations of conflict and displacement.**

### **Inquiry Led Active Participation**

The main objective of utilising active participation as a tool is to build a bridge between complex memories of displacement and an audience who might not have a prior understanding of such experiences. Inquiry led active participation is what I call the process whereby the viewer, or the participant, is sufficiently intrigued by the potential content of the artwork to actively pursue further investigation of it. To utilise active participation as a tool, I designed my artwork to exhibit an element of temptation, or as a playful hybrid<sup>26</sup> with the aim of leading the viewer to the sphere of

<sup>26</sup> 'Playful hybrid' is a term I devised to describe sensory perception that consists of two or more opposite elements embraced in the artwork that are at play against each other, or a sense of dichotomy of opposing sensations that can be perceived by the viewer.



participation. I intended this idea of the playful hybrid to be sensorially immersive and to possess a sense of opposites, or a dichotomy that references the opposing emotions I felt through my own displacement (such as feeling insecure in spite of being in a safer place, and guilt at being safe whilst my family and friends remained in danger).

In creating this sense of dichotomy I implemented both specifically safe, and specifically unsafe, elements within the smells, motions, sounds and tactile mediums that made up the artwork. For example, some of the work in the *Hybrid Residues* series (figs. 11, 20), was imbued with 'unsafe' smells that, for me, provoked anxiety such as the scents of different plastic mediums, rust, hot metal and resins. These 'unsafe' scents embodied childhood memories associated with times of bombardment and vicious periods of fighting when, I remember, my surroundings were filled with smoke, dust and the smells of hot shrapnel, molten plastics and dying matter. Other pieces in the *Hybrid Residues* series were infused with 'safe' smells designed to give a homely, comforting feeling such as the smells of coffee, baking, incense, orange and spices, all of which embody memories of happy times with family and community, gathering for food and conversation (figs. 9 and 20). The use of different types of textures embodied my longing for, and grief at the loss of, what during my childhood constituted 'home'; home, to me, is where I feel secure, where family is, where my bed and my belongings are. These embodied textures such as aluminium foil and wire, resin, wax paper, cotton and plastic had a hybrid corporeal presence associated with home, 'stuff', the kitchen, belongings and toys (fig. 11). As an example, the texture of some of the materials I used caused a crackling and swishing noise when touched which reminded me of pleasing sensations of packaged toys, or sweets in semi-brittle wrappers. (E.g. figs. 9, 11, 20 and 39; pgs. 71 and 78, and *Memoirs* p. 55) Other materials were smooth surfaced but with spikey edges, made

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from transparent glues or resins embedded with thin wire or other materials (fig. 33). These pieces embodied an unpleasant sense of fear and uncertainty. I also made thin fragile ceramic artefacts, small in size to accentuate fragility and potential for breakage (fig. 10).



Fig. 10 | Alissar McCreary | *Ceramic scrolls* | 2011-12 | Mixed media | 2.54 cm

The intention with these pieces was to show the vulnerability I felt as a refugee. The colour and nature of the ceramic material also brought back more comfortable memories of traditional jugs, bowls and vases still in common use in Lebanon.

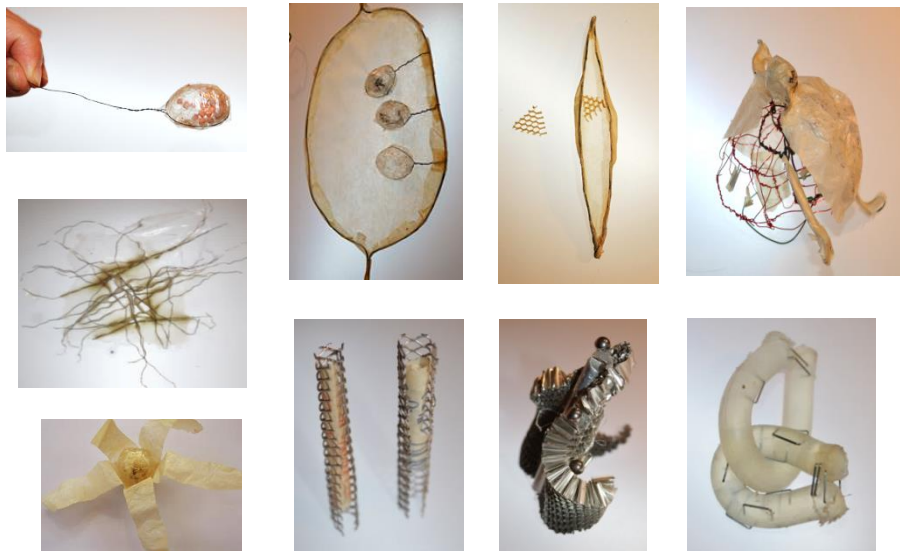


Fig.11 | Alissar McCreary | Details from *Hybrid Residues series* | 2011-12 | Mixed media | More details are provided in the catalogue.

## The Bridge – Reaching for Connection

I developed active participation using different strategies in order to explore the notion of connection between my work and people, space and place, and also in order to achieve the phenomenon of sensorial empathy<sup>27</sup>. I did this through using sensorial techniques such as haptic perception (examples on page 48, 49, 86, and 90), smells (see catalogue, p. 62), choice of space and sense of place (e.g. *Artefact of Loss* fig. 31, and *disPLACED* fig. 47) in order for my tacit emotional experiences of displacement to be felt and understood intuitively by audiences from diverse cultures. (E.g. video ref. fig. 31 and appendix 1 – Catalogue p. 44)

An example of ways of exploring the notion of connection was my sketchbook series *Mahkzan*<sup>28</sup> (2011-17) (fig. 13), which was made of reused paper and thin corrugated card, designed to be picked up and viewed by the audience. The lines and sketches were delicate and carried a narrative-like sequence of drawings. The drawings embodied a visual and sensorial dialogue (i.e. patterns, repetition, and continuous line) that compelled the viewers to keep looking through the pages. When my colleagues viewed *Mahkzan* (see catalogue, pgs. 10, 11, 18, 35, 36, 40 and 49) they indicated a certain connection with these sketchbooks which, they felt, were telling a personal tale. I wanted them to be a chronicle to take the viewer on a silent and remote personal journey.

In *Mahkzan* I used active participation a little differently. In this piece, I reached for an intuitive knowing<sup>29</sup> and a connection with others using the

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<sup>27</sup> Phenomenon of sensorial empathy: here is based on nonverbal physical sensation and an intuitive understanding. From a psychoanalytical point of view, it can be related to enactment: 'Enactment is, along with empathy, another form of non-verbal communication: participation through a 'shared act' ' (Zanocco, de Marchi and Pozzi, 2006 p. 149)

<sup>28</sup> *Mahkzan*, Arabic name for a magazine, journal or periodical, it also describes a hiding or storage place for different things including ammunition.

<sup>29</sup> Intuitive knowing: (Schön 1991) is about thought and action, and an internal awareness.

visual narrative of the illustrations to express my existential sense of being without disclosing a conventional representation of the real story. The feedback from my peers suggested that the physical presence of the sketchbooks required them to be touched, felt, looked at, and investigated further (a clear indication that active participation between audience and artwork occurred), in turn encouraging pursuit of the illustrated narrative sequence. Reflecting on this feedback, I sensed that this further pursuit of the narrative (from the sketch books) led the audience to sensorial empathy with the predicament expressed in that narrative.

One of the initial influences for *Mahkzan* was Sartre's novel 'Nausea' which, for me, accentuated the importance of mankind's existential motive of actively participating with each other, for instance by playing cards or eating in a restaurant full of other people, because that gave us the feeling that we exist. When Sartre was describing Monsieur Fasquelle (the manager of café Mably in Nausea) he wrote:

I smile at seeing him so lively: when his establishment empties, his head empties too... when this man is alone, he falls to sleep.

There are still about a score of customers left, bachelors, small-time engineers, and office workers. They lunch hurriedly in boarding houses which they call their 'messes', and, since they need a little luxury, they come here after their meal, to drink a cup of coffee and play poker dice; they make a little noise, but a vague noise which doesn't bother me. In order to exist, they too have to join with others. (p. 16)

The second influence was George Maciunas's *Fluxus 1* (fig. 12) which was an 'artist's book' containing work made by different artists from diverse creative disciplines and backgrounds. (Ken Friedman 1998 and 2012)

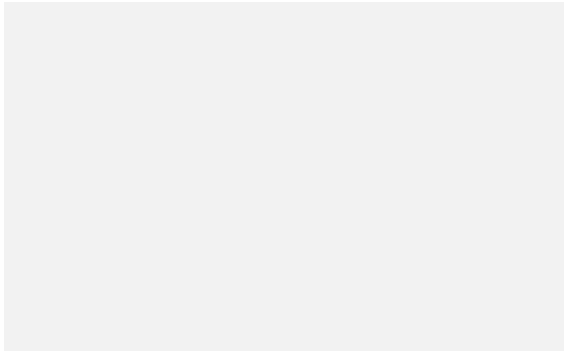


Fig. 12 | Maciunas | *Fluxus 1*  
| 1961 | Mixed Media



Fig. 13 | Alissar McCreary | *Mahkzan* |  
2017 | Mixed media

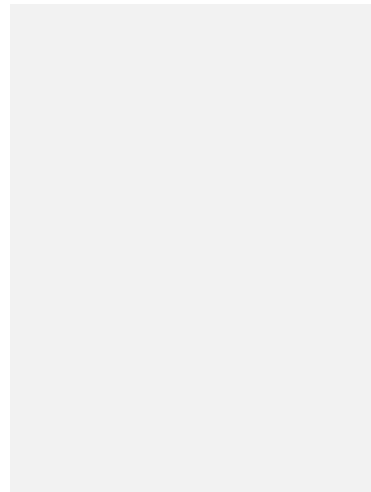


Fig.14 | Mona Hatoum | *Home* | 1999 |  
wood, stainless steel, electric wire, light  
bulbs, computerised dimmer unit,  
amplifier, speakers | 77 x 198 x 73.5 cm

I was particularly interested in, and influenced by, Maciunas' (1961) use of the word 'purging' or 'purge', (one of three meanings of 'flux' that he chose to use). (ibid, p. 16) Purging was similar to the word nausea which reminded me of the feeling I get when I remember home during the war. The *Mahkzan* series became, essentially, a storage place for explosive emotions I had suppressed for many years but which were finally, by its creation, purged. The sequential quality of the books became apparent after making three books in one week. I was telling my story and I couldn't stop. One of the stories was portrayed in a series of sketches of a character who burst out of his skin to become an entity of scribbles that

were either battling each other to gain their own space, or swarmed in a space trying to stay together.

My experiments with active participation of the viewer in the *Hybrid Residues* series, *Artefact of Loss* exhibition, and the *Mahkzan* series, all centred around the idea of the audience touching, moving, destroying or reconstructing the artwork, both as a way of sensing and sharing my memories of experiences of displacement. Based on audience feedback, I felt that this process of active participation allowed me to explore ways to achieve sensorial empathy with the audience, which I believe is a bridge to connect and understand each other at a purely human level without the cultural barriers which written or spoken language tends to create. I believe that this embodied art became a sensorial and unifying language that allowed my tacit communication to be felt by an audience with varied cultural differences in a way that might otherwise be more difficult to understand.

I wanted to compare the *Mahkzan* series to one of Mona Hatoum's artworks to search for similarities between the two pieces, since we both refer to the same themes of loss and displacement. The piece that consistently drew my attention was *Home* (1999). (Fig. 14) With her use of the noise of electrical pulses and the neck high razor wire, Hatoum appropriated the gallery space and abstracted it into the scene of a traumatic event, a siege or a massacre where all that remained was the stripped electrical wires with their sizzling and crackling sounds implying a warning. Visually, from a distance, the scene looked like a kitchen or part of a home, but on closer inspection the noise and the razor wire that divides the audience from the installation, gave the sense of a scenario that embodies lethal danger (Ohlin 2002). *Mahkzan* and *Home* had an underlying sense that was comparable in that the essence of both contents was, from my perspective, emotionally explosive.



Fig. 15 | Alissar  
McCreary  
| *Shedding Skin*  
2D1 | 2012 |  
Graphite and ink  
| size 12.7 x  
12.7cm:

The sketchbooks for *Mahkzan* series were first made in 2012 (fig. 15); however to push the boundaries further into encouraging the audience to touch the art, later that year I made the 2D work into 3D (fig. 16), so that its implications became more tangible and affective. I re-created the small swollen human figure from the *Mahkzan* into 3D. He now stood constructed from wire and wax paper apparently bloated to such an extent that he might be about to explode. Suspended within him were individual scrolls of text which swayed when he was handled. The translucent nature of the wax paper 'skin' was designed to encourage the viewers to handle the piece in order to see more clearly the meaning of the writing within, in turn creating a shifting and whispering pattern of noise. These shifting patterns of noise were intended to explore auditory memory as well as suggesting a sense of a transformation and instability.<sup>30</sup> The black crosses stuck on his eyes, nose, mouth, and ears suggested a lack of ability to speak, hear, breath, see, or perceive in any way, in other words he was not allowed to use his senses. The embodiment of his struggles, which were observed in the form of the scrolls stuck on wire and hung within the cavity of his torso, were exposed and ready to burst out and purge him of his burdens. The audience's perception and feedback after a viewing suggested sensorial empathy for his predicament. At first glance he was seen as a doll, quite small, fragile and innocent, but on closer inspection, the feedback suggested, he changed to reveal a sense of underlying

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<sup>30</sup> See also *Skin* appendix I - catalogue p. 13

predicament disclosing a more dark and ominous presence than that which was initially sensed.



Fig. 16 | Alissar McCreary | *Shedding Skin 2D1 and 3D1* |  
2012 | Wax paper, wire and polymer | size: 12.7 x 12.7cm

## Disconnection

Three of the earliest artworks for this research project were called *Silence 1* (2012) (fig. 17) *Silence 2* (2012) (fig. 18), and *Silence 3D* (2013) (fig. 19). *Silence 1* depicted a place that is seen from above, as in a bird's eye view, but portrayed upside down and as if a sheet of glass existed between this place and the viewer. The illusion of the sheet of glass as a divider attempted to instill a sense of disconnection, as of a sensory vacuum, where the cars, people or animals could not be heard, and the croissant



with the cup of coffee could not be smelt. For me, these illustrations reveal a sense of loss. I wanted the viewer to experience an embodied sense of disconnection between them and that world on the other side, seemingly caused by an invisible transparent shield. *Silence 2* depicts a place that can be felt and seen from above but is not separated from us like in *Silence 1*. The transparent dividing sheet is no longer disconnecting us from the scene, where the cars, people or animals could potentially be heard, and the croissant with the cup of coffee could be smelt. Sensorial empathy, or a sensory responsiveness to what is familiar in our world, a car, a tree, people swimming or a cup of coffee, all give a sense of belonging. To be able to identify the familiar whether it is a smell, an object or a sound, makes the feeling of being at home more tangible.

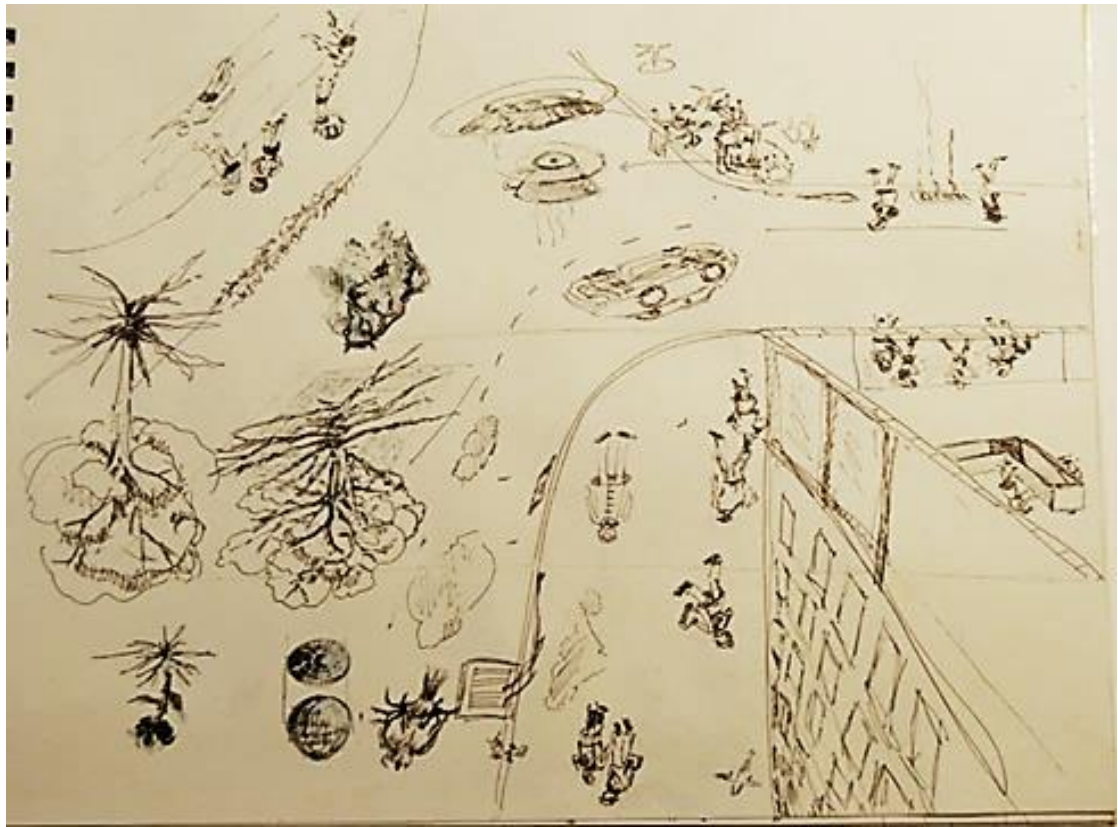


Fig. 17 | Alissar McCreary | *Silence 1* | 2012 | Ink  
on paper | size: 25.4 x 30.48 cm



Fig. 18 | Alissar McCreary | *Silence 2* |  
2012 | Ink on paper | size: 25.4 x 30.48 cm

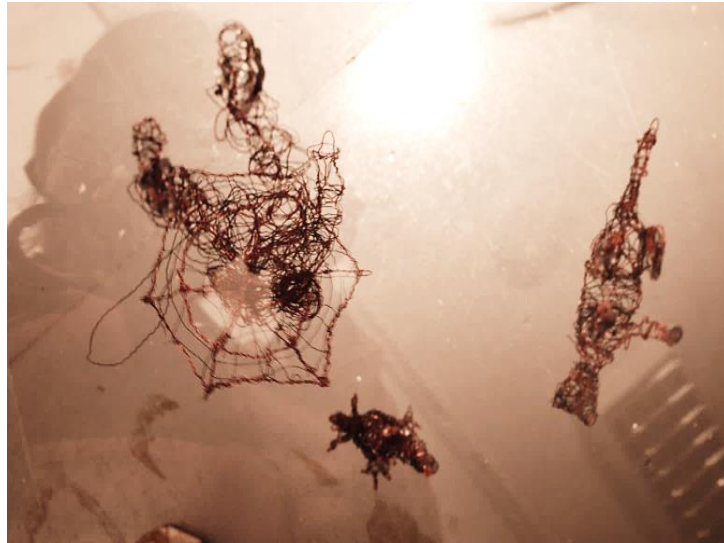


Fig.19 | Alissar McCreary | *Silence 3D* | 2013 | Wire  
on Perspex | size: 60 x 40 cm

*Silence 3D* again depicts a place that is seen from above, portrayed upside down and separated from us by a sheet of glass. A wire man with an umbrella is walking along unaware, but the raven and the cat behind him suddenly notice us looking from the other side; are they above or below us?

The concept and narrative of what is or isn't real, or perhaps a combination of both (the hybrid)<sup>31</sup> continues to run through the thesis, metaphorically speaking, as if it is a continuous contour or a thread from beginning to end. The element of the playful and toy-like artefacts became stronger and more prevalent as the research project evolved.

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<sup>31</sup> See also catalogue pgs. 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

## The haptic sense<sup>32</sup> and touch

I remember that when I was a child I wanted to touch and sense the whole world around me. The sense of touch is of great importance to human beings and has been referenced in many ways, whether through a figure of speech or metaphor; however we still remain cautious of the physical side of touch.



Fig. 20 | Alissar McCreary | *Scrolls* from the *Hybrid Residues* series  
| 2012 -13 | See catalogue for details

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<sup>32</sup> Lusebrink (2004).

Middle Eastern culture thrives on the power of the touch and the haptic perception<sup>33</sup>, from relationships with family, friends and associates to practices beyond the norm such as superstitious rituals and clairvoyance. *Scrolls* (2012) (fig. 20) was the first piece in a series that demanded the haptic (or Lamsi- لم سي in Arabic) to be present. The tiny scrolls were dropped in the hands of the audience, and in doing so created whisper like sounds when falling and shifting together. As the scrolls settled in the hand, the viewer realised that their surface was impregnated with illegible scribbles. These scribbles were my memories and expression of corporeal emotions stemming from experiencing the conflict.

To encourage touching and sensing, in the installation *Artefact of Loss* (fig. 32 chapter 3), the audience helped with moving packaged artwork from a suitcase to wire stands. I wanted the work to demand involvement from the audience and to arrest their senses sufficiently to encourage them to pursue a closer, more intimate on-going investigation and to feel a connection with the artwork via touching, smelling, listening, seeing and sensing. *Artefact of loss* helped me achieve the inquiry led active participation I was seeking, which mostly relies on tacit communication, and an understanding that can be referred to as intersubjectivity<sup>34</sup>. This stems from prior experiences and exploration by the senses, rather than the direct verbal explanation of feelings which can sometimes be impossible to express. The feedback from my colleagues, during the *Artefact of loss* exhibition, suggested to me that the audience's awareness of similarities between my experiences embodied in the art, and their own prior equivalent experiences, might be essential in achieving sensorial empathy. (Chapters 2 and 3)

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<sup>33</sup> The Haptic perception: here concerns the hand's identification of shapes and objects, as well as assessing the object's properties such as mass, weight, height, size, form, texture, malleability.

<sup>34</sup> Intersubjectivity: Here means a mutual and shared understanding of the essence of the art by the audience. (See also article by Dan Zahavi (2001) on Heidegger views of intersubjectivity).

## Reciprocity

Through the idea of the connecting 'flesh', or the *in between space*, I explored reciprocity<sup>35</sup> (Merleau-Ponty, 1968) as a phenomenon to use in order to promote the viewer's sensorial empathy both with the embodied<sup>36</sup> artefact and that artefacts' connection to a specific place. I wanted to understand ways of sensing, perceiving, and interpreting experiences which produce mutuality with the audience, and to explore new ground in the search for intersubjectivity. In order to pursue this, I produced studies in a range of sizes such as *Mezza* (2013) (fig. 23), and *Embodied* (2013) (fig. 24), none larger than the palm of my hand, which aimed to promote both active participation and sensorial empathy. These studies were developed to create a connection and a presence suggestive of my memories of displacement; for example, I used 'scribbling' on miniature scrolls, split spheres and containers as a metaphor for writing about my memories. I incorporated materials such as cotton string, plastic sheets and paper, all of which were materials we used continuously whilst on the run due to conflict. I was aiming to construct a variety of surfaces that might be light, precious, delicate, thin (skin like), cold or warm, smooth, transparent or translucent, but all strong enough to be handled in order to act as a structure and container. (Figs. 34 and 35)

The scrolls (figs. 20 and 21) were made from tracing paper, wax paper or clay. Presentation of and experimentation with these studies helped my understanding of how to develop the artwork with a view to accentuating the viewer's sensory perceptions and to encourage a desire on their part to participate with the artwork of their own free will. Feedback from my peer

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<sup>35</sup> Reciprocity here is used as being the opposite of isolation. It is the mutual and sensual connection between two entities.

<sup>36</sup> Embodied artefact: embodied with my experience of war and displacement.

group, elicited through presentations, seminars and exhibitions, revolved around the size, style of script and smell of the scrolls, and also the noise created when they were touched or moved. For some of the group, the size was reminiscent of religious scrolls or of doll's house contents, referencing childhood memories, while the script became intriguing to some because it was unintelligible (fig. 2). The noise from the scrolls reminded some of the group of the sound of seashells, dry leaves or wood shavings, once again remembered from childhood. My intention was to create familiar sounds that might trigger memories of both home life and childhood experiences in an audience, regardless of its cultural background.





Fig. 21 | Alissar McCreary |  
*Scrolls from Hybrid Residues*  
Series | 2012 | Ink on wax paper  
| size: 76.2 cm

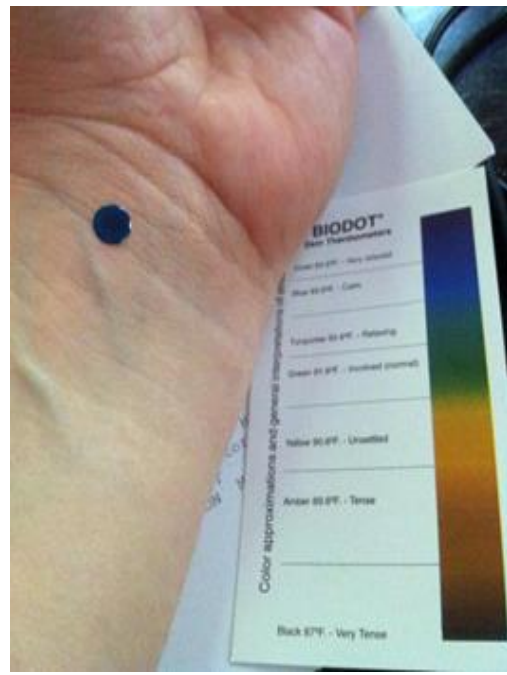


Fig. 22 | Alissar McCreary |  
*Biodots* | 2012 |  
| Size: 5mm dia.

Another study I carried out involved placing a Biodot<sup>37</sup> (fig. 22) on the surface of members of the audience's skin with a view to exploring the idea of measuring mood fluctuation with the aim of helping each individual to detect and perceive their own emotions in relation to my artwork. The purpose of this study was to enable me to observe the extent of the viewer's awareness of, and interest in, measuring their own mood fluctuations which were contingent on external influences (conversations, artwork, atmosphere, vibes etc.). I also wanted to gauge whether intersubjectivity or a mutual connection was present within the audience in response to both the device and the artwork. The outcome of this experimental presentation was interesting because it seemed, from

<sup>37</sup> Biodots are used for measuring stress or mood (emotion) levels. It helps uncover certain factors that might have activated a certain emotion. 'Biodots are made of heat sensitive material that changes color in response to changes in skin temperature. ... Biodots adhere to the back of your hand and change color as the flow of blood to your capillaries increases or decreases.' StressStop.com

subsequent feedback, that the changes in readings of the Biodots appeared to have more to do with the participant's reactions to both the act of wearing the device, and its changes of reading, rather than their perception of the artwork.

Other small studies were designed to embody memories of family gatherings which involved traditional hospitality such as the offering of small cups of Turkish coffee, small sweets like Turkish delights and baklava, and sitting around the table to have meals of Mezza<sup>38</sup>. (Figs. 23 and 24) These family meals are usually lengthy occasions, with the offering of hospitality, the gathering of family and friends, and above all the sharing of such experience being, perhaps, more significant than the meal itself. Whilst these studies collectively referenced the foods, cigarettes and coffee cups of these social gatherings, the incongruous materials they were made of made them seem curious and unsafe. Their shape and texture referenced hand grenades, bullets, shrapnel, open wounds, chemical smells and associated uncomfortable feelings. I originally created these objects with the intention of enlarging them to create installations about my memories of displacement. However, I became increasingly interested in the idea of creating an installation that consists of small objects made with threatening materials, textures, patterns, and shapes which represent traditional Middle Eastern hospitality over-shadowed by the dark and pervasive clouds of conflict. This idea was stimulated by different viewer's feedback which confirmed my intuition that for active participation and sensorial empathy with the artwork to be successful both 'touch' and 'sound' will, ideally, need to be present.

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<sup>38</sup> *Mezza*, in Lebanon, is a collection of small savoury dishes served together either as an appetiser or as a part of the main meal.



Fig. 23 | Alissar McCreary | *Mezza*  
from *Hybrid Residues series* | 2013 |  
Plastic, carbon fibre, wire, emulsion,  
cotton string and cello tape | size:  
15.24 x 20.32 cm



Fig. 24 | Alissar McCreary |  
*Embodied* from *Hybrid Residues*  
series | 2013 | Mixed media |  
Plastic, cotton, wax/parchment  
paper, ceramic, wire | size:  
4dia.cm

A presentation called *Disconnect/Displace* (2015), designed to investigate (fig. 25) reciprocity and intersubjectivity, involved the merging of some of my experimental studies into a short performance. The presentation involved a small plain white cardboard box containing clay scrolls inscribed with written memories, and a small mallet. I placed the mallet on the floor, opened the box and carefully poured the small ceramic scrolls that it contained onto the floor next to the mallet. The scrolls, approximately 25 mm in length and 6 mm in diameter, were inscribed with illegible text. Although I didn't invite the audience to participate but only announced that these scrolls represent my memories of displacement, the group did, intuitively, decide to participate. They approached the scrolls, touching them, examining their texture, smell, the text and the material they were made of. One of the participants then picked the mallet up and smashed some of the scrolls. I returned, carefully retrieved the scrolls (including the damaged ones), placed them back in the box and closed it, setting the mallet carefully beside it.

Following the presentation of *Disconnect/Displace*, feedback from the majority of the participants centred on interest in the meaning of the text and an urge to use the mallet to destroy the scrolls. This destructive urge

was however, for most people, overcome by preconceived inhibitions. The participant who destroyed some of the scrolls stated that she took this action because she felt that the scrolls represented my bad memories and thought that their destruction might alleviate the pain of those memories. She also stated that she did not “feel bad” for destroying the scrolls initially, but she did later when I carefully picked the scrolls up and placed them back in the box. Feedback from the participants suggested that they had taken part in inquiry led active participation to varying degrees and that a connection or an understanding was made with my memories of displacement embodied in the work.



Fig. 25 | Alissar McCreary |  
*Disconnect/Displace* | 2015 | Mallet,  
ceramic scrolls

### **Artefacts – The Corporeal Presence<sup>39</sup>**

The *artefact*, in my artwork, embodies my memories and emotions, therefore I wanted them, when they were touched by others, to create both a corporeal presence of my memories, and a phenomenon that could

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<sup>39</sup> Corporeal presence can be a material artefact that can provide a corporeal presence to mediate the absence of something.

instigate the audience's sensorial perception. I hoped that a connecting bridge would thus be created through active participation.

When I first held the roman soldier (pgs. 31, 32, and see appendix II-*Memoirs* p. 8, 13 and 14) my father gave to me, it instigated these same feelings of connection, of sensorial empathy, and of sensorial perception. In *You wanna peace of me* (fig. 26) I wanted to embody this feeling of connection or affiliation that I had with the soldier. In my mind, we had an existential element of mutuality in that we were both here in the present, but displaced physically and (for me) psychologically.

The idea of connection and of the small embodied object is conveyed in Mona Hatoum's works *Over my dead body* (fig. 27), and *Witness* (fig. 28). Hatoum uses humour in her Photograph *Over my dead body* (1988), in which the rebellious<sup>40</sup> expression of the artist, as she stares at the toy soldier standing on her nose, conveys a shift of dominance in status and gender power. (Ohlin, 2002)

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<sup>40</sup> 'Rebellious', the term was used within the Darat al Funun article on 'The State of Being in Mona Hatoum's Artwork' by Salwa Mikdadi in the article under Ohlin (2002).

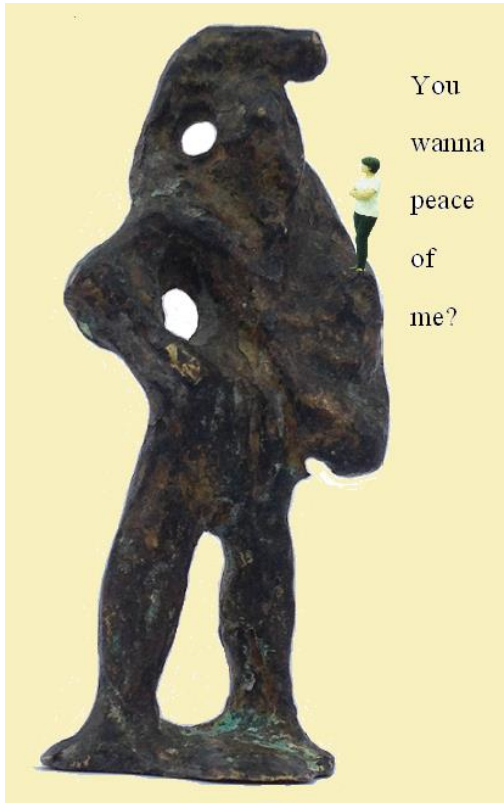


Fig. 26 | Alissar McCreary |  
*You wanna peace of me* |  
2017 | Photomontage | 10cm

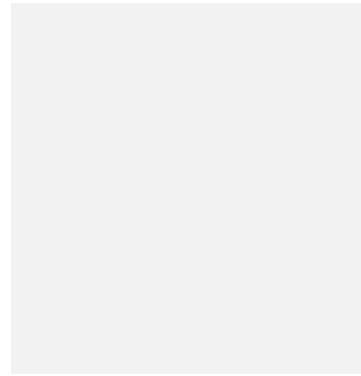


Fig. 27 | Mona Hatoum | *Over my dead body* | 1988 |  
Photograph

In *Witness* (2008) a small fragile ceramic sculpture was created as a replica of the original monument that was erected in Martyr's Square in Beirut in 1916 to commemorate the rising of the Lebanese nationalist's against the Ottoman powers. Throughout many years of conflict, this memorial became riddled with bullet holes and shrapnel damage, testament to the suffering endured by the population over many decades. During the years when I lived in Lebanon, and whenever I went back to visit, I always went to Beirut to visit my uncle, and if it was safe, we went out viewing the capital, always ending up at Sahet al Shuhada, (The Martyrs' Square in Arabic). Every time we viewed the monument it seemed to have been adopted by a new movement or a different struggle. The statue became a timeless witness to numerous conflicts through the years and, in my mind, a witness to my struggles through displacement. When we drove by the

Martyrs' statue, it felt very sad and poignant, scarred and disfigured with the marks of war, but still standing as a constant reminder to the Lebanese people that we are still here regardless of immense loss and tragedy. On a personal note it also reminds me of the death of my aunt who was killed in the war in Beirut (1975). (Fig. 29)

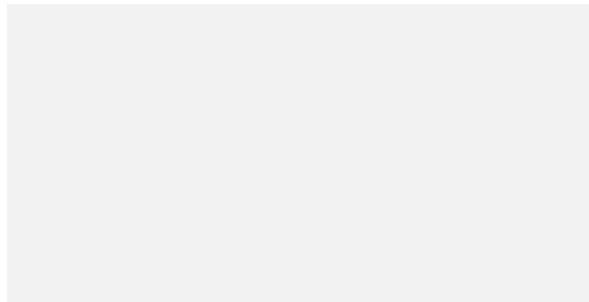


Fig. 28 | Mona Hatoum | *Witness* | 2008 | ceramics, stone | 84 x 57 x 35 cm



Fig. 29 | Alissar McCreary | *Huda* | 2011 | Photo on Ceramic | 90 x 60cm

When Hatoum placed the fragile replica *Witness* in a gallery space, she pushed the timelessness of the memorial further, and seemed to question both the foundation of shared national ethics and the expectation of permanency during changing times. (Ohlin)

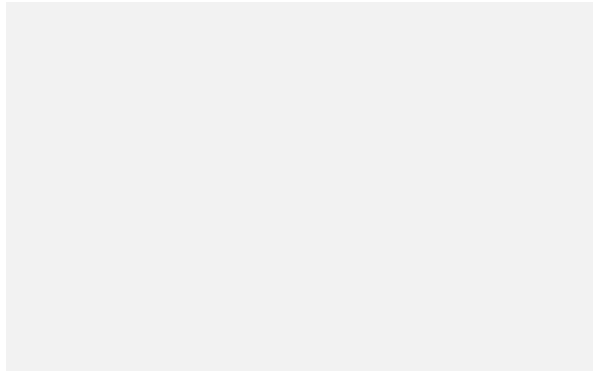


Fig. 30 | Mona Hatoum | *La grande broyeuse* | *Mouli-Julienne x 17* | 1999 | mild steel | main sculpture: 343 x 575 x 363 cm, discs: each 4.5 x 170 cm diameter

## Mona Hatoum

Symbolism and the surreal were prevalent in the installation *Home* which consisted of a real life structure of a 'home' with furniture connected to electrical cables. Hatoum intended the cables to resemble human veins, and the domestic objects to resemble bodily organs (fig. 14). Separating the viewer from the work, the artist erected a wall of barbed wire to insinuate the separateness the artist had endured through being displaced. Here, I believe, the artist provokes feelings of sensorial empathy in the viewer, aroused by the seemingly imprisoning domestic scene. Hatoum implicates the viewer with the essence of her experience of displacement,

...her ghostly installations boil these rival geographies and histories down to a minimalist essence, leaving only the barest furnishings behind. As a result, all cultures—and all viewers—are implicated in the punishing scenarios her installations put on display. (Ohlin 2002)

To me, surrealism is both a kind of escapism and the resurrection of a world existing in the mind, that is to say, a conceptual construction formulated by our intellect, affections, and the sensorium, predisposed



both by our perception and real experiences of our material world. Sculptural artefacts have played a major role in both Hatoum's (fig. 30), and my own artwork (figs. 5, 6, 19 and 38). For me, they feel like a personal landmark, a testimony and a memorial as well as the embodiment of memories of conflict. I wanted my artefacts to carry my own memories and stand in the space between me and others, touched, sensed and perceived and to become the 'connecting flesh'. (Abram 1996)



Fig. 31 | Alissar McCreary | *Artefact of loss* | 2015 | Mixed media  
<https://youtu.be/ExPt8bX-GuM>

### ***Artefact of loss***

*Artefact of Loss* (2015) (fig. 31) was an installation that embodied memories and emotions of my experience of war and displacement during the Lebanese conflict between 1970 and 1984. The installation consisted of a number of objects packaged in clear plastic bags with labels and price tags (fig. 33), all displayed for sale on three white metal rotary stands. The stands were placed under a white plastic tent and lit from above with fluorescent strip lights. (Fig. 32)



Fig. 32 | Detail from *Artefact of Loss*.



Fig. 33 | *Like fear in my body* detail from *Artefact of Loss*.

Each of the packaged objects embodied an emotion I had experienced during times when I was displaced in a period of conflict. The objects or artefacts, hung on hooks and were made from materials with opposing properties, such as spiky wire intertwined with a thin layer of translucent polymer (strength combined with delicacy), or wax paper sewn to a frame shaped out of polymer coated wire (flexibility sewn to a stiff frame). These combinations gave off a slight chemical and metallic smell, purposely chosen to embody the discomfort of prolonged periods of fear derived from specific circumstances. This fear embedded itself and felt like thorns or spikes in the flesh of my body, or like a web of sharp pain in my stomach. (See appendix I- catalogue pgs. 44-48, and appendix II- *Memoirs* p. 38)

The method of display I used was to explore each emotional experience by embodying it in a three dimensional artefact. Each artefact was then isolated in a clear plastic bag, (i.e. in its own space), and given a category and a price. The price of each object was very low (a few pennies only)

depicting the meagre significance attributed to human emotional turmoil and suffering during any war or displacement. This posed the question: What value does human suffering and displacement have for others? The answer, for me, was that this value depends on the sensorial empathy of others, of their understanding of, and sensitivity to, this kind of hardship and suffering. This understanding and sensorial empathy refers to our primordial sensing<sup>41</sup>, our capability as human beings of intuitively knowing and sensing. (Abram 1996, p. 68)

Through the method of displaying the artefacts of my embodied memories, emotions of suffering are sensed and acknowledged by the viewers; therefore, sensing and the knowing touch becomes evidence of a closer sharing and understanding of other's suffering.

Using the plastic shelter helped mark an invisible border. The viewer can, however, come in from any side. During the exhibition, I asked the viewers to hang the bags of objects onto the stands. I expected that when the audience fetched a bag of objects from the suitcase and took them to the hook stands, they would have to not only touch the objects but look closely at them to ascertain what they were, to read any instructions on the package and to find the best place for them on the hooks. Whilst the plastic bags were in the hands of the viewers, they would be able to hear the rustling noise that they produced and feel the weight of the object in their hands. In touching the bags of objects that embodied my memories, they would in return be touched by my memories. Through this active participation, the act of touch becomes important. David Abram's (1996) defines the idea of the touch as: '... an active and a passive sense, for to touch is to be touched, as Merleau-Ponty recognized: The presence of the world is precisely the presence of its flesh to my flesh'. (Ibid, pgs. 68 and 206)

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<sup>41</sup> Primordial sensing here refers to our capability as human beings of intuitively sense the world around us.

The bags were in a suit case on the floor outside of the exhibition arena. The viewer's hung all of the bags on the stands and in doing so they seemed to actually take interest in, and ownership of, the objects they had hung. They sensed the nature of each object through touch, sight and sound, read the labels, examined the material they were made of, and chose where to position them on the stands. The shelter also embodied the idea of impermanence, as of a plastic bag. This impermanence implied that the shelter could be assembled and disassembled instantly, then placed in its bag for quick flight. The reference to the plastic bag here is important as it was the only vessel available to be used for essential items when we had to leave home in a hurry.

Staging these recollected residues of memories in a public exhibition space became the primary goal. Each experienced emotion was isolated and dichotomised in order to understand why it has redeveloped, and the origin of its manifestation. At this time however, I felt that these were experiences that would only be empathised with by individuals who had been in similar circumstances. I, however, wanted every viewer to feel and connect with my experiences. Critical feedback from presentations to my PhD colleagues suggested that an effective way to do this would be to allow the viewer to touch the embodied objects. In the first instance, I produced a series of maquettes intended to be developed into life size sculptures which I felt would effectively promote the empathy I have been describing. At this time I felt that the large scale of these pieces would prove the most effective way of achieving this.

During an early presentation however, it quickly became apparent from viewer's feedback that the small<sup>42</sup> (palm sized) scale of the original maquettes was, in their opinion, more effective in promoting empathy.

Whilst I was still working on these art pieces, I remembered that whenever my family and I ran away to escape the fighting we always took just a plastic bag full of essential items as there was never enough time to pack suitcases with clothes or belongings. I also remembered that whenever we had to run away from home to other villages or cities, my mother always took us out the next day and bought us a small toy, invariably contained in a crackling plastic bag, to keep us occupied as all our own toys were left behind at home. The toys were always very cheap, but that did not matter; they were thrilling to me and my brother, and we would play with them for days or weeks until we went back home. Even then, we eventually had to run away from these places once again, leaving the new toys behind.

The challenge was to find ways to encourage the viewer to instinctively touch the artwork during an exhibition, to physically interact with the pieces without external influence or encouragement. In *Artefact of Loss*, touching the bags and feeling the objects inside them gave me a sense of a strange excitement, stemming from the dichotomy of pleasant memories of a plastic bag containing a toy which would bring much joy, as opposed to unpleasant memories of a plastic bag as the sole means of carrying items essential for survival in a time of flight. These elements made me feel that the plastic bags were both relevant and completing in making the packaged artefacts embodied objects.

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<sup>42</sup> The intimate closeness of the artefact in the viewer's hands, enabling them to feel the texture and the details that emphasised the uniqueness of each piece, and to sense the smells, apparently different temperatures, and sounds produced by the objects, all seemed to stimulate the emotions, and generate sensorial empathy; an empathy obtained from the senses and not just visual perception. Reacting to this result, I decided that a series of smaller studies would be more effective in achieving my aim. My earlier maquettes essentially became the first of my studies. The challenge was to find ways to encourage the viewer to instinctively touch the artwork during an exhibition, to physically interact with the piece without external influence or encouragement.

The objects in my installation were alienated behind the barrier or wall of the plastic bag, and each bag was given a tag and hung from a hook on a cold white metal stand. The shelter covering the installation *Artefact of Loss* symbolises not only the welcome protectiveness, but also the unsettlingly temporary nature of our accommodation. Like newspapers on newsstands, it became the market for my memories, an artificial place to exhibit a record of times of misfortune and sorrow for my family. In the same way that the newspaper provides stories about the displacement of people during current conflicts, so my installation allowed my memories to raise awareness of my own past experience of conflict and displacement.

The *Artefact of Loss* installation helped me to formulate an understanding of the phenomenon of recollecting memories of certain experiences, and re-presenting or re-creating their existence. Materialising recollected emotions of displacement, in order to re-present them as objects capable of creating, in the viewer, sensorial empathy with the original emotions, gave rise to this sense that 'marketing' of these emotions was taking place.

## CHAPTER THREE

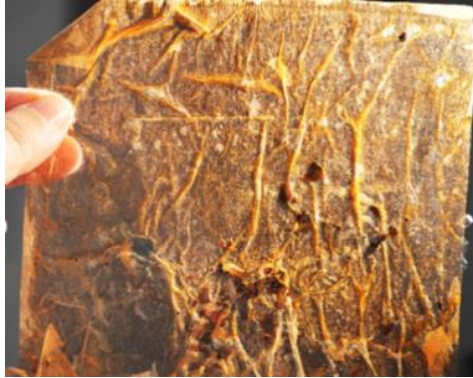


Fig. 34 | Alissar McCreary | *Yellow/skin* from *Hybrid Residues* series | 2013 | Transparent handmade parchment, made from tissue paper, fibre glass paper and polymer.

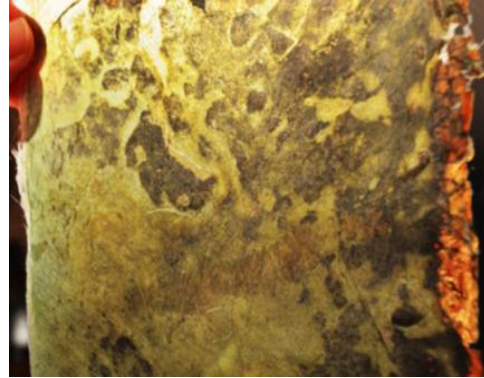


Fig. 35 | Alissar McCreary | *Gold landscape-skin* from *Hybrid Residues* series | 2013 | Transparent handmade parchment, Gold leaf, tissue paper, fibre glass paper and polymer.

**My second hypothesis proposes that active participation of the viewer with artwork can help promote or facilitate sensorial empathy.**

### Remembering and Detachment

My first exploration of this second hypothesis involved exploring ways of remembering places from which I was displaced. I developed *Hybrid Residues* to: **a.** find out if an audience can sense any of my embodied emotions through the artefacts and **b.** if an audience can feel an empathy or sensorial empathy through the artwork.

On the whole the feedback indicated the viewer's sensing a fragile and fragmented presence embodied in the artwork. Some of the artefacts were referred to as parts of a body and others as pieces from a doll's house. The most interesting outcome for me, however, was noting the

level of engagement and involvement of my colleagues as they touched the artwork in silence. I realised that the embodied experiences that I had attempted to inject into the work had been sensed and recognised.



Fig. 36 | Alissar McCreary | Details from *Hybrid Residues* series: (top L-R) *Waiting*, *Precious Memories*, *The Clay Card*, *precious Nothing*, *Preserved*, *Shedding Skin* | 2011-16 | Mixed media , wire, plaster, cotton, clay, fibre class resin, paper, plastic, ink, incense.



It was fundamental that I saw my colleagues sensing and perceiving my embodied emotions while touching my artwork, as this, I think, is a phenomenon that equates to sensorial empathy through which intersubjective implications can be generated and shared between the self and the other without the use words. I see this as relating to Merleau-Ponty's intercorporeality<sup>43</sup> which concerns a form of nonverbal behaviour and a set of embodied interactions, namely 'primordial empathy'<sup>44</sup> and 'interactional synchrony'<sup>45</sup>, all of which point to a kind of mutual understanding, coordination, rhythm, and synchrony in tempo and behaviour resulting in a corresponding and interconnected interaction. (Tanaka 2015, p. 457)

### **Forced displacement**

In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said says that exile 'is predicated on the existence of, love for, and a real bond with one's native place; the universal truth of exile is not that one has lost that love of home, but that inherent in each is an unexpected, unwelcome loss.' (1994, p. 407) My displacement has been the main instigator for my making art for thirty two years.

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<sup>43</sup> 'According to Merleau-Ponty's writings, intercorporeality refers, first of all, to the reciprocity of one's own body and that of another. The other's body appears to the self not as a mere object (Körper) but as the living body in action (Leib). This is where the perception-action loop between the self and the other occurs: perceiving the other's action prompts the same potential action in the self and vice versa.' (Tanaka, p. 467-8)

<sup>44</sup> Primordial empathy according to Tanaka (2015) is when: '...the self and the other happen to merge into the same impersonal emotional state through the shared intentionality.' (P. 465)

<sup>45</sup> Interactional synchrony- 'From the viewpoint of nonverbal behaviors of interpersonal communication, intercorporeality appears not only as behavior matching but also as a meshing of each other's actions [...] Synchrony describes the coordination and timing of movements and includes simultaneous movement, tempo similarity, and coordination or smoothness [...] In communication research, behavior matching and interactional synchrony—or, simply, matching and meshing—are generally considered to be two basic types of interpersonal coordination that occur in social encounters with others [...]'. (Tanaka, p. 465-66)

Through my art I keep searching for clues and indications that might help me understand my constant longing for home (Lebanon). I realised that fear of loss was one of the emotions I remembered the most while writing my PhD diary (*Memoirs*, p. 21, 22 and 56) particularly the fear I sensed in my mother while huddled up together in a bomb shelter. When bombs, bullets and missiles flew around us, my mother knew that the consequence of getting hit might be injuries or death, but I, as a child, did not.

Through writing my *Memoirs* I was able to remember that after a few years of being evacuated and returning home on a monthly or even weekly basis as a child, I got used to the idea of not having around me all the familiar people and possessions that I had previously been surrounded by. I realised that being a refugee is a subjective state of being with more complex consequences than its dictionary definition might imply. The emotions I remember the most were the fear of losing my family, and sensing my mother's anxiety at the situation we were in.

Thinking back to these times of bombardment, the idea of an injury now signifies to me the notion of the skin, denoting protection, sensing and sensuality, being torn and the flesh being cut. When I started to make my artefacts, I began to visualise each emotion as an entity living under my skin, and wanted to represent and embody them in my art. I began making small semi-translucent skin like sheets (figs. 34, 35 and 36), using a range of ephemeral materials such as wax paper, various thin tissues, plastic films, gold leaf, and clay. I then added different strengthening agents to their surfaces to prevent them from tearing or breaking. Pursuing both the dichotomy which characterises my work, and also the idea of the skin being the protective, binding container and source of the sensuous, I made small rectangular transparent parchments which give a deceiving sense of fragility but are, due to the addition of strengthening agents, more durable than they appear. (See appendix I- catalogue p. 14)

During the period of making the skin sheets, I also practiced a form of automatic writing (fig. 21 and 36), a meditative technique that I called intuitive rhythmic scribbling<sup>46</sup>. Through this automatic writing I recollected individual incidents, related to the war, from my childhood and proceeded to scribble words that were not legible. As I scribbled, I intuitively followed the rhythm of my emotions. For example, some lines looped many times within what seemed to be a word and at other times the rhythm of the line was unconsciously repeated. When I begin this process, I try not to write legible words, often for a prolonged period, but as I become more comfortable writing about difficult experiences I am able to proceed with a more conventional diary.

Using this process of intuitive rhythmic scribbling helped me perceive my virtual memories, making them really exist as I extracted them from my mind and scribbled them down on the skin sheets. Scribbling my recollected memories on some of these sheets felt as if I was tattooing my memories in order to make them visible and permanent. It also helped me to write my journal and diary, seeming to symbolically unveil meanings and reasons behind the intuitive process of making my art.

The process of building the skin became a meditative one that allowed me slowly and systematically to access my emotions and to gain the mental strength to explore them. Building different types of skin became an on-going process throughout my PhD, my aim being to create the skin first and then to try to get under it (metaphorically speaking) in order to find answers to my questions.

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<sup>46</sup> See list of terms.

## Body parts

One of the comments (from feedback) that stuck with me from a PhD seminar was the resemblance of my artwork to that of body parts. This immediately reminded me of Eva Hesse's *Studiowork* pieces. A year before she died in 1970, Hesse created a collection of fragmented test pieces made from ephemeral materials which evoked the form of body parts. The pieces were also referred to as 'a scrap of a thing, but a beauty,' and 'like a laying out of reliquaries' as Holland Cotter (of The New York Times) continued to explain that Hesse's goal was, '...to make art that gave us no idea what we were looking at, that left us wondering whether we should come close and touch or back away.' (Kennedy R. 2011)

I felt that I intimately related to and understood Hesse's *Studiowork* on first seeing it and without further reading about it. Even though her work can be described as test pieces, I believe they can also be stand-alone pieces, and that they strongly resemble my *Hybrid Residues* series in their scattered, disconnected and fragmented state of being. Rosie Lesso's (Art Monthly 2009-10) account of Hesse's work is delicate and poetic but with an edge. She starts her article by saying:

Looking at an artist's work- in- progress can be like reading their diary; it offers a tantalising glimpse into their unconscious mind. The 50 or so incomplete fragments that make up this exhibition, Hesse's self-named 'test pieces', are like dried-up innards or body parts and, scattered across various surfaces, they can't help but speak of the war and degradation she experienced as a child fleeing Nazi Germany. (Lesso, p. 1)



Fig. 37 | Alissar McCreary | *Artefact in cabinet* from *Artefact of Loss* | 2015 | Mixed media | 175 x 50cm



Fig. 38 | Alissar McCreary | *Artefact in bag* from *Artefact of Loss* | 2015 | Ceramics | 10cm

Lesso also talks about the conscious and obvious divide of the artwork that Hesse made in her lived-in studio, placing what she considered finished work upstairs but leaving unfinished work or 'test pieces' downstairs. Lesso also stresses the perceived challenge of the boundary between the finished and the unfinished pieces. When this *Studiowork* was exhibited in the Fruitmarket Gallery (2009-10), it was placed in glass show cases and, again, closely resembled body parts. It was not clear from the article whether Eva Hesse did or did not display any of her *Studiowork* in show cases before her death, but this also reminded me of my own endeavour with the challenge of the boundary between the finished and the unfinished.

When I first displayed my *Hybrid Residues* series, I scattered them on a table for the audience to look at or touch. I always felt that, although each small artwork can stand as a finished piece on its own, together they

always seemed unfinished. When I placed them in plastic bags, even before I hung them on display stands (in *Artefact of Loss*, fig. 31), they seemed finished. The challenge was to understand why they didn't seem to be a finished piece when scattered together on the table. Taking this issue further, I took them out of the bags and placed them in a glass display cabinet which, I felt, completely changed their appearance, meaning, functionality and presence. (Figs. 37 and 39)



Fig. 39 | Alissar McCreary | *Artefact in cabinet 1* from *Artefact of Loss* | 2015 | Mixed media

After careful analysis of my colleague's feedback, I concluded that the artefacts, when shown in the glass case, had the feeling of 'do not touch'; a natural separation seemed to set in, culminating in a restrained environment lacking a certain freedom. However, when the artefacts were placed individually in plastic bags, the feedback indicated that they begged to be touched, perceived closely and felt. From this feedback I started reflecting in more depth on the idea of sensorial empathy and how to achieve it through my artwork, consequently coming to realise that there were essential elements missing. I felt that these missing elements were my own image, my own voice, and what I perceived to be the sound-track of my memories. The main reason that drove me to introduce sound and moving images was my perception of a constant and limiting silence in my artwork. Whether placed in bags, cabinets or simply scattered on tables, they seemed to me to be silent and therefore somehow lacking. My artwork needed a voice in order to be fully sensorially immersive.

### Sensorial empathy: The video series



Fig. 40 | Alissar McCreary | *Calling home series* | 2014 - 15 | Video | <https://youtu.be/pqHCGXMSYMI>  
<https://youtu.be/BuK5-RG0W8ERG0W8E>

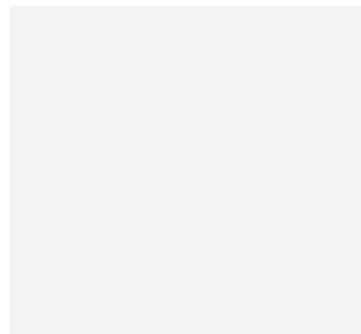


Fig. 41 | Mona Hatoum | *Measure of Distance* | 1988 | Video | The Standard on Line.

### ***Calling Home 1***

*Calling Home 1* (2014) (fig. 40) marked the start of a video series that embodied my experience of connecting with home and family during the

Lebanese war (1968-1994). This video was set in a darkened room in my home here in England, with the focus being on my mouth as I made telephone calls to my mother during the conflict. I chose to show only my mouth because I did not want my identity or image to predominantly affect the meaning of the video, instead letting the audience's experience of it shape its layers of meaning. Visually, I concentrated on the motion of my mouth whilst calling my mother on the phone; in doing so I aimed to embody a combination of the emotional and the aesthetical, thus creating what Merleau-Ponty describes as the 'flesh' or the space and the bridge 'in between' that could generate interconnectedness between me and the world, and to allow his so called 'embodied interactions' ('primordial empathy' and 'interactional synchrony') to manifest.

After making and reviewing the initial video, I replaced my voice with the beep of a busy telephone signal. I remember the telephone as being almost the single most important and essential object in my life, my only source of communication with my home and family. The telephone line was the invisible cord, providing a tenuous connection to my mother that I needed and could not live without. In *Calling Home 1*, I tried to inject my memories of fear, anxiety, and longing for my mother, family and home into the video. I wanted the video to promote a sensorial experience in the viewer, a body, mind and soul experience of primordial<sup>47</sup> awareness.

### **Parallels to Mona Hatoum**

I sensed that certain parallels can be drawn between Hatoum's work (see pgs. 16, 25, 28, 43, 59, **73**, 74) and my own, particularly through the subjective, intuitive and authentic approach we both have employed in order to create art that embodies our personal experiences of war and displacement. Autobiographical narrative was also used in both works as a

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<sup>47</sup> Primordial- Existing at, or from, the beginning of time; primeval, (especially of a feeling or state) basic and fundamental. Oxford Dictionaries [online].



mode of disclosure of emotions of traumatic experiences of displacement. Both of our methodologies can be seen as involving active participation, temporality in presencing or remembering past experiences, embodied artefacts or artwork, tone of voice, and I believe, both aimed at achieving sensorial empathy. Through installation art, I also believe we both used invisible influences such as sensorial language (e.g. tone of voice, rhythm, the body, embodiment) in order to create an intertwining relationship between the audience and our emotional experiences of war, displacement, place of affiliation, and loss.

When I made *Calling Home 1* video, it became apparent to me that despite the visual differences between my work and that of Mona Hatoum, the underlying layers of meaning presented were very similar. These similarities lay, again, in the use of autobiographical work, instilled with testimonials that hint at our feminine and cultural identities. *Measures of Distance* (1988)<sup>48</sup> (fig. 41), is a video of Hatoum with her mother in the shower, with Arabic script draped in front of both figures shielding them from the viewer. An audio of the artist's voice reads out the Arabic script from a letter received from her mother during their separation amidst the Lebanese war (1975). Besides introducing a warm and intimate relationship between mother and daughter, Hatoum offers an element of the sensuous embodied in both her nude image, and her voice while reading her mother's letter. I felt that this affective sensuousness, especially in her voice, created empathy in connection to the artist's closeness to her mother, simultaneously accentuated with an unbearable sense of pain at the realisation that the two were separated by exile and displacement. (Luke 2016)

Another similarity *Calling home* had with Hatoum's *Measures of Distance* was a vague and unplanned element of feminine sensuousness. In *calling*

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<sup>48</sup> Ben Luke (2016).

*Home* I filmed only my lips while speaking to my mother, enlarging the image to fill the entire screen. I also projected a reddish-orange light at my face whilst filming with the intention of producing a representation suggestive of the warning flares that preceded night time air raid. To me this light gave the eerie and chilling sensation which I wanted to achieve. Feedback from my colleagues, however, suggested that although the light did indeed seem eerie, it also produced an element of sensuality in illuminating my lips in the video. In Hatoum's *Measures of Distance*, I sensed an underlying feminist statement in the concept of two women, mother and daughter, bathing naked in a video designed to be viewed by the public in a gallery setting. The video brought to mind certain traditional taboos in the Middle East regarding nudity in public settings. I valued Hatoum's sense of freedom and defiance against Middle Eastern traditions and taboos, and admired her seemingly innocent statement in which she said: 'I felt we were like sisters, close together and with nothing to hide from each other. I enjoyed the feeling of intimacy... '(Luke, no page number)

In my *Calling Home* video series, I concentrated on the tone of my voice in order to achieve sensorial empathy. I wanted the tone to be affective; to embody my feelings of pain and loss without any recognisable words in order to eliminate perceptible language and cultural differences. I believe that muteness or lack of voice makes visible the primordial human predicament, and allows for an affective engagement and, perhaps, acknowledgement pertaining to certain human expressions.

Whilst making *Calling Home*, I was thinking about the overwhelming guilt that I felt when I spoke to my mother over the telephone from a land that allowed me a normal and peaceful life. Strangely our physical distance apart felt much greater when we were actually speaking on the telephone, with the result that I greatly cherished our calls and tried to remember every second that we spoke together. Remembering the phone

conversations felt as if I was preserving our existence together in a small space and in a short span of time, as if I was documenting the rhythm and tone of our voices which in turn provided a window into the emotions that were driving the dialogue.

I wanted the viewer to look beyond the immediate (my face on the screen) in favour of the experience of sensory perception and the phenomena of embodiment. I could not prescribe specific sensations or experiences to the audience because each individual perceives a situation differently depending on their own experiences and knowledge. However, I think that the audience was participating, through their imagination, in trying to make sense of what they perceived, thus engaging in a creative activity within the context of the video.

In *Calling Home 1*, I replaced my voice with the busy ringing tone because I believed that words would, in this instance, have a more immediate meaning leaving no room for the phenomenon of perception. Furthermore, I was mapping the sensations I remembered experiencing during my phone calls; how I felt whenever I tried to call my mum during the bombardment and the line would not connect, or the many times when the line got disconnected in mid conversation, resulting in an overwhelming fear that something might have happened to my mother and family. The ringing tones and beeps seemed to have the resonance of an anxious heartbeat, stimulating an image of lines of empty dots on a page, or bullet holes. I visualised our words as the links of a chain rushing through the suffocatingly claustrophobic confines of the telephone cable that connected us. I went on to manipulate the ring tones by either splitting them into short segments with the intention of increasing their sense of urgency, by stretching them to give the impression of slowing down time, or by distorting them to suggest my feelings of uncertainty and confusion. I tried to synchronise the ring tone with the rhythm and

movement of my mouth to suggest the feeling, which I experienced at the time, of becoming as one with the telephone apparatus, with an urgent and immediate need to connect with my mother.

A consistent rotation of my head from side to side was highlighted by the audience after viewing the video. They felt that the disjointed sounds of the beeps seemed to echo this side to side movement of my mouth creating a symbolic impression of the mouth somehow being disconnected from my head, echoing my own disconnection from my mother. The video became a complex visual and audible narrative in which I was physically and psychologically revisiting my experiences.

At this point, I gained an understanding of the fact that most of my audience could empathise with my memories and experiences of war through sensorially immersive art. This became apparent specifically when I was trying to gain a sense of sensorial empathy from an audience which, to my knowledge, had never experienced war.

### ***Calling Home 2***

*Calling Home 2* was further modified in terms of the audio effects. I manipulated the innately ominous and chilling sounds of drones and fighter jets with the objective of producing a background soundtrack that echoed my memories of the sounds of war. I overlaid this background track with the sound of my own voice slowed down to the point at which individual words were no longer comprehensible.

I introduced a flashing reddish light to simulate the flares used by the Israeli army to illuminate target areas to be attacked. I used the original

*Calling Home 1* video, slowing down both the audio and the visual. The rotation of the head remained as a peculiar and un-staged personal and natural phenomena. Viewers indicated that the video showed a contrast between my sensual presence and the ominous sense of war.



Fig. 42 | Alissar McCreary | *Overwhelmed* | 2014 |  
Video | <https://youtu.be/ZGJt7sZVxm4>

### ***Overwhelmed***

*Overwhelmed* (fig. 42) was a video that showed me washing my face with small scrolls that I had made and upon which I had written scribbled words or phrases that characterise my feelings about the war and my experience of displacement. The writing on the scrolls was spontaneously and impulsively scribbled, not focusing or concentrating on the individual words but freely recording the feelings that came to my mind.

The symbolic embodiment of my emotions in the scrolls explores the notion of creating awareness in others of my experiences of displacement. The scrolls became, in essence, a symbolic call for help for all those who are still enduring the hardships of war and the consequences of

displacement. In the video *Overwhelmed*, before washing my face with the scrolls, I covered my face with a sticky substance so that the scrolls would adhere to my face, appearing to hang there, reluctant to fall off. The act of washing my face with the scrolls implied, to me, a sense of being overwhelmed and submerged in the residual emotions from memories that I am unable to get free of.

After completing the video, I reversed it as a gesture of my rejection of this overwhelming tide of emotions. I appear to try to peel away the residual scrolls and cleanse myself of them as one might if they were parasites, evoking a sense of a struggle to erase unwanted emotions.

I used a cooks mixing bowl as a container for the scrolls, filming the video in the kitchen to denote the heart of the household, both the centre of family gatherings and the source of nourishment; the place from which to be displaced is most keenly felt. I filmed from a low camera angle giving an impression of my image being a reflection in a mirror. This view point provided a sense of intimacy, as of washing alone in a bathroom.



Fig. 43 | Alissar McCreary | *Behind Clear Walls 1, 2* | 2014 -17| Video | <https://youtu.be/9nA2zOP1jOA>

### ***Behind Clear walls***

One of the enduring effects of the numerous displacements my family and I suffered during the conflicts in Lebanon was the feeling of alienation. The sensation of not fitting in or not belonging was an issue my family and I seemed constantly to suffer from.

The video *Behind Clear Walls* (fig. 43) started as a short poem that I wrote to describe how I perceived myself fitting in amongst people in different countries and from different backgrounds. I decided to make a video based on myself reading the poem in order to increase sensorial empathy with its meaning. I chose to wrap my face with waxed paper rather than standing behind a transparent wall or partition as I wanted a barrier that was not only transparent but also intimate and almost a part of me, but still alien against my skin. After wrapping my face with the waxed paper I proceeded to film myself reciting the poem. When making my video I monitored the filmed image, allowing the effects of light, colour or movement that were visually arresting to be spontaneously changed whilst filming. The resultant video seems intimate, instant, and authentic.

As I recited the poem, the wax paper restricted my enunciation, creating an intrusive crackling sound in my ears. I literally could not hear myself speak. On reviewing the video it became apparent that my voice was muffled and that the precise text of the poem had become blurred and ambiguous. This effect was more pronounced than I expected, but seemed to reference the sense of alienation central to the poem.

Visually, the reflected light on the waxed paper accentuated the movements of my mouth in tandem with the crackling sounds of the paper, producing an unlikely harmony between the broken rhythm of the sounds and the visually abstract images. The impression given is of my mouth fighting to shape words against the restricting paper, whilst my voice fights to be heard over the crackling noise. This seemed truly analogous with the sense of alienation, the sense of not fitting into a situation and being in conflict with my surroundings which is the central theme of the original poem.

*Behind Clear Walls 2* was a culmination of different short videos with the main emphasis still being on the original video of the poem, with its wax paper facial cover and the idea of alienation. My voice reading the poem is interspersed with new images. I added visual shots of the written poem juxtaposed with a magnifying glass ruler, this implicating our being deliberately targeted in missile strikes. I also interspersed footage of my sister and her son on the beach in Lebanon into the video. When I was filming my sister, I scanned the horizon of the sea between focusing on her and her son playing in the sand. Scanning the horizon was something my parents always did while the war was going on. They used to go out on the balcony to check if they could spot any Israeli warships, also scanning the sky for warplanes. Air raids were often so sudden that we didn't have any time to run away to safety. We soon acquired the ability to make surprisingly accurate judgments as to where missiles were coming from,



where they were heading and how close they were likely to land, purely by listening to their sound in the quietness.

In *Behind Clear Walls 2*, the background sound consisted of a busy telephone beep and the rasping sound of a cricket, both slowed down considerably, almost to the point of being unrecognisable.

After reviewing the video with my PhD colleagues, their feedback suggested that my deliberately covered mouth and muffled speech denoted the helplessness I felt in a situation that I could not change, and the fact that my words could not have made a difference to my family's displacement. Feedback from my colleagues also indicated a sense of anxiety and loss when they viewed my nephew running away from his mother and her turning in a distressed manner to shout to him. They expressed a great sense of alarm at the image of my mouth being muffled and the fact that they couldn't hear what I was saying.

I realised that I was symbolically referencing my longing for my family and home, and seemed to have embodied my persistent unconscious and conscious resentment at, and blaming of, the war for my loss and displacement. I used an intuitive approach (example in methodology) when producing my videos, not always questioning their meaning or attempting to visualise the results before I started, but simply setting out with a broad concept and allowing the direction the piece takes to be guided by intuition as I proceeded. Following this approach produced enlightening results (discussed below) revealing more about my motives and feelings in making the videos than I could have expected at the start.

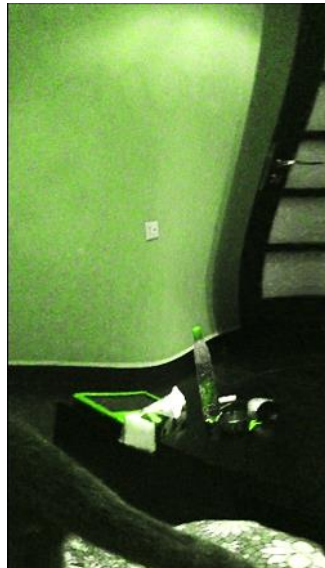
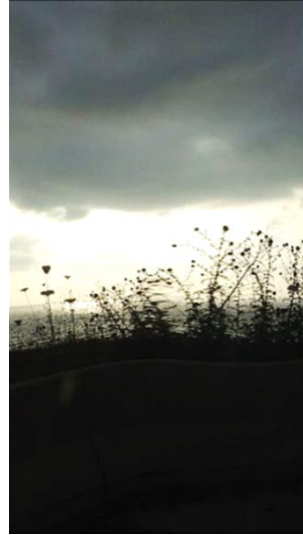
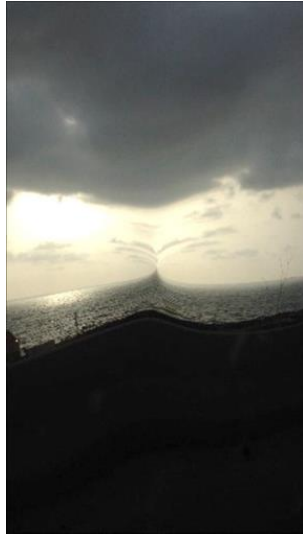


Fig. 44 | Alissar McCreary | *Nausea* | 2015 | Video | <https://youtu.be/UmOGdwloOsk>

***Nausea (2015)*** (Fig.44)

When I went to visit my home in Lebanon (2015), I decided to video the roads that we always used when we had to evacuate our home town. As a child, I remember leaflets being dropped from the sky by the Israelis to inform us that we had a few minutes to evacuate. The roads turned into a one-way street for herds of cars scrambling to get out. That vision and the noise of shouting drivers, beeping horns, revving engines, and the clouds of fumes and dust still resonate in my memory. Visiting these roads today still gives me a nauseating feeling.

The video is made up of four parts: the road from my home town Tyre (Sour or كعب داور eht ,turieB ot (cibarA ni صور to Tyre, the area around our house, and inside our house. Although the road going to Beirut is the same one that we used for the return trip, our feelings on these journeys were always very different. Evacuating implicated the fear of the unknown as our displacement was leading us to strange places without any of our belongings. An adequate description of these feelings can be found in David Albahari's interview with Radmila Gorup (2005). The interview is based on true stories of Albahari's own and other's experience of displacement, and where he describes the anxieties of people when they leave their home or countries:

Instead of getting relief from their anxiety, as they go further and further, they get closer and closer to the very thing they are trying to escape and, instead of feeling safer, they feel more vulnerable. The narrator of *A Man Made of Snow*, also in Canada, echoes the sentiment that basically nothing has been changed for him and that he is no less at war than he had been in his former country [...] I've covered such a distance only to reduce my life to that from which I wanted to flee [...] (p. 5)

Driving back, the feeling of excitement at returning home would prevail but tempered with slight dread as to the predicament of our house and whether or not it had been hit by the shelling. I tried to embody the feeling of nausea by manipulating the video with cyclical swirling effects that expand and explode. Inside our home the feeling of nausea would come back whenever we heard anything that might be a fighter plane or the distant rumble of an explosion. At these moments flashbacks of the feeling of dread that comes with memories of the last evacuation return to haunt us. The video was silent because I wanted the experience of watching *Nausea* to be sensorially immersive. Through my videos, I learned a great deal about the more immersive quality of the audience's experience due to the combined audible and visual impact of the video art pieces. I felt that the sensorial empathy that I have been seeking, demonstrated in the audience's connection with my embodied memories in the artwork, was perhaps more readily achieved with the videos specifically by using the tone of my voice.

**Final Exhibition** (Full details of my exhibits can be found in the catalogue)

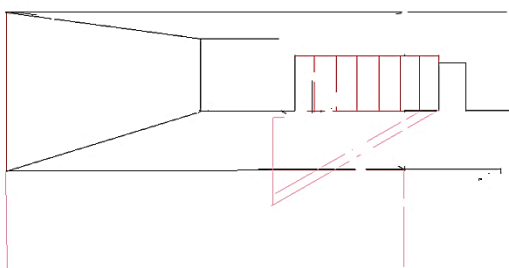


Fig. 45 | P21 | Floor plan, upstairs, was used for disPLACED group show.

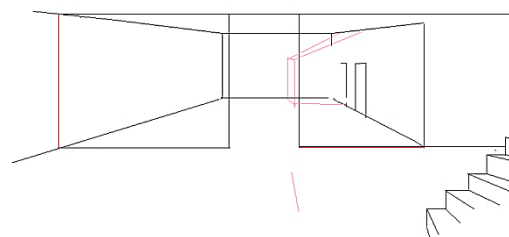


Fig. 46 | P21 | Downstairs, used for my show (disPLACED).

My final exhibition was a part of a group show called *disPLACED* which took place at Gallery P21 in London from 20<sup>th</sup> January to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2018, curated by Dr Aya Kasai<sup>49</sup>. The work on display consisted of mixed media installations, photography, prints, found objects, sculpture, video art, and the *disPLACED* project. Home, place, displacement and memory were the predominant elements which embodied the majority of the work on the first floor. I chose the gallery because of its Middle Eastern Palestinian background. I intuitively knew that the gallery would be a place 'close' to home, not in its location of course, but in the attitude and the familiar hospitality of the gallery management. My intuition was proved correct by the cordiality extended to me by the gallery staff both whilst we installed the artwork, and also during the private view when the smell of Lebanese food, a warm and welcoming atmosphere, and their attentiveness towards the audience were very much in evidence. That was just like home.

### **My exhibition space**

The exhibition space felt provocative yet claustrophobic. The ceiling was very low and the concrete floor was dark and cold. The challenge of realising the opportunities of this demanding place was one I relished. I visualised the place as the floor plan of a house, with a number of rooms, although in reality it was a single room with only one small room intruding into it.

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<sup>49</sup> Dr Aya Kasai, Curator, fellow PhD student, and the Founder of CARU- Contemporary Art Research Unit at Oxford Brookes University.



Fig. 47 | P21 Floor plan, downstairs, used for my PhD final exhibition disPLACED.

# CONCLUSION

Two hypotheses formed the foundation for this thesis, and further questions were initiated during the implementation process of making and exploring, which in turn, helped further develop and support the hypotheses.

**The first hypothesis inferred that active participation is a tool that can be utilised as a form of communication to imply, indirectly, experienced situations of conflict and displacement.**

To test the first hypothesis I raised two questions:

**1. How can the phenomenon of active participation, requiring the haptic perception, inform or affect the experience of embodied artwork?**

To answer the question I explored the following concepts:

## **a. Phenomena of participation**

In chapter one, 'Methodology', I drew on a large body of theoretical, contextual and practical reviews to inform my understanding of ways of utilising active participation as a tool to communicate embodied artwork. I found that the implementation the phenomenon of participation entailed a blend of vital ingredients that needed to correspond with, and complete, each other. These ingredients are: active participation, residues, autobiographical narrative, remembering, and embodiment.

Through *Artefact of loss* I was able to achieve inquiry led active participation which frequently relied on tacit (e.g. indirect non-verbal) communication, and intersubjectivity. The information my colleagues and I were able to gather through touch and sensorial perception was deciphered and analysed through dialogue and feedback. This helped in drawing my conclusion that if we can free ourselves from the restricting boundaries of language and cultural differences, embodied art, touched and sensed by the audience, could indeed achieve sensorial empathy between artist, audience and place. (Chapter 2, pgs. 41- 44 and 53)

**b. Embodiment and presencing**

The concepts of embodiment for creating, and presencing for recollecting, went hand in hand. Presencing (see list of terms and chapters 1, 2, 3) is related to my memories being made present through meditative processes which led to the acknowledgment of the existence of my experience of displacement. Embodiment and presencing, I found, required the implementation and development of certain meditative practices such as 'Automatic writing' (Breton 1933) from which I developed my own process of 'intuitive rhythmic scribbling' (chapters 1 and 2, pgs. 23, 33 and 68). This technique helped to assist my recollection of childhood memories. I also recognised that through embodied and immersive artwork, affect and sensorial empathy became more tangible.

**c. Touch, Reciprocity and Space**

The use of reciprocity and space (chapter 2) were strategies employed to explore and study the implication of active participation on the audience (comprised of my PhD colleagues).



Inspired by George Maciunas's *Fluxus 1* (fig. 12) and *Mail Order FluxShop* (Friedman 1998, pgs. 18 and 26) which were a part of his new art distribution network, my three series *Hybrid Residues*, *Makhzan* (fig. 13) and *Artefact of Loss* (fig. 31) focused on the audience touching, sensing, moving or destroying the artwork. These strategies were designed to generate intersubjectivity on the issue of how to sense embodied art. (chapter 2, ex. pgs. 40-45)

**d. *Inquiry led active participation***

Inquiry led active participation (chapter 2) is a method I employed in order to encourage the audience to touch artwork without obvious instruction. To intrigue the audience sufficiently in order for them to approach and participate with the artwork, I implemented hybrid elements of playful and tempting materials and techniques, particularly in *Hybrid Residues* and *Makhzan*.

**2. How can an object embody an experience of displacement or conflict?**

To answer the question I explored the following concepts:

**a. Symbolism**

I found that symbolism through form, sensing a phenomenon through art, and avoiding the denial of trauma through writing childhood memories of war in my diary, had helped to inform my understanding of the implementation of psychological elements into perceptible works of art.

Symbolically, I viewed each series I made, including my *memoir*, as a personal landmark, a testimony and a memorial, and collectively they were an embodiment of my memories of conflict and displacement. As sculptural artefacts that transferred my memories and stood in space between me and others, they became the 'connecting flesh' (Abram 1996, p. 68).

**b. Sense of disconnection:**

Audience feedback from the *Hybrid residues* series predominantly indicated that they were intuiting a fragile and fragmented presence embodied in the artwork, as well as some references to disembodied parts of a whole and pieces from a dolls house. The discussion also addressed the intentionality of the seemingly unfinished pieces of artefacts. I believe that from these points of views, particularly in a metaphorical sense, Eva Hesse's *Studiowork* (1960-70), (Lesso) and my *Hybrid Residues*<sup>50</sup> share a scattered, disconnected, fragmented and seemingly unfinished state of being. (See chapter three, pgs. 65-70)

**c. Artefacts- the corporeal presence** (see chapters two and three)

In the *Hybrid Residues* series, the embodied textures suggested a hybrid corporeal presence associated with home, kitchen, belongings, toys and war (fig. 11). Some of the sounds emanating

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<sup>50</sup> The *Skin* sheets (from the *Hybrid Residues* series, figs. 34, 35, 36), were made from a range of ephemeral materials in the quest to symbolise the skin's function for protection, sensing and sensuality. Through this detached *Skin* I wanted to express emotions I remembered most from my memories of war, particularly fear of loss of my family, injury and death. *Shedding Skin* (chapter 1), for example, accentuates the notion of the body being unprotected, and therefore vulnerable to injury and death. Disconnection was also perceived by the audience throughout my video work (Chapter 3). The mouth in the *Calling Home and Behind Clear Wall* series created a symbolic impression of somehow being disconnected from my head, echoing my own disconnection from my home and family.

from the small art pieces when touched were described, in feedback, as having the pleasing sensations of packaged toys, or sweets in wrappers (figs. 5, 32 and 33). Other pieces embodied an unpleasant sense of uncertainty due to being made of materials that were either perceived as being unsafe to touch, (fig. 33) or too thin and small to be handled, such as the *Ceramic Scrolls* which were made to accentuate fragility and potential for breakage. (Fig. 10)

These artefacts embody memories and emotions resulting from my experience of displacement. When touched by my peer group they appeared to instigate both a corporeal presence<sup>51</sup> of my emotions derived from my memories, and the phenomenon of sensorial perception. As a result, a connecting bridge could be seen to be created through active participation and haptic perception.

#### **d. Video work**

The pursuit of this sensorially immersive quality intuitively led me to make videos that predominantly centred on images of myself, sentimental places in Lebanon, and my family home. Through making these videos, I was able to promote sensorial empathy through affective expression and the voice. To develop the notion of giving my memories a voice, I created carefully designed soundtracks for my videos with the intention of achieving a closer, more intimate interaction with the audience.

The *Calling Home* series (fig. 40) symbolically and metaphorically mapped my experience of sensing both the physical and

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<sup>51</sup> Corporeal presence here is used in a similar way to when people use headstones, photographs or small items that belonged to dead ones in order to mediate their absence. (Sturken 2007, p. 179)

psychological distance between my mother and myself, since my departure from Lebanon in 1994. The series embodied my feelings of fear and helplessness at being unable to rescue my family during the war.

The *Behind Clear Walls* series (fig. 43) embodies a sense of separation and anxiety. The rigidly constraining nature of the wax paper I taped over my mouth restricted my enunciation and muffled my voice, implying a sense of suppression and alienation central to the poem about displacement that I was trying to recite.

The videos *Overwhelmed* (fig. 42) and *Nausea* (fig. 44) embodied the ever present and increasingly nauseating emotions and sense of distortion, both visceral and psychological, that can never be eliminated. In *Overwhelmed* the scrolls became a symbolic call for help, and the act of washing my face with the scrolls in reverse, implied, according to PhD feedback, a sense of being overwhelmed and submerged in the residual emotions of memories that I am unable to get free of. My deliberately covered mouth and muffled speech denoted a sense of helplessness, anxiety and loss, with some viewers experiencing a great sense of alarm at the image of my mouth being gagged and at not being able to hear what I was saying.

I wanted these videos to offer an intuitive visual and sensorial dialogue between my memories and the audience, particularly my memories of Lebanon looking back from the safety of the USA and the UK, separated from a family who were still living under the trauma of bombardment.

This approach to immersive art, which includes the element of the human voice, can be used to create an ontological bridge that may

instigate a connection with, and an understanding of, each other, exclusive of the cultural barriers that spoken language or written words tends to produce. (Chapter 3)

**e. Autobiographical narrative**

The core of this thesis is an autobiographical narrative intertwined with a process of embodying artefacts with recollected traumatic events. The utilising of autobiographical narrative<sup>52</sup> as a method of inquiry helped provide an authentic testimony from my perspective having been a refugee. The production of the book *Memoirs* also furthered greatly the process of creating embodied artefacts by helping to enable the recollection of memories, childhood events, and emotional and sensorial memory.

**f. Intuitive knowing**

Inspired by the writing of the philosophers Merleau-Ponty (1962), David Abram (1996) and Donald A. Schön (1983), intuitive knowing was helpful in determining the course to take in mapping my memories and the way I embodied memory in the artwork. (Appendix I – catalogue pgs. 5, 6, 7, 9, 37, 38, 39 and 41) It also helped determine the process of implementing and achieving active participation and sensorial perception/empathy utilising the beyond words experience. Intuitive knowing helped me decipher implications that my artwork had on the audience, and to then develop the playful artefacts that encouraged the audience to

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<sup>52</sup> Narrative inquiry is fundamental, ‘Perhaps because it focuses on human experience, perhaps because it is a fundamental structure of human experience, and perhaps because it has a holistic quality, narrative has an important place in other disciplines. Narrative is a way of characterizing the phenomena of human experience and its study which is appropriate to many social science fields.’ (Connelly and Clandinin, cited in American Educational Research Association 1990, p. 1)

participate and connect in order to help achieve 'sensorial empathy'. I came to understand that affection towards the embodied subject with its affiliation to a place, and the sensorial perception of traumatic experience, can be achieved through play within the art context.

**The second hypothesis proposes that active participation of the viewer with artwork can help promote or facilitate sensorial empathy.**

To test the second hypothesis I raised two key questions:

**1. How does sensorial empathy affect the viewer's perception on the subject of displacement?**

To answer the question I explored the following concepts:

**a. Creating awareness through intersubjectivity**

Creating awareness of my personal experiences of displacement resulted from sharing subjective knowledge, creating artefacts, and designing space conducive to intersubjectivity which in turn led to sensorial perception/empathy. The phenomenon of shared knowledge and understanding achieved through the perception of embodied emotions, helped to allow sensorial empathy to be generated and shared between the self and the other without mental illustration or facilitation. My own observations and feedback from my colleagues suggested that the experience of sharing subjective occurrences through artwork, via sensorial communication, appeared to diminish cultural barriers due to the intersubjective and intuitive understanding of the concepts of fear, loss and sharing. This intuitive understanding relates closely to

Merleau-Ponty's 'intercorporeality' (chapter 3, p. 67) which involves a form of nonverbal behaviour which points to a kind of mutual understanding. (Tanaka 2015, p. 455)

**2. How can the sensorial empathy of the viewer provide insight into my experiences of war and displacement?**

**a. Sense of marketing my emotions (Chapter 2)**

The *Artefact of Loss* installation, and my video series, helped me formulate an understanding of the phenomenon of recollecting memories and re-creating their essence. The materialisation of recollected emotions of displacement, re-presented as objects of art seemingly capable of creating sensorial empathy in the viewer with my original emotions, gave rise to a sense that marketing of these emotions was taking place. In the same way that the newspaper provides stories about the displacement of people during current conflicts, so my installation and videos allowed my memories to raise awareness of my own experience of conflict and displacement.

**b. Play or 'dis\_Play'**

*Playful hybrid*<sup>53</sup> is a term I used to describe sensory perception that consisted of opposites, or, in other words, a sense of dichotomy of opposing sensations that can be perceived and sensed by the viewer (chapters 1, 2, 3, ex. pgs. 15, 37 and, 38). I also found that implementing the *playful* element in artefacts, such as in the *Hybrid Residues* and *Mahkzan* series, enabled the audience to readily connect and participate with the work, which in turn

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<sup>53</sup> See list of terms.

allowed me to have a clearer understanding of how sensorial empathy could be reached. The *playful hybrid* in the work revealed the importance and affective-ness of the embodied subject in reaching empathy, affiliation to a place, and a perception of the experience of others through the use of immersive artwork and installation.

## Discussion

In this research, my aim was to explore, develop and produce artwork that compelled, or at least tempted, the audience (in an independent and joyful way) to actively participate with it in order to achieve (ontological) sensorial empathy. I wanted to investigate how a connection to an object, a place, and another's traumatic experiences could be manifested and sensed through art. I believed that sensorial empathy could play an important part in making this connection happen. In this sense, experiencing embodied artwork is like encountering a monument or a landmark. (Chapters 1, 2, ex. pgs. 32, 33 and 59)

I found that in order to reach a connection to the affective and the sensorial, some modification concerning the current approach to active participation of the audience with art, particularly in touching and sensing, was required. Immersive active participatory art involving the mechanical experiential, such as , for example, Warren Neidich's *Book Exchange* (Büsing and Klaas 2010) concentrates on the act of interacting with the audience but does not greatly utilise the affective and the sensorial. *Book Exchange* was not about experiencing affect, rather it was about the experience of exchange and the mechanical. Active participatory art, rather than mechanical or spectatorship art, opens up boundaries and regains a sense of communal freedom in a space of shared empathic and sensorial communication.



As I demonstrated in chapters 2 and 3, and as a consequence of peer feedback, reflective and critical analysis, and both contextual and theoretical review, I developed a participatory process that explored artwork that can be touched and felt, heard and smelt, and, in some cases, destroyed and reconstructed by the viewer. This participatory process helped me understand and further develop the dichotomy of opposing emotions and sensations that I was exploring in my art. I called this process inquiry led active participation.

As a result of further investigations into inquiry led active participation and the implications the artwork had for the audience, I discovered that a playful element in the artefacts encouraged the audience to participate and connect with the artwork, which suggested the initiation of sensorial empathy. I learned that both affection towards the embodied subject, and the sensorial perception of the traumatic experience of displacement and its affiliation to a place, can be achieved through play within the art context. (E.g. *Scrolls, Mezza*) This affective and playful hybrid was sensorially immersive and possessed a dichotomy that referenced the opposing and conflicting emotions I felt through my own displacement (*Artefacts of Loss*). This also influenced my final pieces of work, *Don't Let's Play Pretend* (appendix I- p. 63-69) and the *disPLACED* project. The *disPLACED* project entailed workshops that I organised with my colleagues and which have subsequently been effective in engaging members of the public in the issues covered by my research.

### **A rationale for sensorial empathy art**

My artwork has embodied my childhood experience of war and displacement. As an artist, and a displaced person, I am fascinated by how art can reveal connection to a place.

The process of conducting this research leads me to an understanding that sensorial empathy can be achieved with the audience through my artwork, enabling them to acknowledge the existence of my experience of displacement. This creates new grounds for dialogue and compassion. Through my art I have expressed the affects forced displacement had on myself and my family without the need to focus on identity. Through my investigations I have demonstrated that reaching and connecting with others from different cultures, through active participation, without the use of words, entailed primal, invisible elements such as sensorial perception and affective expression. I describe this approach as Sensorial Empathy Art which could be considered as a new type of art practice.

### **Contribution**

This research delivers an intuitive, authentic and subjective understanding, and a sensing, of how specific processes can be employed in order to create art that embodies personal experiences of war and displacement. Autobiographical narrative was used as a mode of inquiry into the process of disclosure of my own experiences of displacement. The methodology involved active participation, embodied artefacts, temporality in presencing past experiences, my voice, and sensorial empathy. (chapters 1, 2, 3 and *Memoirs*) The objective of my methodology was to generate, through installation art, invisible influences such as a sensorial language and sensorial empathy, and to use these in order to create an intertwining relationship between my emotional experiences of war, displacement and place of affiliation, and the audience.

This thesis may be viewed as an evolutionary step in the progression towards the possibility of a sensorially immersive process developed as a dynamically affective and active language, able to create awareness of our

capacity to sensorially empathise with the traumatic experiences of others in cases of war and displacement.

This kind of process which I have developed, could be considered as an affective playful hybrid movement, a way of not only sensing the embodied art, but of breaking limiting barriers in order to reach an affective tacit communication and intersubjective sharing of experiences, which in turn allows sensorial empathy to be achieved through sensorially immersive art.

This research is designed to initiate a new dialogue in contemporary art practice on the subjects of inquiry led active participation and the affective playful hybrid, derived from my own research and artwork dealing with my personal experiences and memories of war and displacement. This contribution is intended to benefit artists and art researchers in the way they study both active participation and the affective playful hybrid in their research and their work in order to pursue sensorial empathy.

### **Further developments**

As I moved forward with my research, it became apparent that active participation of the viewer with my artwork was the most effective way to achieve sensorial empathy with my memories of displacement. I found that there is a definite need to instigate the use of active participation, the playful and the affective, as modes of communicating through the senses, in spaces and environments that are situated outside<sup>54</sup> of traditional gallery and museum settings.

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<sup>54</sup> The workshops for the disPLACED project were designed to embody these modes of communication in both the creative process and the place of final display they provided for the artefacts. The project entailed members of the public making small figures, about 15cm in height, which embodied displacement. The participants, who were of all ages, used mixed media in order to express their ideas and feelings in creating their own figure of a displaced person. Choice of place and audience was central to the project. For example, workshops were set up in a variety of venues such as community centres, university fairs, and colleges. The experience of running these workshops was astounding because we met so many people who had been displaced (physically or psychologically), and who relished the opportunity to express their emotions which disPLACED provided for them.

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# List of Accompanying Materials

- **Appendix I** - Catalogue
- **Appendix II** - *Memoirs*



## Hybrid Residues:

Exploring experiences of displacement  
through active participation in art practice.

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School of Art , Faculty of Technology,  
Design and Environment.

Oxford Brookes University

**Alissar H. McCreary**



## **Artist's background**

I was born in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1968. As a child I was greatly affected by the upheaval caused to my family by the conflict in the region at that time. Whilst I was inevitably aware of the physical destruction around us, it is the psychological affects of fear, anxiety, emptiness, disorientation, helplessness, alienation, lack of freedom and, above all, displacement that have left a more lasting impression on me. My artwork has been and will continue to be the embodiment of these experiences of conflict and displacement.

## Abstract

### **Hybrid Residues: Exploring experiences of displacement through active participation in art practice.**

This thesis explores and examines reciprocity between art, active participation, and traced memories of displacement. I review the significance of the active participation of the viewer with artwork which embodies personal experiences of war and displacement, with the aim of promoting what David Abram calls 'sensorial empathy'.

In the thesis I have appropriated the term 'sensorial empathy' and use it to refer to a form of silent connection, or knowing, that can manifest phenomenologically between artist, artefacts, place and audience. I investigate how and when sensorial empathy takes place, and how it might affect the viewer's perception of the concept of displacement.

My methodology has utilised five main methods of inquiry: active participation, residues, autobiographical narrative, remembering and embodiment. My experiments with the active participation of the viewer have centred on the idea of the audience participating with the artefacts, both as a way of sensing and sharing my memories of experiences of displacement, and also to encourage in the viewer a sense of concern for the issues that initiated the work. Inquiry led active participation has been responsible for the artwork's transformation, relocation, and possibly, reconstruction or destruction. In experimental presentations of my artwork, this process of participation has been effective in promoting or instigating sensorial empathy, phenomenology, and existential awareness.

Embodiment of the artefacts with memories of displacement was implemented through an intuitive approach, using metaphor and symbolism. Reflections on the effectiveness of active participation were drawn from analysis of audience feedback and used to modify and develop the artwork further.

My intention is to show that active participation of the audience with immersive art, embodied with my experiences of displacement, can lead to sensorial empathy between the audience and these experiences in turn promoting a connection and understanding with each other that may help to overcome cultural barriers.

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17. *Shedding 3D2* 2013 (continued)
18. *Overwhelmed 2D* 2013
19. *Overwhelmed 3D* 2013
20. *Silence 1* 2012
21. *Silence 3D* 2013
22. *Silence 2* 2012
23. *On the Other Side* 2013
24. *Embodied* 2013
25. *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)
26. *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)
27. *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)

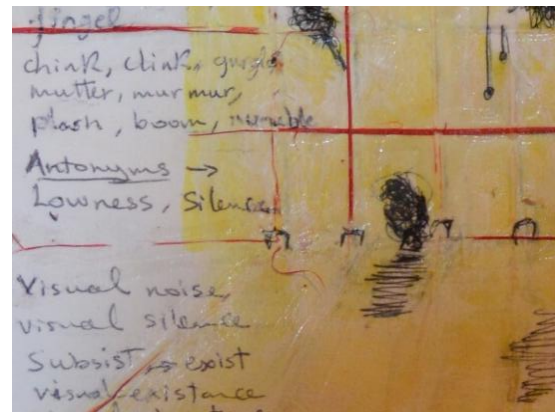
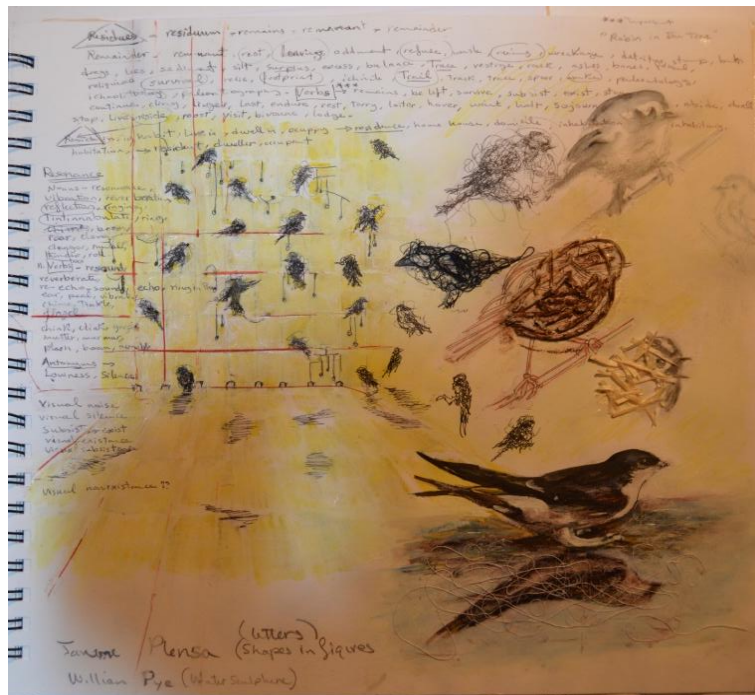
## Pg. Illustration

28. *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)
29. *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)
30. *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)
31. *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)
32. *Embodied 2* 2013
33. *Mezza* 2013
34. *Mezza - 2013 Detail* (continued)
35. *To Belong* 2013
36. *To Belong* 2013 Detail (continued)
37. *Sounds of Memories* 2014
38. *Mapping and Connecting Memories* 2014
39. *Mapping Memories* 2014
40. *Memory Of Home* 2014
41. *Purge* 2015
42. *Intuitive Knowing* 2015
43. *State of Limbo* 2015
44. *Artefact of Loss - Exhibition* 2015
45. *Artefact of Loss* 2015 (continued)
46. *Artefact of Loss* 2015 (continued)
47. *Artefact of Loss* 2015 (continued)
48. *Artefact of Loss* 2015 (continued)
49. *Like Thorns* 2015
50. *Like Thorns 3D* 2015 (continued)

## Pg. Illustration

51. *Like Thorns* 2015 (continued)
52. *My Skin* 2015
53. *Soldier - You Wanna Peace of Me* 2015
54. *Memoirs* 2011-17 (appendix II)
55. *Trapped* 2015
56. *Disconnect/Displace* 2015
57. *Overwhelmed* 2014
58. *Scrolls* 2014
59. *Calling Home* series 2014 - 15
60. *Nausea* 2015
61. *Behind Clear Walls* series 2014 - 17
62. *Makhzan* 2011 - 18
63. *Don't Let's Play Pretend* 2018 Final Exhibition
64. *Behind Clear walls* 2018 Final Exhibition
65. *Don't Let's Play Pretend* 2018 (continued)
66. *Don't Let's Play Pretend* 2018 (continued)
67. *Don't Let's Play Pretend* 2018 (continued)
68. *disPLACED Space* 2018
69. *disPLACED Project & Exhibition* 2018 (continued)





## Residues 2011

### Hybrid Residues series

#### Rationale:

Visual noise, visual  
silence, visual existence,  
resonance, vibration,  
reflection

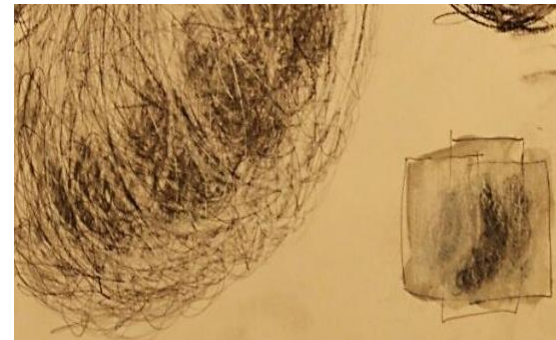
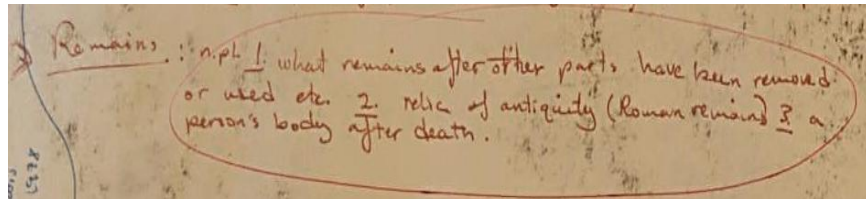
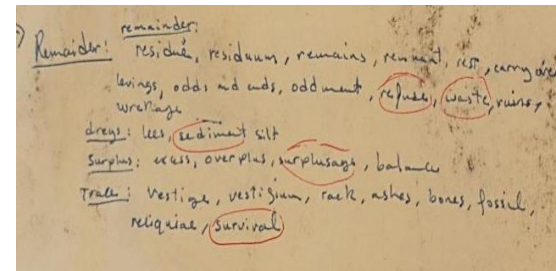
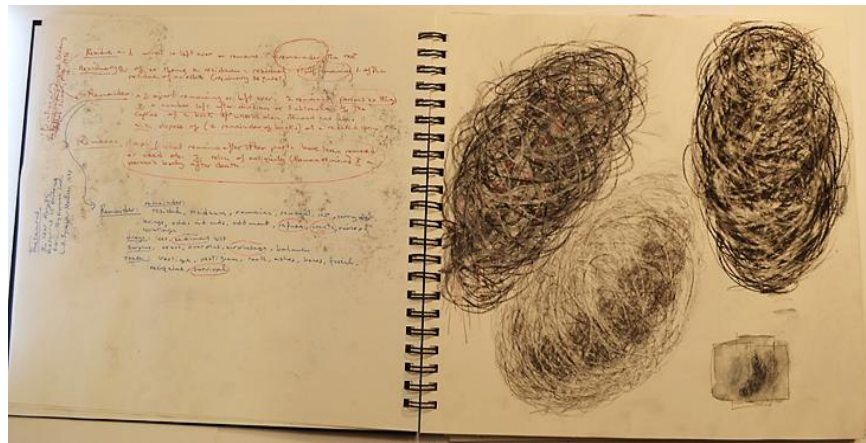
**Material:** Paper, wax,  
emulsion, wood, cotton  
thread

**Sizes:** 25.4 x 30.48cm

## Residues 2011

*Residues* is a metaphor for my memories of my childhood experiences of war and displacement. The phrase embodies the search for my place and identity. The connotation of a hybrid (in the main theme, Hybrid Residues) refers to the divide that exists in my mind, firstly in remembering from a Lebanese child's point of view, and secondly remembering from the point of view of a western citizen, having lived more than half of my life in the west. It is, perhaps, like two separate persons, a child and an adult, living in the same body, both sharing and dividing thoughts and memories.

The birds embody the idea of noise versus silence. Noise refers to war, violence and upheaval, and silence refers to peace. The cage like structure refers to a scrambled or confused state of existence. The wooden splinters replacing feathers references pain and discomfort. The reflection in water alludes to the question of what is reality? Which view is reality and which is only the reflection of the bird? Water in this case represents the dividing wall between the two.



## Place 2011

### Hybrid Residues series

#### Rationale:

Remains, removed, ruin,  
waste, survival, affiliation,  
recollection, meditation

**Material:** Paper, wax,  
emulsion, cotton thread

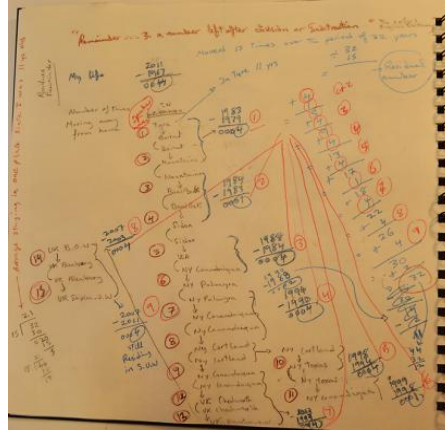
**Sizes:** 25.4 x 30.48cm

## Place 2011

The processes of drawing these images became meditative and helped me explore ways of remembering aspects of places from which I was displaced, and to reflect and analyse the constant longing for these places.

I questioned the significance and the implications of the process of recollecting places I have inhabited, and how this phenomenon (remembering past places) affects me as an artist.

This work echoed my questions and assessment of both the importance and the affectiveness of the embodied subject and its affiliation to a place, and also the perception of an experience.



## *Displaced* 2011

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### **Rationale:**

Remains, removed, ruin,  
refuse, waste, survival,  
connect

**Material:** Paper, graphite,  
ink, emulsion, fabric,  
cotton thread

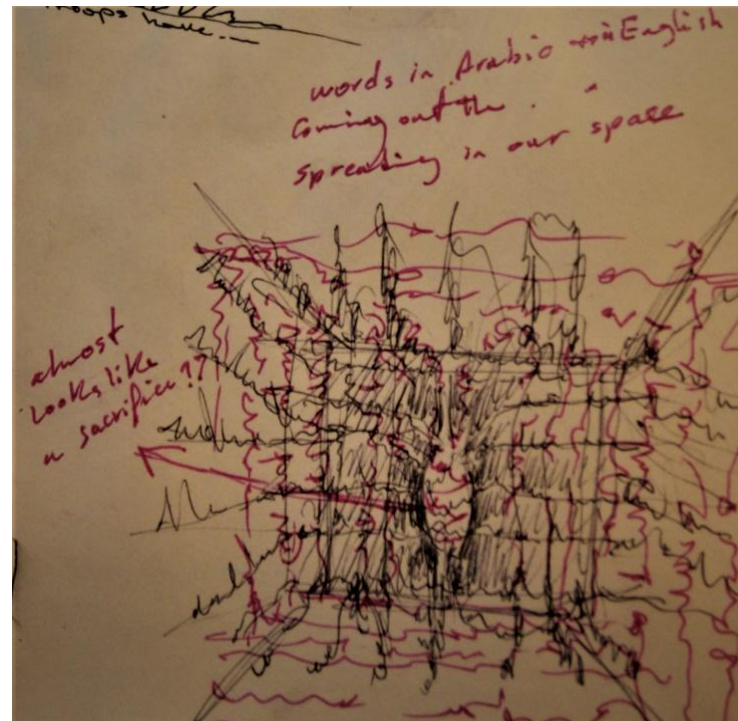
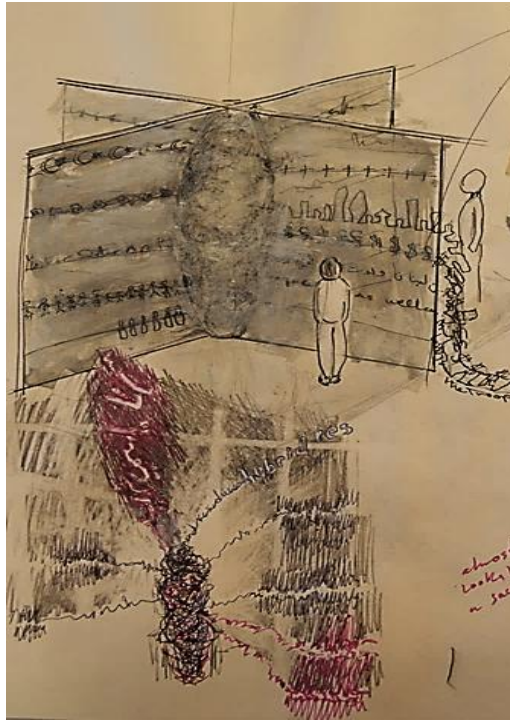
**Sizes:** 25.4 x 30.48cm

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### *Displaced* 2011

The egg symbolised a place of belonging which I created by using lines of graphite, ink, thread and emulsion. From my point of view, I was not just drawing, I was building and making this egg shaped cocoon. As I wove the thread round and round, I visualised places I lived in and the times I had to leave them. I visualised my memories and thoughts being woven in with the lines.

This work helped me visualise the amount of times I have been displaced in comparison to my age, as well as becoming a meditative process of mapping memories of emotions from my childhood.



## Recollecting 2012

From *Mahkzan* series

### Rationale:

Web, loom, narrative  
line, autobiography

**Material:** Paper,  
graphite, ink and eraser

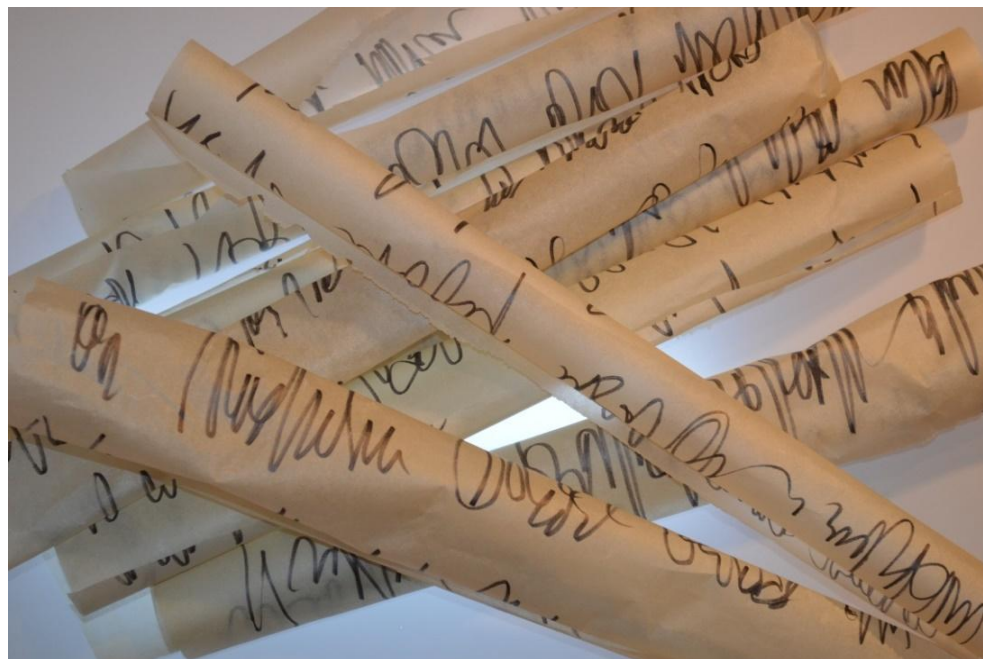
**Sizes:** 25.4 x 30.48cm

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### Recollecting 2012

These sketches resonate with my ideas of staging my memories as a loom that unravels as a narrative or a time line, sandwiched between two sheets of glass

Creating and embodying these recollected residues of memories through art installations became a primary goal. The subjective nature of my work, (i.e. dealing with experienced feelings from a traumatic past) prompted me to want to exhibit experienced emotions, along with the narrative of those recollected experiences.



a



b



c

## Scrolls 2012 - 13

### Hybrid Residues series

#### Rationale:

Memories, sound, rhythm,  
touch, senses, sensorial,  
active participation, silence,  
affective

**Material:** Wax paper,  
emulsion, ceramic, plastic,

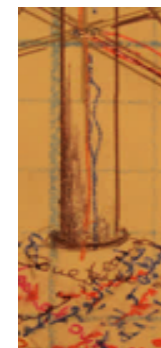
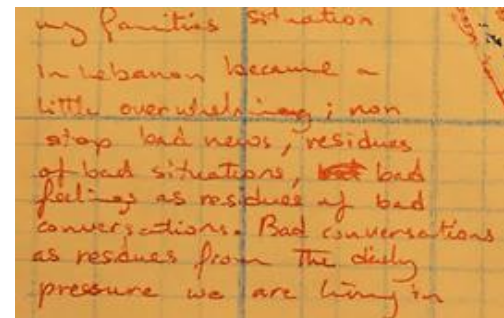
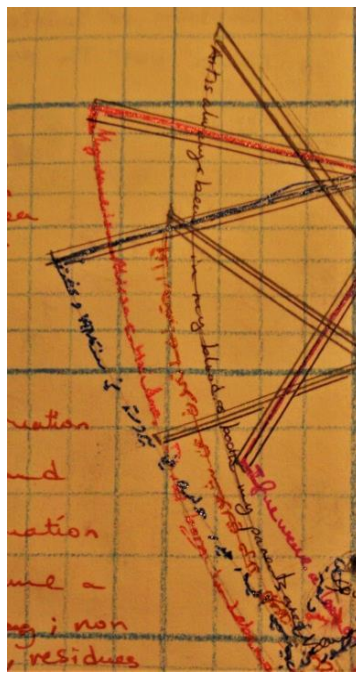
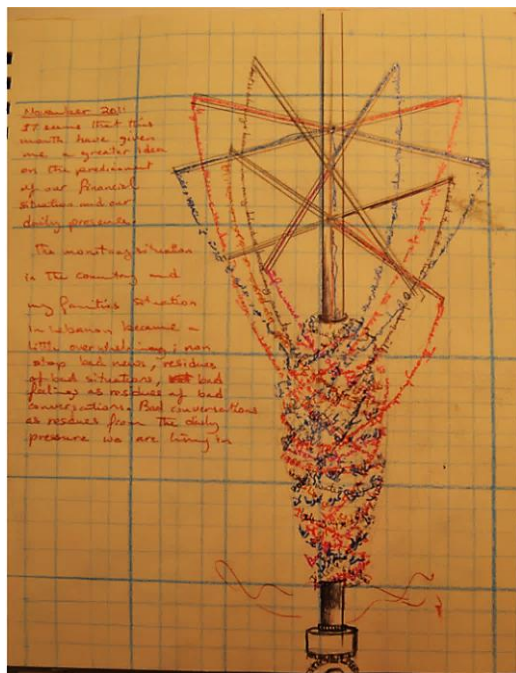
**Sizes:** a. 76.2cm, b. 12.7cm,  
c. 2.54cm

---

### Scrolls 2012 -13

*Scrolls* was the first piece in a series that demanded the haptic (or Lamsi- لامي في Arabic) to be present. The tiny little scrolls were dropped in the hands of the audience and in doing so created whisper like sounds when falling and shifting together. As the scrolls settled in the hand, the viewer realised that their surface was impregnated with illegible scribbles. These scribbles were my memories and expressions of corporeal emotions stemming from experiencing the conflict.

In my PhD work, I explore and examine reciprocity between art, active participation, and traced memories of displacement. My intention is to review the significance of the active participation of the viewer with artwork which embodies personal experiences of war and displacement, with the aim of promoting 'sensorial empathy'.



## Loom of Autobiography 2012

From Mahkzan series

### Rationale:

Materialise , reveal, weave, intertwine, mix, hybrid, family, memories

Material: Paper, and ink

Sizes: 15.24 x 12.7cm

### Loom of Auto-biography 2012

This sketch embodies my autobiography, memories and emotions written in two languages (Arabic and English). It parallels my thesis which offers a hybrid method for the incorporation of subjective memories, cultural identity and creative autobiography in the artwork.

The concept of a loom with an autobiographical thread running through it and coiled around it gives a sense of sharing, intertwined with a continuous dialogue between audiences, art and place.



## *Shedding skin* 2D1 2012

From *Mahkzan* series

Ceramic  
Play-cards

### Rationale:

Metaphor, symbolism,  
narrative, patterns of  
words and noise,  
embodiment

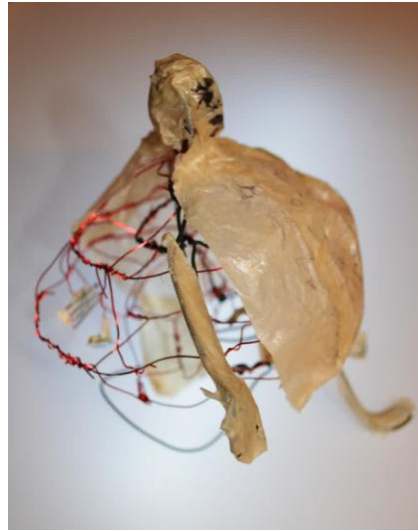
**Material:** line, ink, and  
assorted used paper,  
ceramics

**Sizes:** 12.7 x 12.7cm

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### *Shedding Skin* 2D1 2012

In this narrative series of sketches, the man became filled with scribbled words and expanded until he exploded. In doing so his skin fell to the ground and the words burst out to form another being. These visually shifting patterns of words and noise suggested a sense of transformation and instability. The black crosses stuck on his eyes, nose, mouth, and ears suggest a lack of the ability to speak, hear, breath, see, or perceive, in other words he was not allowed to use his senses. The embodiment of his struggles, which were observed in the form of the scribbled words in the cavity of his torso, were exposed and ready to burst out to purge him of his burdens. I created this narrative of a small swollen human figure using metaphor in order to depict a sense of the purging of painful burdens.



## *Shedding Skin 3D1 2012*

*Hybrid Residues  
series*

### **Rationale:**

Embodiment, noise and auditory memory, presencing, emotional struggle, sensorial empathy

**Material:** Wax paper, wire, ink, emulsion

**Sizes:** 12.7 × 12.7cm

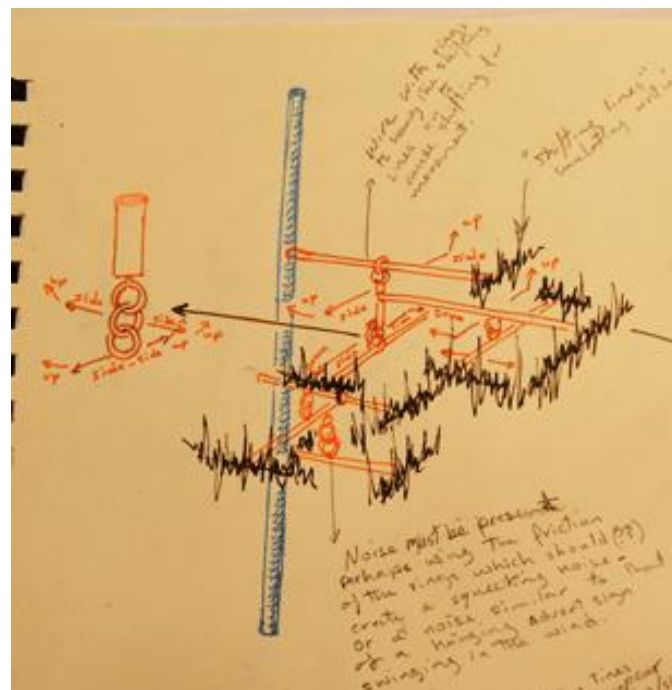
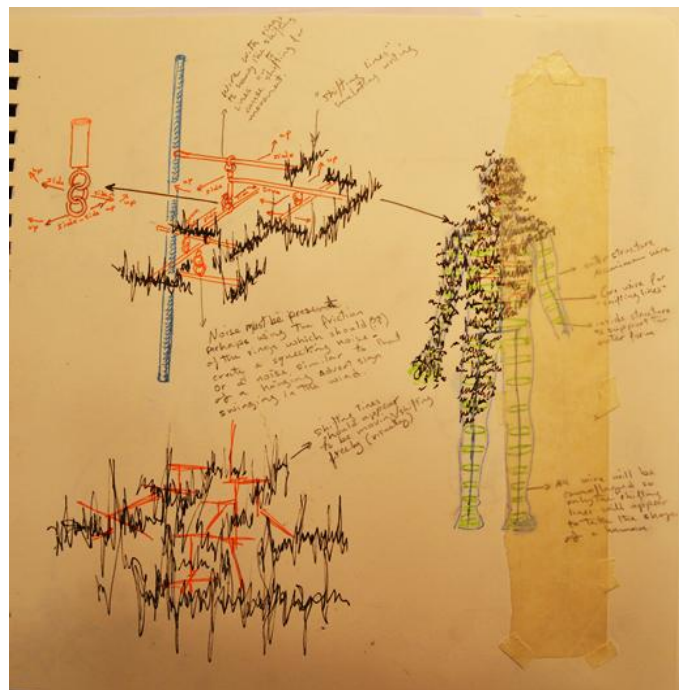
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### ***Shedding Skin 3D1 2012***

I re-created the small swollen human figure which was initially a series of line drawings on assorted used paper. In 3D, the little figure stood constructed from wire and wax paper apparently bloated to such an extent that he might be about to explode. Suspended within him were individual scrolls of text which swayed when he was handled. The translucent nature of the wax paper 'skin' was designed to encourage the viewers to handle the piece in order to see more clearly the meaning of the writing within, in turn creating a shifting and whispering pattern of noise. These shifting patterns of noise were intended to explore auditory memory as well as suggesting a sense of transformation and instability.

At first glance he was seen as a doll, quite small, fragile and innocent, but on closer inspection, the feedback from my peers suggested, he changed to reveal a sense of underlying embodiment disclosing a more dark and ominous presence than that which was initially sensed. The audience's perception and feedback, after handling him at a presentation, suggested sensorial empathy for his predicament.





## Shedding Skin 2D2 2013

### Hybrid Residues series

#### Rationale:

Touch, noise, skin, fragile structure, patterns, shifting

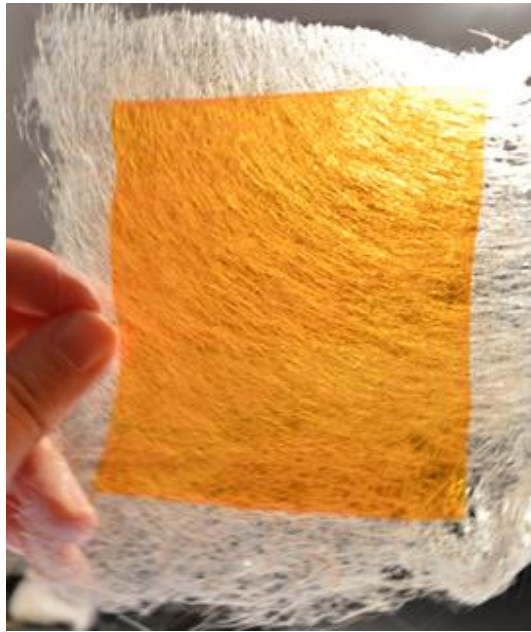
**Material:** Paper, wax, emulsion, wood, cotton thread

**Sizes:** 25.4 x 30.48cm

### Shedding Skin 2D2 2013

The *Shedding Skin* pieces encouraged me to design and make a life size man. He is made of soft, heavy gauge aluminium wire and his skin is of wax paper scribbled with my memories. I explored ideas and materials of fragile nature, wire that bent easily and paper that is quite delicate to handle. I also investigated different ideas on how to hang the skin on the wire structure. This is designed to shift slightly when touched, and to make the skin segments chafe against each other in order to create a rustling noise.

The aim in building *Shedding Skin* life size was to test whether the sight and sound of the skin falling from a large structure has a greater impact on the audience than the sensation of touching a smaller structure which might fit in the palm of the hand.



## *Skin* 2013

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### Rationale:

Touch, sense, patterns of noise, precious, delicate, protect

**Material:** Fibre glass tissue, plastic film, gold leaf, polyurethane, emulsion, latex, coffee grounds

**Sizes:** 7.62 x 8.89cm

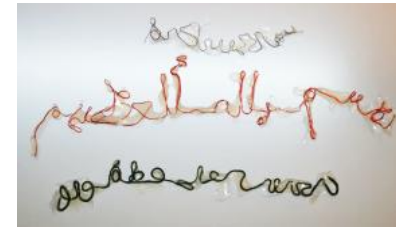
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### *Skin* 2013

I was aiming to construct a variety of surfaces that might be light, precious, delicate, thin, cold or warm, smooth, transparent or translucent, but all strong enough to be handled in order to act as a skin or to contain a structure such as the life size figure. I realised that being a refugee is a subjective state of being with more complex consequences than generally realised. The emotions I remember the most were the fear of losing my family, and sensing my mother's anxiety at the situation we were in. The *Skin* also represents protection, sensing and sensuality. The translucent nature of the materials used here was designed to hang or cover artefacts I made, and to encourage the viewers to touch and sense the textures thereby creating a shifting and whispering pattern of noise.



Joints



Writing using wire



Wax paper with ink writing and wire support

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## *Shedding Skin* 3D2 Components 2013

In preparation to build the full wire figure, I thought about two main strategies: first, how to put the aluminium structure together but keep it very light, and second, how to create a skin that can easily be shed if the figure was touched or moved. Having chosen to work with malleable aluminium wire, it was not easy to adhere the components together. Hot glue broke off the aluminium and would not bond to it.

Consequently I established that wrapping the joints of the aluminium structure with thin steel wire then applying hot glue to bond it together seemed to work best. I liked the transparent look of the glue around the joints. The steel woven wire magnified through the glue gave the impression of being both trapped and preserved.

I wanted the full size figure, which stood about 185cm tall, to be very light and easily transportable.

## *Shedding Skin* 3D2 Components 2013

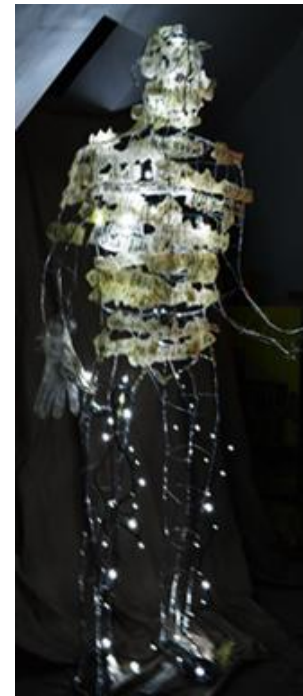
### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### Rationale:

Malleable, light,  
delicate, easily portable,  
sheds easily

**Material:** Aluminium  
wire, steel wire, hot  
glue, wax paper

**Sizes:** Writing and skin  
12.7 x 5.08cm



## *Shedding Skin 3D2 2013*

*Hybrid Residues series*

### **Rationale:**

Shifting pattern of noise,  
shedding skin easily,  
transformation

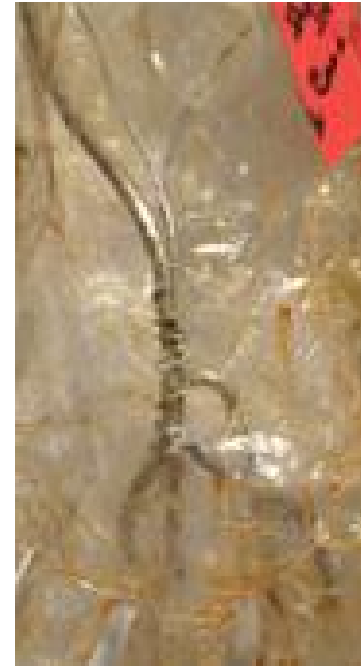
**Material:** Aluminium  
wire, steel wire, hot glue,  
wax paper, ink, emulsion

**Sizes:** 12.7 x 5.08cm

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### ***Shedding Skin 3D2 2013***

I used the soft aluminium wire to outline the form and shape of my husband as well as the facial profile. I wanted the figure to be based precisely on a real human being so when I peeled it off the person it would metaphorically take on the idea of a layer being shed off as if it was old skin. I strengthened the joints by adding coiled wire inside the figure. The 'scribbled on' wax paper was treated with emulsion to give it strength so that it withstood wire being bonded to it. I cut around the scribbling to create pieces of skin (approx. 13 x 5cm), and attached on the back of each a wire structure with hooks. Finally I hooked the skin onto the figure. I used aluminium honeycomb to make the feet flat and stable so that the figure can stand on its own. In my mind, this full size figure was just a maquette to learn from, and to ascertain if it would have more impact on the audience with regard to encouraging them to touch than would be the case with a smaller object. The structure moved at the slightest touch and the skin segments collided against each other to creating a whispering, seashell like noise and proceeded to fall off the figure easily as planned.



## *Shedding 3D2 2013*

*Hybrid Residues series*

### **Rationale:**

Touch, skin, Haptic  
perception, embodiment

**Material:** Wire, hot glue,  
plastic, latex and emulsion

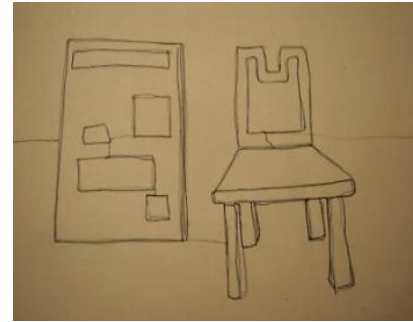
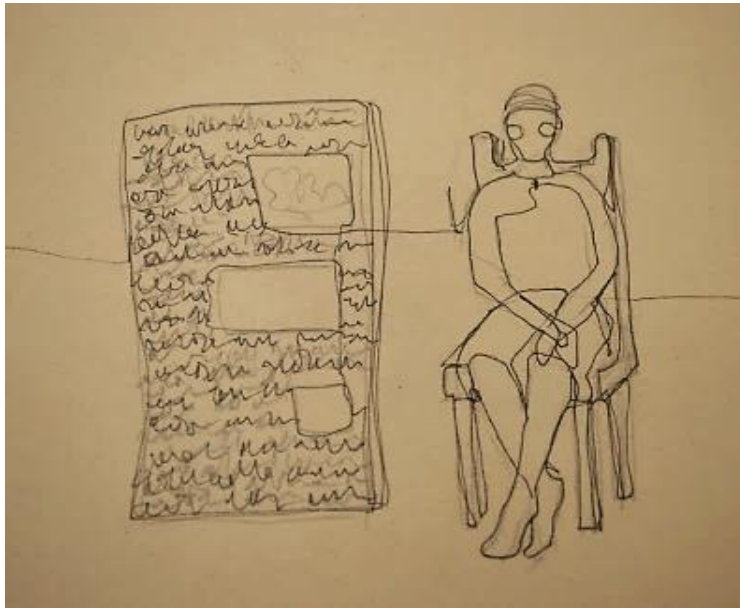
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### *Shedding 3D2 2013* (continued)

As a symbol for touch, sensing and the sensuous, I added the (tested/created) skin onto the wire structured hand. I did not plan to finish the figure as a piece on its own but rather to learn from it.

I realised that the gesture of the figure was becoming important but in particular the hands and the translucent quality of the skin which made the wire within look like spiky veins.

This piece helped me understand further the concept of how sensory perception works and gave me the idea of marketing and adding value to work for the purpose of encouraging people to touch and assess as they do when evaluating their needs (emotional and physical) when shopping. The concept was about the haptic perception and achieving sensorial empathy more than any monetary perception.



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### *Overwhelmed 2D 2013*

The narrative series *Overwhelmed* was created using continuous contour drawings, a process of drawing I find meditative and which allows for the access of unconscious private thoughts and memories of emotions. The drawings embodied my feeling of being overwhelmed with the on-going conflict at home in Lebanon and throughout the Middle East region. The continuous line ran through out the sketchbook non stop. This series also characterises the ever present and increasingly nauseating emotions that can never be eliminated; emotions such as alienation, fear of loss, insecurity and uncertainty.

I wanted these sketches to generate an intuitive visual and sensorial dialogue between my emotions and the audience, and particularly my memories of being separated from my family who were still living under the trauma of bombardment in Lebanon.

*Overwhelmed*  
2D  
2013

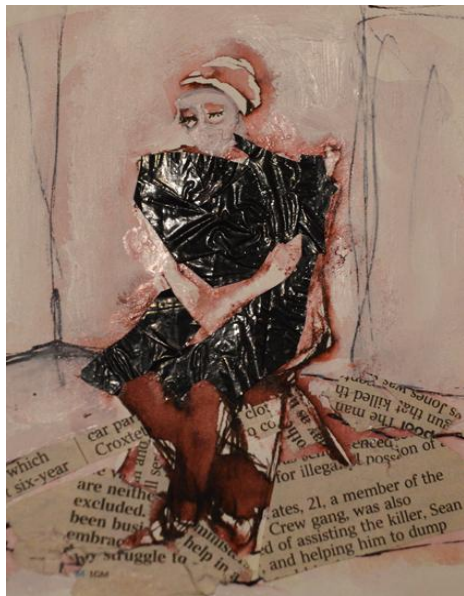
From *Mahkzan* series

**Rationale:**

Testing intuitiveness,  
sensorial empathy

**Material:** Paper, and ink

**Sizes:** 12.7 x 12.7cm



a. Original collage



b. Maquette figure



## Overwhelmed 3D 2013

### Hybrid Residues series

#### Rationale:

Testing, audience's active participation and touch

**Material:** Old Lebanese News paper, wire mesh, thread, plastic fibre, plastic, wood, card, graphite, acrylics, ceramics

#### Sizes:

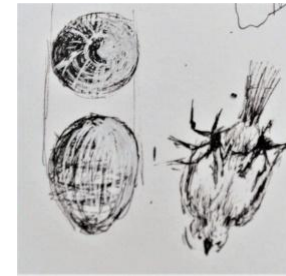
a. 12.7 x 8.89cm

b. 12.7 x 5.08 x 5.08cm

### Overwhelmed 3D 2013

The motivation of making Overwhelmed 3d was to explore different ways of intriguing the audience to touch the art without my consent. I wanted the art or the artefacts to have a playful element, to almost become toys but to stay under the umbrella of fine arts.

Through active participation, the act of touch becomes important. David Abram (1996) defines the idea of the touch in the following way: 'Touch is an active and a passive sense, for to touch is to be touched..' (Abram 1996, p. 68). Abram believes that this simple yet profound recognition of touching and being touched could be the foundation for a new 'environmental ethic' that can come through a new attentiveness, a 'carnal, sensorial empathy' (ibid. p. 69).



## *Silence 1* 2012

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### **Rationale:**

Silence, a divide, another dimension, disconnection, isolation, separation, on the other side, under.

**Material:** Paper, ink

**Sizes:** 25.4 x 30.48cm

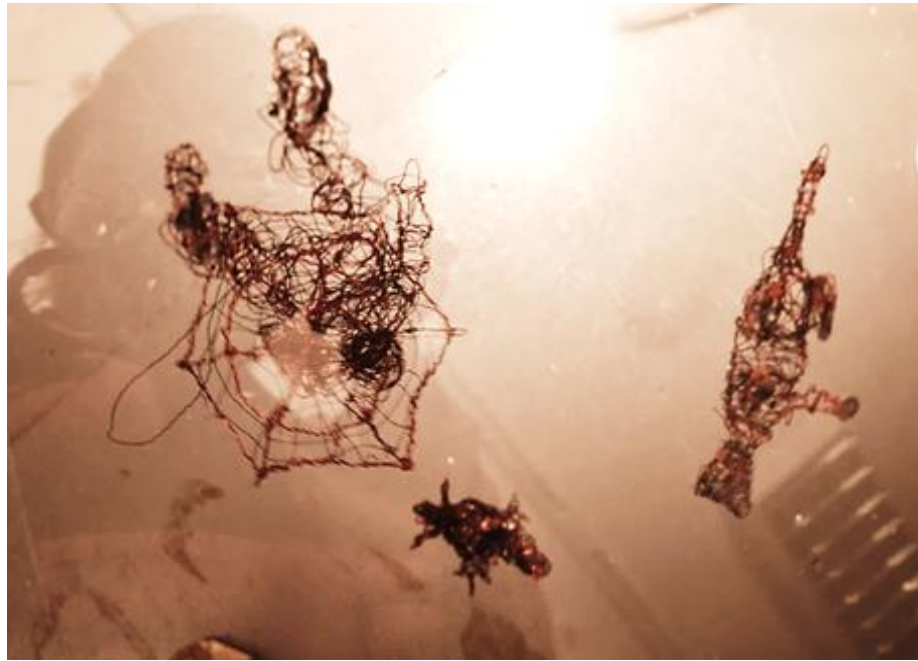
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### *Silence 1* 2012

*Silence 1* depicts a place that is seen from above, as from a bird's eye view, but portrayed upside down and as if a sheet of glass existed between this place and the viewer. The suggested illusion of the transparent dividing sheet is designed to instill a sense of disconnection, as of a sensory vacuum, where the cars, people or animals could not be heard, and the croissant with the cup of coffee could not be smelt.

For me, the drawings reveal a sense of loss. I wanted the viewer to experience an embodied sense of disconnection between them and that world on the other side, seemingly caused by an invisible transparent shield that can not be removed.





## *Silence 3D* 2013

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### **Rationale:**

Isolated, separated,  
divided, on the other  
side, under.

**Material:** Wire, Perspex

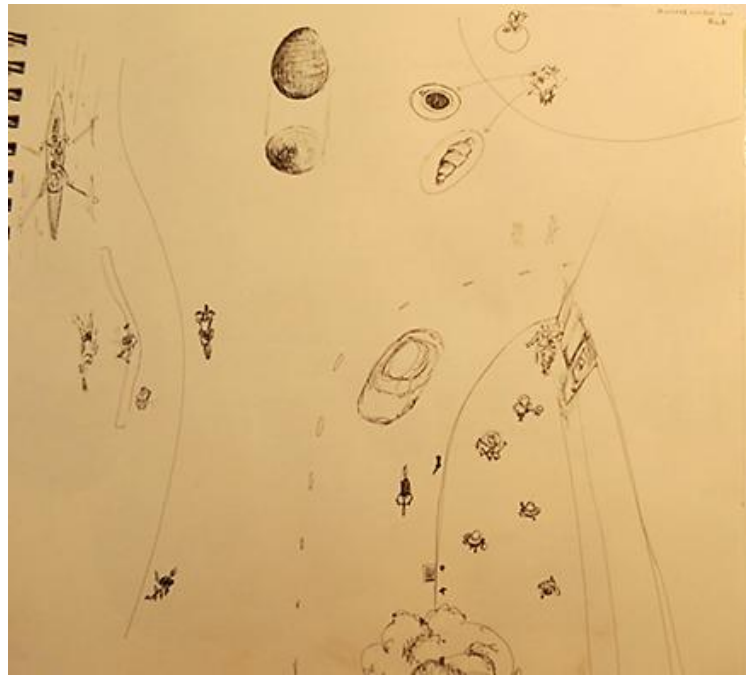
**Sizes:** 60 x 40cm

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### *Silence 3D* 2013

*Silence 3D* again depicts a place that is seen from a bird's eye view but portrayed, perhaps, upside down and separated from us by a sheet of glass. A wire man with an umbrella is walking along unaware, but the raven and the cat behind him suddenly notice us looking from the other side; are they above or below us?

The concept and narrative of what is or isn't real, or perhaps a combination of both (the hybrid) continues to run through the thesis, metaphorically speaking, as if it is a continuous contour, a thread from beginning to end. The element of the playful and toy-like artefacts became stronger and more prevalent as the research project evolved.



## *Silence 2* 2012

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### Rationale:

Sound, belonging,  
familiar dimension,  
connection, togetherness,  
reunification, on the same  
side

**Material:** Paper and ink

**Sizes:** 25.4 x 30.48cm

---

### *Silence 2* 2012

*Silence 2* depicts a place that can be felt and seen from above but is not separated from us like in *Silence 1*. The transparent dividing sheet is no longer disconnecting us from the scene, where the cars, people or animals could potentially be heard, and the croissant with the cup of coffee could be smelt. Sensorial empathy, or a sensory responsiveness with what is familiar in our world, a car, a tree, people swimming and a cup of coffee, all give a sense of hope and belonging. To be able to identify the familiar, whether a smell, an object or a sound, makes the feeling of being at home more tangible.

From a personal perspective, the drawings reveal a sense of gain and alludes to the familiar, like the sounds of people chatting or the aromas of baked food and coffee. I wanted the viewer to experience an embodied sense of connection between them and this world that is on the same side as they are, in contrast to the sense of isolation embodied in *Silence 1*.



## *On the Other Side* 2013

*Hybrid Residues*  
series

### Rationale:

Sensorial empathy,  
active participation,  
severance, belonging,  
familiar, perception

**Material:** Wire,  
ceramics, Perspex

**Sizes:** 13.97 x 10.16 x  
13.97cm

---

### *On the Other Side* 2013

This study depicts a person without feet. He is stuck on one side of a transparent wall with his feet being on the other side. *On the Other Side* embodies the sense of severance and the longing to be reconnected to what is familiar.

Again, I wanted the viewer to sensorially empathise with the figure's perceptible predicament which suggests an embodied sense of disconnected existence.



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### *Embodied 2013*

These small studies were designed to embody my memories of both my emotions from the war, and family gatherings which involved traditional hospitality such as the offering of small cups of Turkish coffee, small sweets like Turkish delights and baklava, and sitting around the table to have meals of *Mezza*. The family meals in Lebanon are usually lengthy occasions, with the offering of hospitality, the gathering of family and friends, and above all the sharing of such experience being, perhaps, more significant than the meal itself. These artefacts were designed to fit in the palm of the hand.

Whilst these studies collectively referenced the foods of social gatherings, the incongruous materials they were made of made them seem curious and unfamiliar. Their shape and texture references shrapnel, open wounds, chemical smells and incomprehensible words.

## *Embodied* 2013

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### Rationale:

Embodied, belonging,  
sharing, being together

**Material:** Wire, wax  
paper, emulsion, card,  
cotton thread, ceramic,  
plastic, carbon fibre  
**Sizes:** 4cm



## *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)

*Hybrid Residues series*

### Rationale:

Home, touch, active participation, containers, memories, emotions

**Material:** String, wax paper, ink

**Sizes:** 4cm

---

### *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)

This detail is a cocoon like shape that was wrapped around a small ball with wax paper and string. On the inside wall, I scribbled some of my memories of home. This artefact became a container of my memories

When I started to utilise active participation as a method of inquiry, I created a number of these small pieces, of which the unfinished nature, size, and embodied meaning of the ruinous effect of war, led to me naming them artefacts. Artefacts embody my memories of emotions left with me after experiencing war and displacement. The artefacts collectively are part of the *Hybrid Residues* series. In this series, I wanted the viewer to sense the art in terms of the material it was made of, its texture, smells and, particularly, the size of the work and how it sat in the palm of the hand. In the initial stages of my exploration of active participation, the audience were reluctant to touch these artefacts because of the fear of destroying them.



*Embodied*  
2013  
Detail  
(continued)

*Hybrid Residues*  
series

**Rationale:**

To embody, belong,  
being, hybrid

**Material:** Tape, wax  
paper, ink

**Sizes:** 4cm

---

***Embodied 2013 Detail*** (continued)

Referencing the *Mezza* and the baklava, this sphere is a mould of a small ball made using tape and cling film. The sphere inside it was moulded around a large marble using wax paper. The tape moulds usually cling very tight to the object it surrounds, a scalpel knife had to be used to slice the shape in half in order to remove off the object. Then the shape had to be repaired to become a sphere again.

The inside sphere was scribbled with my memories using a personal version of the automatic writing which I call intuitive rhythmic scribbling.



*Embodied*  
2013  
Detail  
(continued)

*Hybrid Residues*  
series

**Rationale:**

Fragile, vulnerable,  
artificial comfort

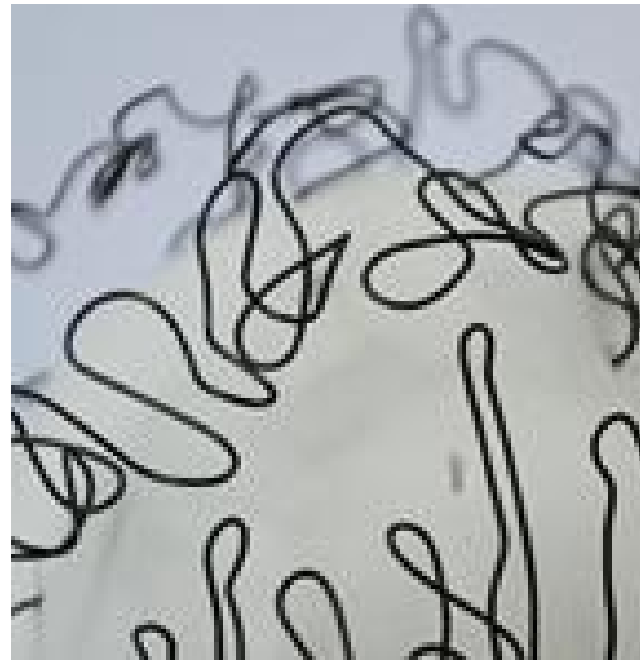
**Material:** Wax paper,  
plastic fibres, ink

**Sizes:** 4cm

---

*Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)

The shell on the outside of this torn sphere was made from wax paper and polyurethane so it becomes brittle to suggest fragility and vulnerability. My memories were scribbled on the paper first then torn into strips before making the mould. The inside is made of a plastic fibre that resembles cotton wool, a synthetic material that has a slight plastic smell. It looked artificially comfortable on the inside and fragile and chaotic on the outside



---

### ***Embodied 2013 Detail*** (continued)

I used wire to scribble my memories and pierced the beginning and the end of each word through the plastic shell of the sphere. The scribbles hovered around the sphere and the shadow cast by the wire made it look more chaotic.

***Embodied***  
**2013**  
**Detail**  
(continued)

***Hybrid Residues***  
**series**

#### **Rationale:**

Shadows, presencing,  
menacing

**Material:** Plastic, wire

**Sizes:** 4cm





*Embodied*  
2013  
Detail  
(continued)

*Hybrid Residues*  
series

**Rationale:**

Words unspoken,  
visible, invisible

**Material:** Plastic, ink

**Sizes:** 4cm

---

***Embodied 2013 Detail*** (continued)

I made an incision into the shell of the sphere big enough to insert a pen in order to scribble my memories on the inner walls. The scribbles look as if they were on the outside shell but have faded through time, but on the inside the black ink is very dark and visible.

These spheres embody my memory of emotions, but they are also a metaphor of my present emotions.



*Embodied*  
2013  
Detail  
(continued)

*Hybrid Residues*  
series

**Rationale:**

Bound, escape, freedom,  
reaching out

**Material:** wax paper,  
plastic, ink, String

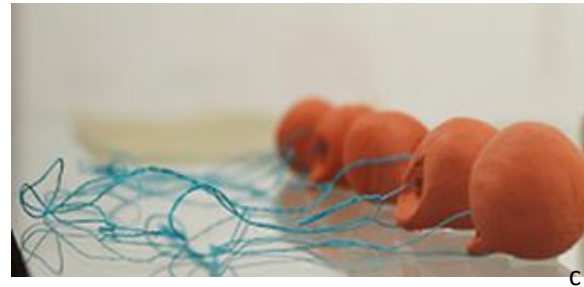
**Sizes:** 4cm

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***Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)**

When I made this shape, I wanted the scribble of my memories to become three dimensional and to look alive as if they are scrambling on the inside of the sphere that is bound with string and wax paper. I scribbled the words on plastic film and tore it to strips then fed it into the sphere.

After careful reflection, the shape suggested an open mouth, with the plastic words trying to escape from it. This piece gave me the idea for my first video which I named *Calling Home*.



## *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### **Rationale:**

Time, impact, noise,  
packaging

**Material:** Ceramics,  
cotton thread, plastic  
and wood

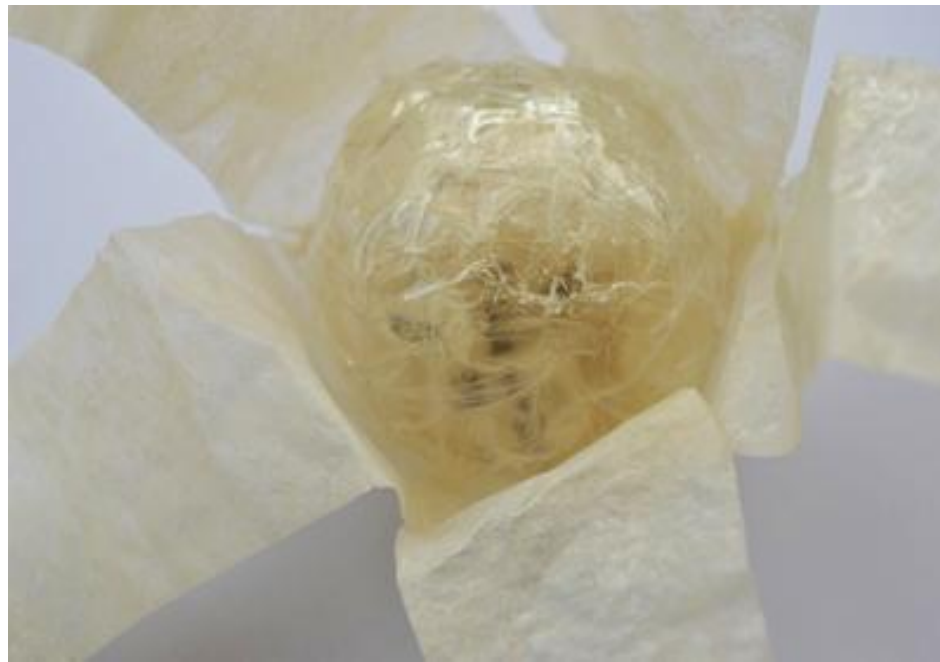
**Sizes:** a. 4cm, b. 30cm  
c. 2cm

---

### *Embodied* 2013 Detail (continued)

The pieces were based on the ancient Chinese time clock dating back to the year 960. It is made of a wooden incense holder and ceramic balls that hang from threads. The threads holding each ball can be positioned at specified distances between each other and when the incense is lit it reaches and burns each thread causing the balls to fall and make a noise.

I made five ceramic balls, each ball representing a major event from my childhood that has impacted on the way my life was shaped. I never burned the incense and the balls never fell to make a noise and mark any time. Instead I packaged it and kept it as part of *Hybrid Residues* series.



a



b



c

## *Embodied 2* 2013

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### **Rationale:**

Disseminating,  
implanting, symbolism,  
empathetic  
consciousness

**Material:** Plastic, tape,  
wire, wax paper, thread

**Sizes:** a. 10.16cm,  
b. 13.97 x 8.89cm

---

### *Embodied 2* 2013

This artefact embodies the idea of telling or disseminating my story of my experience as a refugee when I was a child. Inside these pod like shapes, I have implanted words associated with my memories and emotions. I used symbolism to express the concept of spreading the seeds of my memories in the hope that they will be planted and grow in other's empathetic consciousness.

These pods embody my longing for, and grief at the loss of, what during my childhood constituted 'home'; home, to me, is where I feel secure, where family is, where my bed and my belongings are. These embodied textures such as aluminium wire, resin, wax, paper, cotton and plastic, had a hybrid corporeal presence associated with 'home', with 'stuff', the kitchen, belongings and toys.



## *Mezza* 2013

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### **Rationale:**

Mezza, senses, toys, fear,  
food

**Material:** Wire, wax  
paper, emulsion, card,  
cotton thread, ceramic,  
plastic, aluminium and  
nomex honey comb

**Sizes:** 15.24 x 20.32 cm

---

### ***Mezza 2013***

I became increasingly interested in the idea of creating an installation that consists of small objects made with threatening materials, textures, patterns, smells, and shapes, representing traditional Middle Eastern hospitality over-shadowed by the dark and pervasive clouds of conflict.

The texture of some of the materials used caused a crackling and swishing noise when touched which reminded me of pleasing sensations of packaged toys, or sweets in semi- brittle wrappers. Other materials were smooth surfaced but with spikey edges, made from transparent glues or resins embedded with thin wire or other materials. These pieces embodied an unpleasant sense of fear and uncertainty. I also made thin fragile ceramic artefacts, small in size to accentuate fragility and potential for breakage.



Sweet words



Memories of bullets



Tea

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### *Mezza 2013 Detail (continued)*

This idea was stimulated by different viewer's feedback which confirmed my intuition that for active participation and sensorial empathy with the artwork to be successful both 'touch' and 'sound' will, ideally, need to be present.

## *Mezza 2013 Detail (continued)*

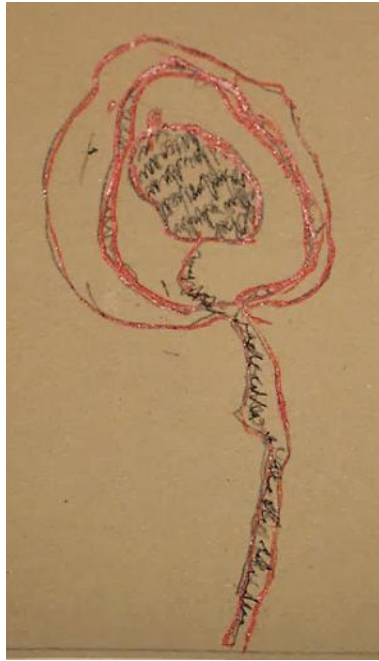
### *Hybrid Residues series*

#### **Rationale:**

Mezza, senses, toys,  
fear, food

**Material:** Wire, wax  
paper, emulsion, card,  
cotton thread, ceramic,  
plastic

**Sizes:** 15.24 x 20.32 cm



## *To Belong* 2013

From *Mahkzan*  
series

### Rationale:

Disseminating  
memories of war,  
belonging, line

Material: Paper, ink

Sizes: 12.7 x 12.7cm

---

### *To Belong* 2013

The narrative series *To Belong* was again created using continuous contour drawings, as a metaphor for using art to tell my story in order to create awareness. It is a line drawing of a plant that grew from of my scribbled memories, branching out and flowering. When the plant reached the end of its life, the dried pods exploded to emit the seeds which are impregnated with memories. The seeds dispersed far and wide and started to grow again.



## *To Belong* 2013 (continued)

From *Mahkzan*  
series

### Rationale:

Narrative line, dialogue

Material: Paper, ink

Sizes: 12.7 x 12.7cm

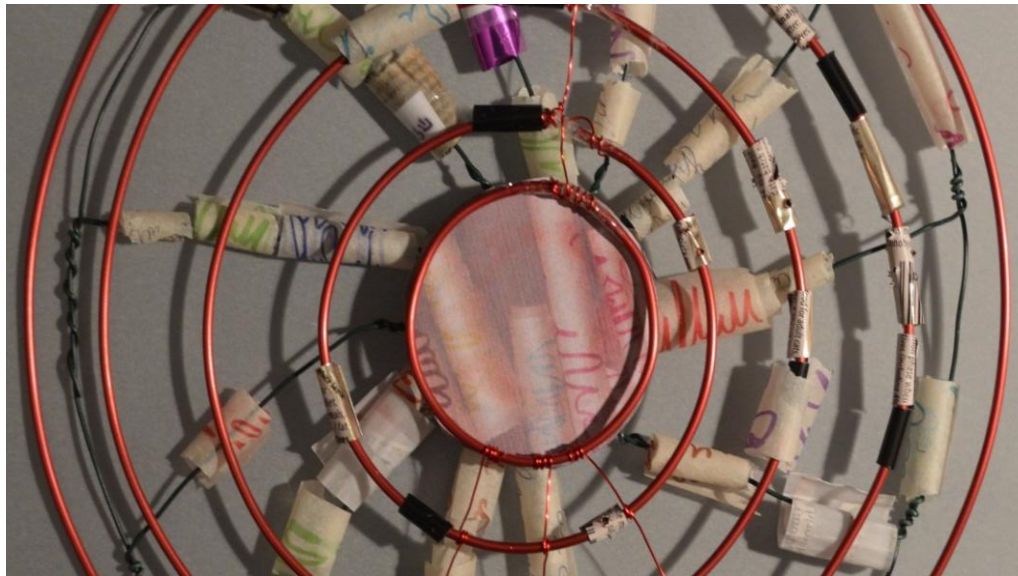
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### *To Belong* 2013 (continued)

The drawings embodied my feeling of not belonging. The continuous line ran non-stop through out the sketchbook. This series also characterises how traumatic stories can be told through art by using just one continuous line.

I wanted these sketches to create an intuitive visual and sensorial dialogue between my emotions and the audience.





## *Sound Of Memories 2014*

### *Hybrid Residues series*

#### **Rationale:**

Sound of memories,  
record, active  
participation, perception

**Material:** Wire, wax  
paper, ink, card

**Sizes:** 15.24cm

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### *Sounds of Memories* 2014

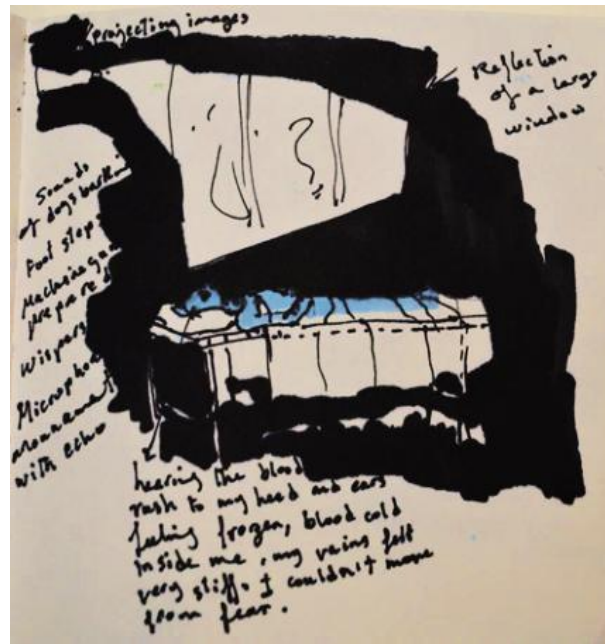
I made *Sound of Memories* using aluminium wire, coiled in the shape of a disc to resemble the idea of vinyl records. I was thinking of my memories as objects attached to coiled wire records that make an incomprehensible noise. This noise was made by small scrolls covered with scribbles of my memories, which can be touched and moved around on the wire disc.

When the records were touched, the small scrolls hung around the wire shifted and collided against each other creating a hollow crackly noise, which I call the noise of my memories. In this case the perceptual process of my work was activated by the audience handling the record.

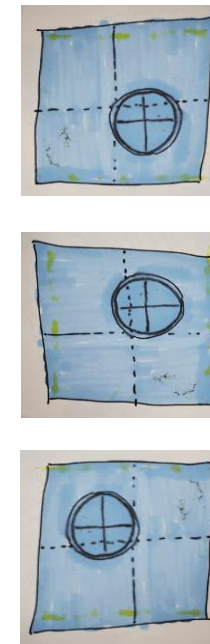
The idea was about the visual process of perceptual activation but with the addition of the tactile or the haptic process of active participation.



a. From Memory



b. Frozen In Fear



c. Targets

## Mapping and Connecting Memories 2014

When I was a child at school studying the subject of geography, we were expected to memorise how to draw the map of Lebanon. As I loved drawing, it was easy for me to draw the map from memory. My friends used to queue up in order for me to help them to draw the map whenever the teacher left the class room. I drew the above map (a) from memory, and on the left side of it, I documented different times when we needed to evacuate our home, as well as unhappy events that had a lasting impact on my childhood years. I used wax paper to record these events and originally intended to roll them into scrolls, but decided instead to keep them open.

Frozen (b) is from a specific memory which is documented in my *Memoirs* book (p.48)

## Mapping and Connecting Memories 2014

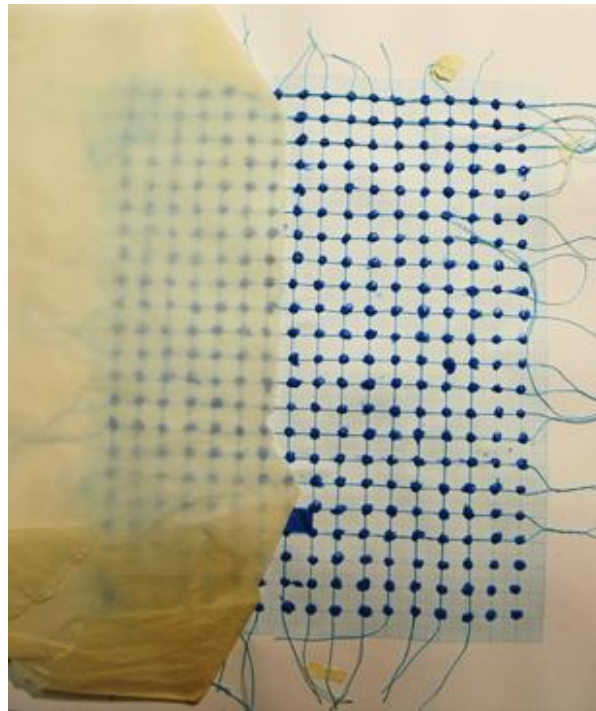
### From *Memoirs*- appendix II

#### Rationale:

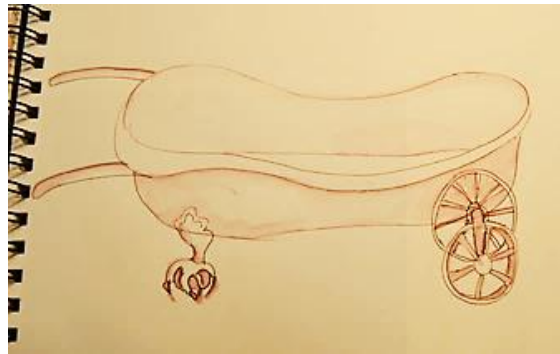
Mapping memories, home land, lasting impact

**Material:** Paper, ink, wax paper, markers, plastic

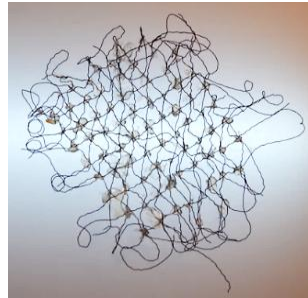
**Sizes:** a. 33.02 x 17.78cm  
b. 10.16 x 10.16cm  
c. 7.62 x 7.62cm



a. Embroidered



c. Cross-stitched



b. Mobile Safety

---

## *Mapping Memories 2014*

I mapped, both symbolically and metaphorically, my experience of sensing both the physical and psychological distance between myself and a number of facets of my childhood. Notable amongst these were the presence of my mother, my childhood activities, patterns and textures of household items, and the significance of the bath tub as a place of safety.

## *Mapping Memories 2014*

### *Hybrid Residues series*

#### **Rationale:**

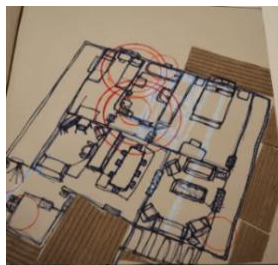
Mapping memories, household, safety

**Material:** Paper, ink, wax paper, graphite, wire, hot glue, acrylics

**Sizes:** a. 25.4 x 30.48cm  
b. 25.4 x 30.48cm  
c. 7.62 x 7.62cm



a. Street map of the building we lived in



b. Map of my bedroom



c. My toys



d. Kitchen



e. Writing on my closet door with chalk



f. Windows over my bed, balcony corner, bath tub where my mum put me during shelling

## Memory Of Home 2014

In order to map my memories I felt that I needed to map the home I grew up in; my bedroom where my toys and belongings lived, the kitchen where the family meals were shared, and the balcony where I built a hammock and played with my toys. These same places in the house also had a sad side to them.

My bedroom is where I left my toys, clothes and belongings at the age of ten. I never saw them again. I saw the first missile flying and heard the news of my aunt getting killed on the radio in the kitchen, and from the balcony we saw the smoke that indicated that invasion was imminent. I sketched the past so that I can see it now in the present, one more time. It also helped me keep a connection between my art and the research project.

## Memory Of Home 2014

From *Mahkzan* series

### Rationale:

Mapping memories, home, connecting art and research

**Material:** Assorted used paper, ink, wax paper, graphite

**Sizes:** 12.7 x 12.7cm



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### *Purge* 2015

The two paintings here describe volatile emotions being purged in the form of miniature scrolls as if they were secret messages. They were emotions I had suppressed for many years but which were finally, by the creation of these paintings, purged. I felt that I had the freedom to tell the story of my experiences of war.

*Purge*  
2015

*Hybrid Residues*  
Series

#### **Rationale:**

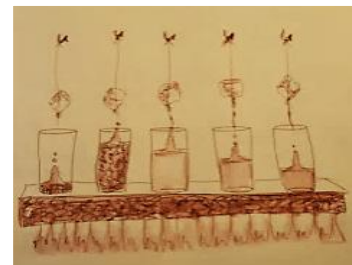
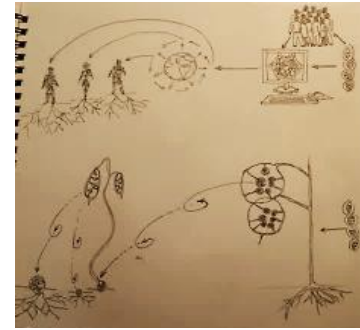
Sensorial empathy,  
painful memories

**Material:** Canvas,  
acrylics, prints, wax  
paper

**Sizes:** 12.7 x 8.89cm



Play



## *Intuitive Knowing 2015*

### *Hybrid Residues series*

#### **Rationale:**

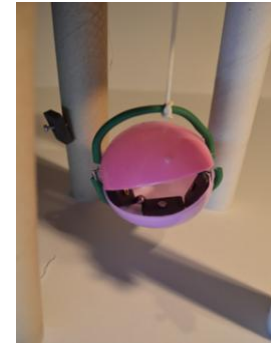
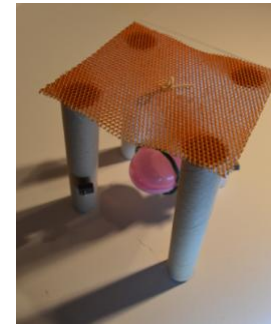
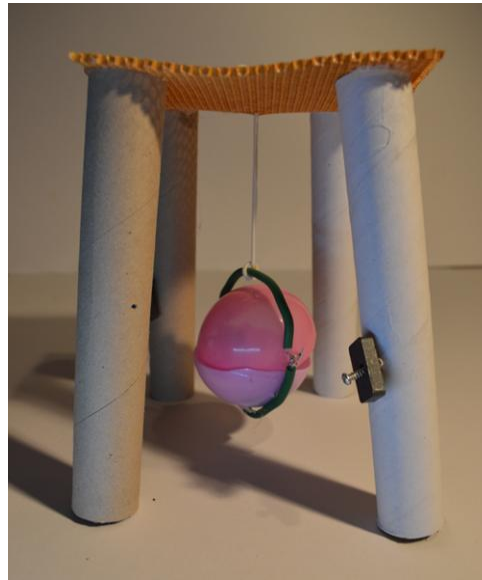
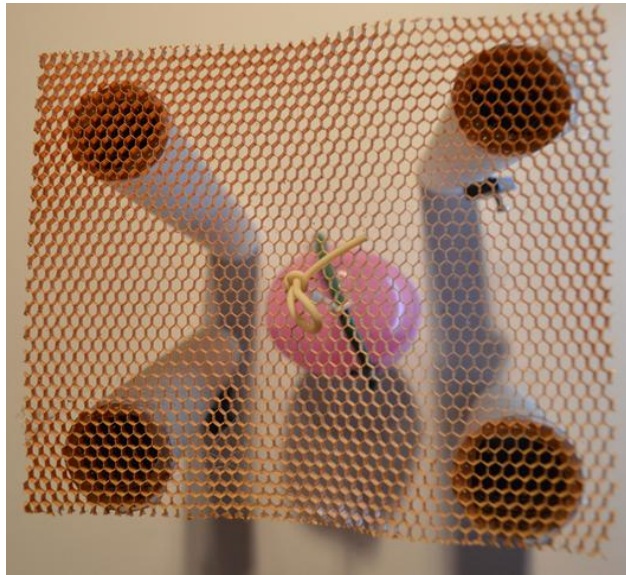
Narrative line, intuitive knowing, affection

**Material:** Paper, ink, wax paper, graphite, wire, hot glue, acrylics

**Sizes:** 25.4 x 30.48cm

## *Intuitive Knowing 2015*

These sketches were part of my mapping the narrative line of this PhD project which delivers an intuitive, authentic, and subjective understanding, and sensing of how specific processes can be employed in order to create art that embodies personal experiences of war and displacement. Inspired by the writing of the philosophers Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), David Abram (1996) and Donald A. Schön (1983), intuitive knowing was helpful in determining the course to take in mapping my memories and the way I embodied them in the artwork. It also helped determine the process of implementing and achieving active participation and sensorial perception/empathy utilising the 'beyond words' experience. Intuitive knowing helped me decipher implications that my artwork had on the audience, and to then develop the playful artefacts that encouraged the audience to participate and connect in order to help achieve 'sensorial empathy'. I came to understand that both affection towards the embodied subject and its affiliation to a place, and the sensual perception of traumatic experience, can be achieved through play within the art context.



## *State of Limbo 2015*

*Hybrid Residues series*

### **Rationale:**

Sensorial empathy,  
perception, manipulation,  
flux

**Material:** Wire, honey  
comb sheet, plastic,  
magnets, cardboard

**Sizes:** 13.97 x 10.16 x  
13.97cm

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### *State of Limbo 2015*

This study is a kind of pendulum that swings freely but is affected by the pull of magnets that are inserted both inside the open sphere and on each column surrounding it. The sphere swings to and fro, trying to reach each column. Sometimes it shakes profusely in one place, as if in a state of limbo not knowing in which direction to go.

The study embodies the sense of being in limbo, trying to reach a specific point, but prevented from doing so by factors outside your control.

I wanted the viewer to sensorially empathise with a perceptible situation of being in a state of manipulated constant flux.



## Artefact of Loss Exhibition 2015

### *Artefacts Of Loss* series

#### Rationale:

Active participation,  
marketing, value of  
lives, intersubjectivity,  
sensorial empathy

**Material:** Mixed  
media, tent with metal  
display stands, artefacts  
in bags

**Installation size:** 400 x  
400cm

[https://youtu.be/ExPt8  
bX-GuM](https://youtu.be/ExPt8bX-GuM)

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### *Artefact of Loss* - Exhibition 2015 <https://youtu.be/ExPt8bX-GuM>

The installation consisted of a number of objects packaged in clear plastic bags with labels and price tags, all displayed or hung for sale on three white metal rotary stands. The stands were placed under a white plastic tent and lit from above with florescent strip lights.

Through *Artefacts of loss* I was able to achieve 'Inquiry led active participation' which frequently relied on tacit (i.e. indirect non-verbal) communication, and intersubjectivity.

I wanted to understand ways of sensing, perceiving, and interpreting experiences which produce mutuality with the audience, and to explore new ground in the search for intersubjectivity.





## Artefact of Loss 2015

Display cabinet  
and empty bags

### Rationale:

Finished and unfinished pieces, appearance, functionality and presence

**Material:** Mixed media, tent with metal display stands, display cabinet, artefacts in bags

**Installation size:** 400 x 400cm

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### Artefact of Loss 2015 (continued)

When I first displayed my *Hybrid Residues* series, I scattered them on a table for the audience to look at or touch. I always felt that although each small artwork could stand as a finished piece in its own right, when placed together they seemed unfinished. When I placed them in plastic bags, even before I had hung them on display stands, they became what I called *Artefact of Loss* and seemed finished. The challenge was to understand why they didn't seem to be a finished piece when scattered together on the table. Taking this issue further, I took them out of the bags and placed them in a glass display cabinet which, I felt, completely changed their appearance, meaning, functionality and presence.



## *Artefact of Loss 2015*

**Display and  
empty bags**

### **Rationale:**

Touch, active  
participation, sensorial  
empathy, separation

**Material: Mixed  
media, tent with metal  
display stands,  
artefacts in bags**

**Installation size: 400 x  
400cm**

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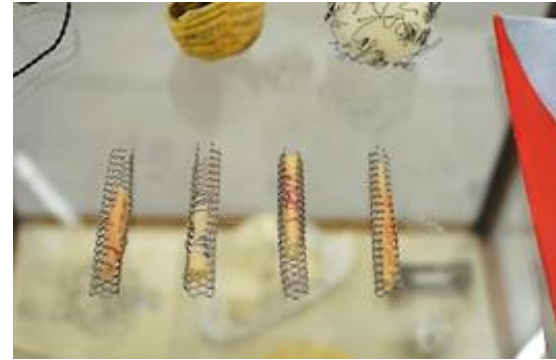
### *Artefact of Loss 2015* (continued)

After careful analysis of my colleague's feedback, I concluded that the artefacts, when shown in the glass case, had the feeling of 'do not touch'; a natural separation seemed to set in, culminating in a restrained environment lacking a certain freedom.

However, when the artefacts were placed individually in plastic bags, the feedback indicated that they begged to be touched, perceived closely and felt. From this feedback I started reflecting in more depth on the idea of sensorial empathy and how to achieve it through my art work.



a. Continuous Home



b. Bullets



c. Waiting



d. Golden Words

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### *Artefact of Loss 2015 (continued)*

When I started to make my artefacts, I began to visualise each emotion as an entity and wanted to represent and embody them in my art.

## *Artefacts of Loss 2015 (continued)*

### Display

#### Rationale:

Display, exhibited, value, intersubjectivity, sensorial empathy

**Material:** Mixed media, wire, plastic, gold leaf, wax paper, string, mesh, plaster



## *Artefact of Loss 2015*

### Display

### Rationale:

Perception, embodied,  
intersubjectivity, Touch,  
sensorial empathy,  
disconnected

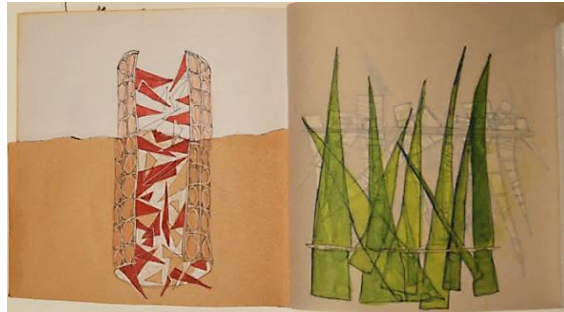
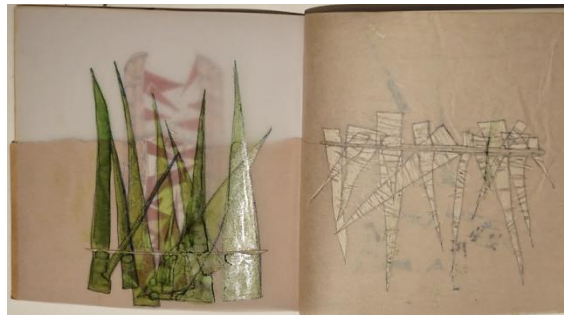
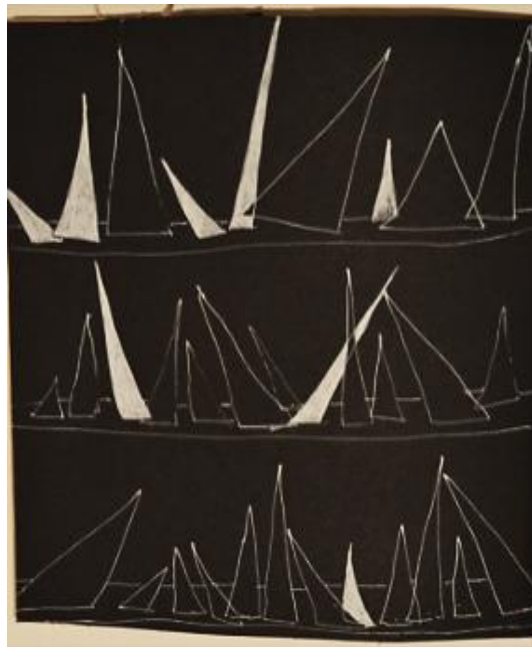
**Material:** Mixed media

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### *Artefact of Loss 2015* (continued)

When I started to utilise active participation as a method of inquiry, I created a number of small pieces, of which the unfinished nature, size, and embodied meaning of the ruinous effect of war, led to me naming them artefacts.

I wanted the viewer to sense the art in terms of the material it was made of, its texture, smells and, particularly, the size of the work and how it sat in the palm of the hand. In the initial stages of my exploration of active participation, the audience were reluctant to touch these artefacts because of the fear of destroying them.



## *Like Thorns* 2015

From *Mahkzan* series

### Rationale:

Fear, pain, dichotomy

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### *Like Thorns* 2015

This artwork embodied an emotion I had experienced during times when I was displaced in a period of conflict. The drawings describe properties of a spiky nature intertwined with a thin layer of translucent paper tracing or wax paper (strength combined with delicacy).

These combinations were purposely chosen to embody the discomfort of prolonged periods of fear derived from specific circumstances. This fear embedded itself and felt like thorns or spikes in my flesh, or like a web of sharp pain in my stomach. At other times the fear felt like frozen water trickling into my body, starting from my head and moving down to rest of my body making my body ache so much that I couldn't move. (See also appendix I - *Memoirs* p.48)

**Material:** Graphite,  
Acrylics, on assorted used  
paper

**Sizes:** 12.7 x 12.7cm



*Like Thorns*  
3D  
2015  
(continued)

Hybrid Residues  
series

**Rationale:**

Pain, un-healable,  
sensorial empathy

**Material:** Wire mesh,  
tracing paper, newspaper,  
polyurethane

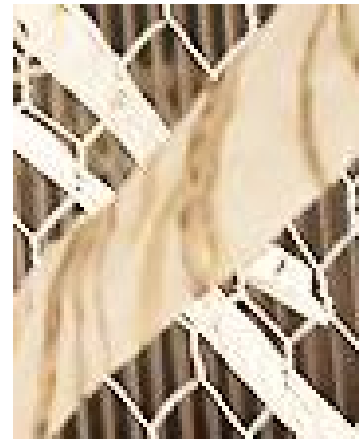
**Sizes:** 60 x 15 dia. cm

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*Like Thorns 3D 2015* (continued)

*Like Thorns 3D* is made of wire mesh, wrapped with tracing paper then coated with polyurethane to make the tracing paper become as brittle as an egg shell. I sandwiched pages of war-time Lebanese newspaper between tracing paper and again coated this with polyurethane. I cut this brittle laminate into thin wedges which were sharp and knife like. I made a small incisions in the hexagons of the wire mesh and then drove the pointed wedges through the structure.

This piece was deliberately created to embody the discomfort of the emotion of fear derived from traumatic experiences.



*Like Thorns*  
2015  
(continued)

*Hybrid Residues series*

**Rationale:**

Pain, un-healable,  
sensorial empathy

**Material:** Wire mesh,  
tracing paper, newspaper,  
polyurethane

**Sizes:** 150 x 60 dia. cm

---

*Like Thorns 2015* (continued)

The thorn like wedges were made to embody the discomfort of prolonged periods of irreversible unpleasant feelings, derived from specific circumstances. Fear was painful and embedded itself like thorns in the flesh of my body, or like a web of sharp pain in my stomach. (*Memoirs p. 48*)



## *My Skin* 2015

*From - Don't let's  
Play Pretend series*

### **Rationale:**

Alone, pain, sensorial,  
emptiness, loss

**Material:** Sellotape, cling  
film

**Sizes:** Height 160 cm

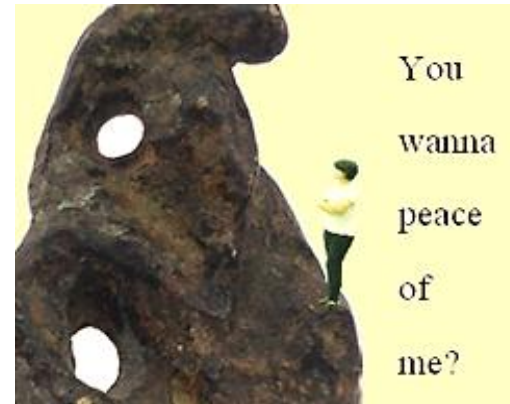
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### *My Skin* 2015

This figure was made with Sellotape which was wrapped around me in order to mimic or take on my features. To get out of the tape structure, someone had to cut the figure with scissors in a few places until I was able to get out. Being inside this structure felt restricting and suffocating, and felt like being trapped, detached and alienated.

When I came out of the figure, I felt liberated and free. The tape figure became like a skin that I had shed. Through this detached skin I wanted to express emotions I remembered most from my memories of war, particularly fear of loss of my family, and the idea of death.





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### ***Soldier - You Wanna Peace of Me 2015***

*Soldier* is a small bronze figurine (10cm tall) representing a Roman soldier which, having accompanied me on my journey out of Lebanon, acquired particular significance for me. I sense in this little soldier the embodiment of not only a lost civilization but also a shared place of origin and subsequent displacement from that place. He feels to me like a personal monument commemorating my displacement from home and my memories of family.

In *You wanna peace of me* poster, I wanted to embody this feeling of connection or affiliation that I had with the soldier. In my mind, we had an existential element of mutuality in that we were both here in the present, but displaced physically and (for me) psychologically.

***Soldier - You  
Wanna Peace  
of Me  
2015***

***Hybrid Residues  
Series***

**Rationale:**

Fear, pain, sensorial  
empathy

**Material: Poster, Bronze,  
photomontage**

**Sizes: 10 cm**



a



b

## *Memoirs* 2011-17 (appendix II)

'Existential phenomenology' (Heidegger 1953) helped me instigate a sense of embodied experience within my artwork. This philosophy, which influenced my thinking, creative processes and techniques, (along side Sartre's novel 'Nausea') also initiated the creation of my book *Memoirs* (fig. a) (Appendix II).

*Memoirs* helped me articulate my present emotions and to link them to past memories of home and childhood. I wanted the reader to sense my experiences not just through my written words, but through the way I was thinking, remembering, and touching the book I had created.

This process of recollecting past painful memories through articulating present emotions, was often useful in developing the art as a sequential autobiographical narrative.

## *Memoirs* 2011-17 (appendix II)

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### Rationale:

Longing, recollecting,

Material: Paper, plaster,  
plastic, prints

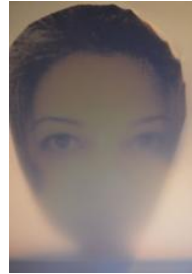
Sizes: a. A5 book  
b. Height 10cm



a. Trapped



b. Preserved



c. Close

## Trapped 2015

The idea of having *Artefacts of Loss* alienated behind the barrier of the plastic bags came from the above piece, *Preserved*. The figures hanging on the rope had my memories scribbled on them before being covered with various materials in order to preserve and protect them.

*Trapped* and *Close* talk about identity, being controlled and regimented through barriers that are transparent.

## Trapped 2015

### Hybrid Residues series

#### Rationale:

Alienated, barriers,  
sensorial empathy

Material: Wire , tracing  
paper, polyurethane,  
string, charcoal, Acrylics  
wood  
Sizes: a. Height 30cm, b.  
25.4 x 30.48cm , c. A4  
Print



## *Disconnect/ Displace 2015*

*Hybrid Residues series  
and from Don't Let's  
Play Pretend*

### **Rationale:**

Displace, reconstruct,  
pain,

**Material:** Sellotape,  
tracing paper, mallet

**Sizes:** 35cm

---

### ***Disconnect/Displace 2015***

This presentation piece (key to active participation) was designed to investigate reciprocity and intersubjectivity, and involved the merging of some of my experimental studies into a short performance. The presentation involved clay scrolls inscribed with written memories, and a small mallet. When I placed the mallet and the scrolls on the floor the audience did, intuitively, decide to participate. They approached the scrolls, touching them, examining their texture, smell, text and the material they were made of. One of the participants then picked the mallet up and smashed some of the scrolls. Following the presentation of this performance piece, feedback from the majority of the participants centred on interest in the meaning of the text and an urge to use the mallet to destroy the scrolls. The participant who destroyed some of the scrolls stated that she took this action because she felt that the scrolls represented my bad memories and thought that their destruction might alleviate the pain of those memories. Feedback from the participants suggested that they had taken part in inquiry led active participation to varying degrees and that a connection or an understanding was made with my memories of displacement embodied in the work.



## *Overwhelmed* 2014

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### Rationale:

Pain, cleansing, trying to forget, sensorial empathy

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#### *Overwhelmed* 2014 <https://youtu.be/ZGJt7sZVxm4>

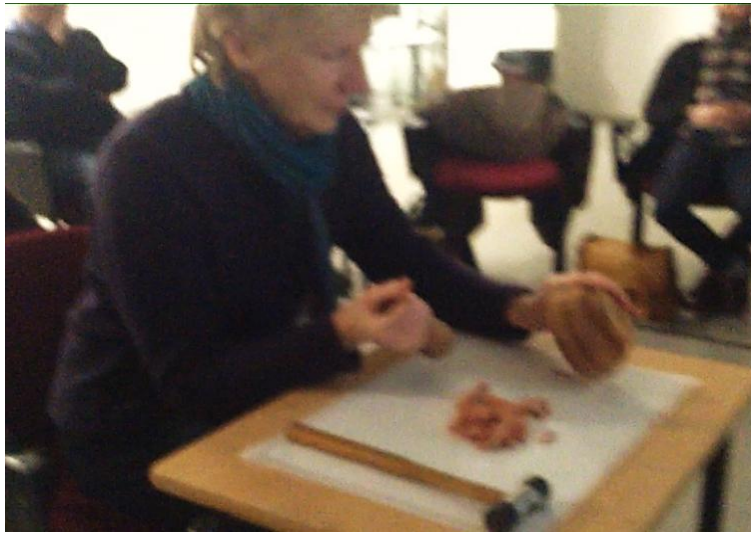
*Overwhelmed* was a video showing me washing my face with small scrolls that I had made and upon which I had written scribbled words or phrases that characterise my feelings about the war and my experience of displacement. The writing on the scrolls was spontaneously and impulsively scribbled, not focusing or concentrating on the individual words but freely recording my emotions.

In this video *Overwhelmed*, before washing my face with the scrolls, I covered my face with a sticky substance so that the scrolls would adhere to my face, appearing to hang there, reluctant to fall off. The act of washing my face with the scrolls implied a sense of being overwhelmed and submerged in the residual emotions from memories that I am unable to get free of. After completing the video, I reversed it as a gesture of my rejection of this overwhelming tide of emotions. I appear to try to peel away the residual scrolls and cleanse myself of them as one might if they were parasites, evoking a sense of a struggle to erase unwanted emotions.

**Material:** Tracing paper, cling film, news paper, ink, bowl

#### Video

<https://youtu.be/ZGJt7sZVxm4>



## *Scrolls* 2014

### *Hybrid Residues* series

#### **Rationale:**

Pain, reconstructing,  
sensorial empathy

**Material: Ceramic scrolls,  
mallet, pestle and mortar**

#### **Video**

<https://youtu.be/WORIs-yvkmI>

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**Scrolls 2014** <https://youtu.be/WORIs-yvkmI>

This video was a recording of a presentation that involved ceramic scrolls inscribed with written memories, as well as a small mallet and a pestle and mortar. Having gathered a small group of my PhD colleagues, I placed the tools with the scrolls on a table without any instructions. The group did, intuitively, decide to participate and took turns in order to examine the scrolls, or to crush them using either tool.

My experiments with active participation of the viewer have centred around the idea of the audience touching, holding, collecting and reconstructing or destroying my artefacts, both as a way of sensing and sharing my memories of experiences of displacement and also to encourage in the viewer a sense of responsibility for the issues that initiated the work.



*Calling Home*  
series  
2014 - 15

*Hybrid Residues* series

**Rationale:**

Fear, pain, sensorial  
empathy

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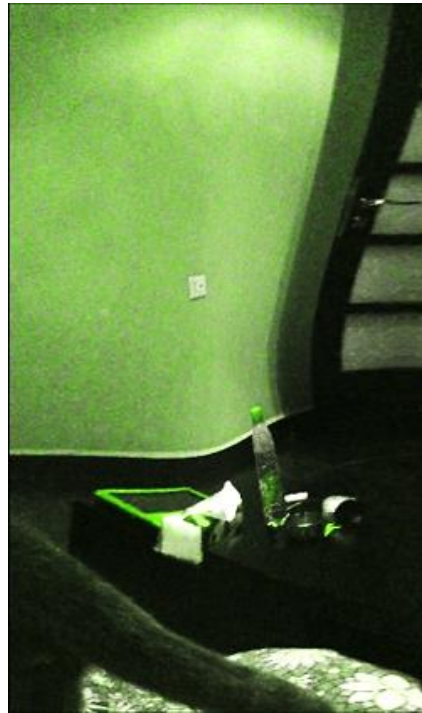
*Calling Home* series 2014 - 15 <https://youtu.be/pqHCGXMSYMI>  
<https://youtu.be/BuK5-RG0W8ERG0W8E>

In my *Calling Home* video series, I concentrated on the tone of my voice in order to achieve sensorial empathy. I wanted the tone to be affective; to embody my feelings of pain and loss, without using recognisable words, in order to eliminate perceptible languages and cultural differences. I believe that indecipherability of the language in the video makes visible the primordial human predicament, and allows for an affective engagement and, perhaps, acknowledgement pertaining to certain human expressions.

**Material: Videos**

<https://youtu.be/pqHCGXMSYMI>

<https://youtu.be/BuK5-RG0W8ERG0W8E>



## *Nausea* 2015

*Hybrid Residues series*

### Rationale:

Remembering times of war and being displaced, fear, pain, sensorial empathy

Material: Video

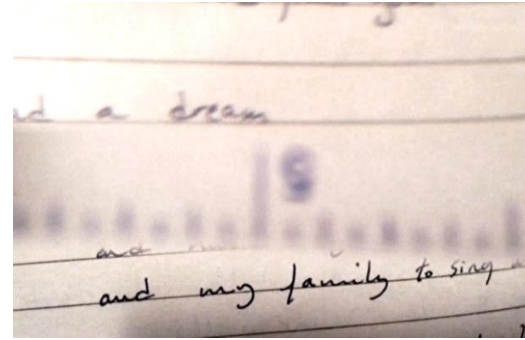
<https://youtu.be/UmOGdwloOsk>

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*Nausea* 2015 <https://youtu.be/UmOGdwloOsk>

Nausea is the feeling I get when I remember home during the war, or when I am driving through places that my family and I travelled through during evacuations and bombardments.





## *Behind Clear walls series* 2014 - 17

### *Hybrid Residues series*

#### Rationale:

Distance, mapping memories, alienation

#### Material: Video

<https://youtu.be/9nA2zOP1jOA>

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### *Behind Clear Walls series* 2014 - 17 <https://youtu.be/9nA2zOP1jOA>

The video *Behind clear walls* started as a short poem that I wrote to describe how I perceived myself fitting in amongst people from different backgrounds. I decided to make a video based on myself reading the poem in order to increase sensorial empathy with its meaning. I chose to wrap my face with waxed paper rather than standing behind a transparent wall or partition as I wanted a barrier that was almost a part of me, but still alien against my skin. *Behind Clear Walls 2* was a culmination of different short videos with the main emphasis still being on the original video of the poem, with its wax paper facial cover and the idea of alienation. My voice reading the poem is interspersed with new images. I added visual shots of the written poem juxtaposed with a 'magnifying glass' ruler, this implicating our being deliberately targeted in missile strikes. I also interspersed footage of my sister and her son playing on the beach in Tyre where I used to swim when I was a child. Feedback from my colleagues indicated a sense of anxiety and loss when they viewed my nephew running away from his mother and her turning in a distressed manner to shout to him.



Smell of home

## *Makhzan* 2011-18

### *Makhzan* series And disPLACED Exhibition

#### Rationale:

Narrative, story telling,  
senses, sensorial

Material: Tracing paper,  
card, glass, plastic

Sizes: Books:  
Suitcase:

### *Makhzan* 2011 - 18

Another example of ways of exploring the notion of connection was my sketchbook series *Makhzan* which were made of reused paper and corrugated thin card, and designed to be picked up and viewed by the audience. The lines and sketches were delicate and carried a narrative-like sequence of drawings. The drawings embodied a visual and sensorial dialogue that compelled the viewers to keep looking through the pages. When my colleagues viewed *Makhzan* they indicated a certain connection with these sketchbooks which, they felt, were telling a personal tale. I wanted them to be a chronicle to take the viewer on a silent and remote personal journey. The feedback from my peers also suggested that the sketchbooks required to be touched, felt, looked at, and investigated further. In the *Makhzan* suitcase, I added little phials, some imbued with smells that, for me, provoked anxiety such as the scents of different plastic mediums, rust, hot metal or resins; other phials were infused with friendly smells designed to give a homely, comforting feeling such as the smells of coffee, baking, incense, orange and spices all of which embody memories of happy times with family and community, gathering for food and conversation.



## *Don't Let's Play Pretend* 2018 Final Exhibition

From *disPLACED*  
Exhibition

### Rationale:

Voice, Absence, presence  
and residues

Material: Tracing paper,  
Sellotape, cling film

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### *Don't Let's Play Pretend* 2018 Final Exhibition

My final exhibition was a part of a group show called *disPLACED* which took place at P21 Gallery in London from 20th January to 10th February 2018, and was curated by Dr Aya Kasai .

The work on display consisted of mixed media installations, photography, prints, found objects, sculpture, video art, and the *disPLACED* project. Home, place, displacement and memory were the predominant elements which embodied the majority of the work on the first floor.



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***Behind Clear Walls* 2018 Final Exhibition** (continue from page 61)

*In the disPLACED exhibition, Behind Clear Walls* needed to be isolated in a separate room, where an old chair, a rug and a suitcase awaited the audience in silence. The small television screen gave a sense of intimacy and confinement, but also a sense of urgency .

***Behind Clear  
Walls* 2018  
Final Exhibition**

**From disPLACED  
Exhibition 2018**

**Rationale:**

Displaced, silence,  
urgency

**Material: Video**



*Don't Let's  
Play Pretend  
2018*  
(continued)

disPLACED Final  
Exhibition

**Rationale:**

Absence, presence and  
residues

**Material:** Sellotape, cling  
film, tracing paper, ink

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*Don't Let's Play Pretend 2018* (continued)

I chose the gallery because of its Middle Eastern (Palestinian) background. I intuitively knew that the gallery would be a place 'close' to home, not in its location of course, but in the attitude and the familiar hospitality of the gallery management. My intuition was proved correct by the cordiality extended to me by the gallery staff both whilst we installed the artwork, and also during the private view when the smell of Lebanese food, a warm and welcoming atmosphere, and their attentiveness towards the audience were very much in evidence. That was just like home.



*Don't Let's  
Play Pretend  
2018*  
(continued)

disPLACED Final  
Exhibition

**Rationale:**

Fear, pain, sensorial  
empathy

**Material:** Clay, wood,  
Sellotape

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*Don't Let's Play Pretend 2018* (continued)

On one side of the room, a circle created from the red ceramic scrolls surrounded a suitcase containing a teddy bear, in front of which lay a mallet, and a pestle and mortar. This provocative piece was asking to be destroyed or reconfigured either by being stepped on or by the use of the tools. The use of a red circle was a dichotomy of the work either being a target, or of being protected.



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### *Don't Let's Play Pretend 2018 (continued)*

My exhibition was in one large downstairs room designed to be the culmination of my PhD research project. The installation described my existential views on how to sense, or sensorially empathise with, a displaced life through art. I saw the artefacts and the installation as being toys of play pretend and as elements being presented from an absent past life. They stood in the gallery able to be seen and touched; however, more significant was the invisible element in the artefacts, the embodied meaning and essence of the artwork which mapped my lifetime experiences of displacement. The real issues were my experiences of displacement and the artefacts were only pretending to be the real issue.

*Don't Let's  
Play Pretend  
2018  
(continued)*

disPLACED  
Exhibition

Rationale:

Sensorial empathy,  
invisible element,  
displacement

Material: Clay, wood,  
Sellotape, mallet, teddy  
bear



## disPLACED Space 2018 (continued)

*Don't Let's Play  
Pretend - Series*

**Rationale:**

**Displacement, sense  
of place**

**Material: Mixed media**

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### **disPLACED Space 2018 (continued)**

The exhibition space felt provocative yet claustrophobic. The ceiling was very low and the concrete floor was dark and cold. The challenge of realising the opportunities of this demanding place was one I relished. I visualised the place as the floor plan of a house, with a number of rooms, although in reality it was a single room with only one small room intruding into it.





## disPLACED Project & Exhibition 2018 (continued)

Rationale:

Displacement,  
workshops

Material: Mixed media

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### disPLACED Project & Exhibition 2018 (continued)

This project entailed members of the public making small figures, about 15cm in height, which embodied displacement. The participants, who were of all ages, used mixed media in order to express their ideas and feelings in creating their own figure of a displaced person. Choice of place and audience was central to the project. For example, workshops were set up in a variety of venues such as community centres, university fairs, galleries, warehouses and colleges. The experience of running these workshops was astounding because we met so many people who had been displaced (physically or psychologically), and who relished the opportunity to express their emotions which disPLACED provided for them.

*Hybrid Residues*  
*Alissar McCreary*

**Hybrid Residues: Exploring experiences of  
displacement through active participation in art  
practice.**

**Appendix II**

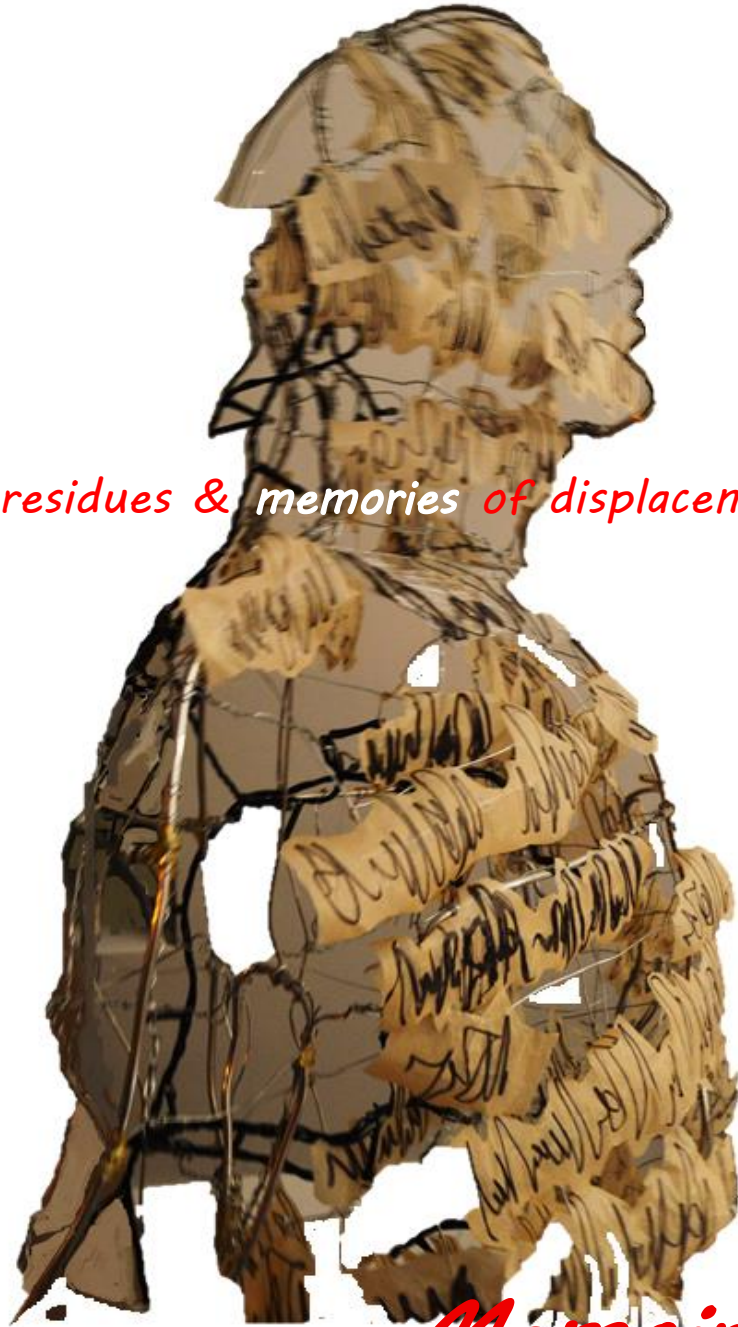
***Memoirs*: Hybrid residues and memories of  
displacement – a journal**

**Alissar McCreary**

**September 2018**

**Oxford Brookes University**

*Hybrid residues & memories of displacement*



*Memoirs*

***Memoirs***

*Hybrid Residues & Memories of Displacement*

*A Journal*

*By*

*Alissar H. McCreary*

# Hybrid Residues





*To Majida*

## *Memoirs*

### *Winter 1970*

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*On a winter evening, we heard a few unexpected knocks on our door. It was our neighbour from the flat below who had come up to alert my mother that something serious was happening outside. When we looked out to sea from the kitchen window, I remember pretty orange lights passing rapidly above the horizon. The sky was dark blue with grey clouds sweeping over my home town of Tyre, in Lebanon. I remember this particular night as being the first time I really felt awareness of an impending threat that was new to my perception and understanding. I was both fascinated with the lights and puzzled by the worried expression on my mother's face. The orange lights were missiles sent from Israel to target Palestinian militant positions in southern Lebanon, a situation beyond my comprehension at the age of three. My mother's anxious expression, on the other hand, I understood instantly, which increased my anxiety.*

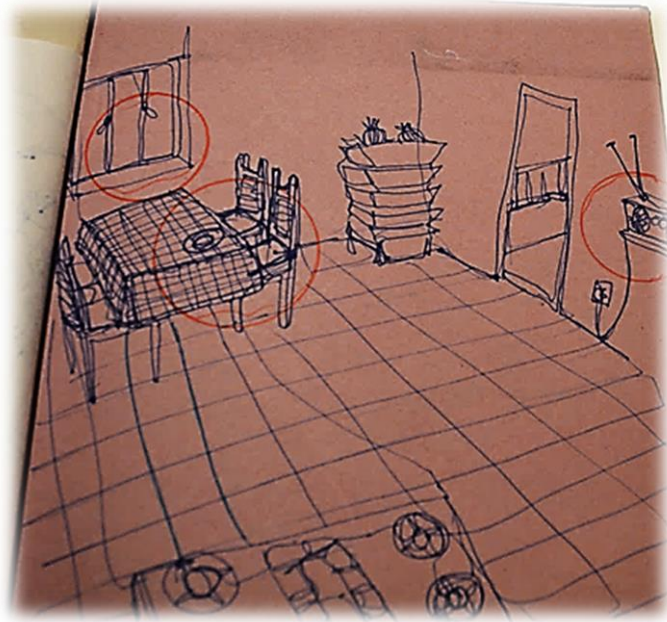


Fig. 1- Our Kitchen



*I intuitively sensed her fear and felt a great empathy for her situation. That night marked the beginning of my awareness of the terror and dread of war; which was for me, a relentless stream of memories of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (which in turn instigated the Lebanese civil war). Following the 1948 Palestine-Israel war, the expulsion of the Palestinian's from their homes and land resulted in the mass exodus known as the "Nakba" or Disaster. The displaced population began settling in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. In the 1960's and 70's, many Palestinian refugees settled in the south of Lebanon including the PLO, Fatah and other guerrilla factions. Some settled in Tyre (Sour in Arabic), my home town, a small city known for its Phoenician merchants, ancient Purple Dye industries and archaeological sites of ancient Roman and Greek ruins. The city is almost surrounded by the sea, with most of the buildings being modern, but part of it still retaining sections of ancient walls.*

*Palestinian militias eventually constructed their own settlements in southern Lebanon, and strengthened these positions in preparation to attack Israel. By the mid-seventies, the disputes over the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and the imminent possibility of a 'state within a state' escalated the situation to a secular civil war. Destruction, massacres and invasions followed.*



*Fig. 2- Tyre*

*In September 1977, the Israeli forces began their invasion of southern Lebanon after intense clashes with the Syrian backed PLO and Fatah. In 1982 Israel launched a full invasion of Lebanon reaching from the south all the way to the west of the capital Beirut.*

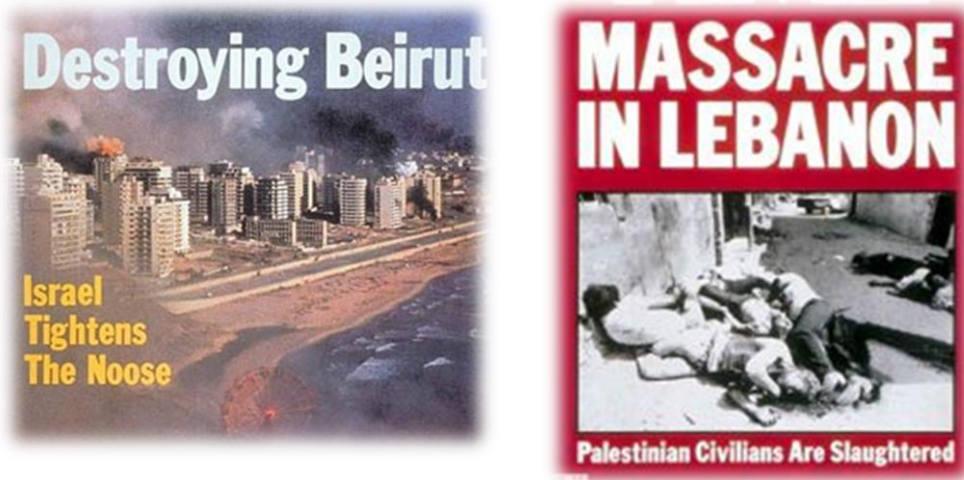


Fig. 3- Beirut during the war

*At that time the horrifying massacre of Sabra and Shatila camp was committed by the Phalangists, a Lebanese group allied to, and backed by, Israel.*

*The PLO was pushed out of Lebanon into Tunisia in 1982, from where Yasser Arafat continued to pursue a political solution for Palestine, but the trouble in Lebanon continued. With the absence of the PLO, Hezbollah assumed prominence particularly in the southern regions of Lebanon. Clashes continued between Hezbollah and Israel culminating in the 2006 conflict in which Hezbollah countered the last Israeli invasion. During these complex and prolonged Lebanese conflicts, around 90,000 civilians were killed, two thirds of the population became displaced and about 20,000 persons were kidnapped or disappeared. Lebanon's reputation as the prime example of a complex cross-sectarian coexistence in the Middle East was crushed along with much of its*

*infrastructure and a history of co-habitual trust. Violence, massacres, torture and car bombings became a routine part of daily life. One act of violence that terrorised both civilians and fighters more than any other was the revenge killings carried out by the different factions in the civil war and implemented, in road blockades and Kidnappings, entirely on the basis of sectarian identity. Subsequent attempts to produce a coherent national history from Post-war testimonials and cultural memories have proved difficult due to the divisiveness of opinions and beliefs.*



*Fig. 4- Martyrs Square, Beirut, Lebanon, 1982*

### *Wild cats roamed*

*After my family had been displaced within Lebanon many times because of the shelling and violence, my parents sent me, in 1994, to live with my uncle in the United States. On revisiting Lebanon after a year my first devastating sight of home was the half destroyed Beirut airport. As we entered the airport we were greeted with a site of ruination with many of the walls having fallen in. Wild cats roamed freely within, a mountain of uncollected suitcases piled up in the entrance way being ruined by their faeces. The stench was overwhelming and haunting. My father collected me from the airport and we set out to join the family in Sidon, in the south of Lebanon.*

*The roads, buildings and bridges were mostly destroyed, many full of holes and littered with debris. The journey was painfully long. The beautiful cypress trees that once lined the entrances to many towns were cut down and birdsong seemed absent. Above all, the people, including my father, seemed tired and silent. Having spent a year outside my war torn country, it felt as though I had come to perceive it differently than before I left. Home, land and people became landmarks in my memories of the past, which I found I needed to hold on to strongly in order to feel that I belonged and that I existed. These landmarks live in my mind like a pile of scattered artefacts, or like the suitcases lying in the airport, divided and disconnected from their owners and their past. My visit to Lebanon in that year, 1985, although only lasting ten days, had a huge impact on me psychologically. In those ten days I witnessed the enormous changes that had occurred while I was out of the country. These included new borders to the Israeli occupied territories, curfews, a continuous flux of Israeli tanks and arms, regular ambush incidents by the PLO, constant power cuts, contaminated drinking water due to the destruction of sewage systems, and a shortage of food. On the day I was returning to the States, my father gave me a little memento, a small bronze soldier.*



*Fig. 5- Sypris Trees, Tyre*

*He had found it in the sea years ago when he was scuba diving in the shallow waters of Tyre, in a pool which the locals call the 'sunken city'. Tyre, as a port city, had endured numerous earthquakes, wars and invasions which caused its almost continuous destruction and rebuilding, ultimately leading to many sites containing ruins and artefacts dating back through many centuries. The city still contains ruins left by a number of colonising powers such as the Egyptians, Romans, Greeks and Babylonians, often overlaying the original Phoenician city.*

*On successive visits, my father would show me his collection of mementos and artefacts retrieved from the pool of the 'sunken city', many dating from these earlier civilisations. They included miniature terracotta Amphora and oil lamps, pieces of statuettes, beads and simple jewellery, often broken but many of which were exquisitely worked and all of which fitted comfortably in the palm of my hand.*



*Fig. 6- Soldier*



***Loss***

*As a child, I was greatly affected by the upheaval inflicted upon my family by the war. Whilst I was inevitably aware of the physical destruction around us, it is the psychological effects of fear, emptiness, disorientation, alienation, lack of freedom and displacement that have left a more lasting impression on me. Above all, the feeling of loss and disconnection as the result of the conflict and the war has always burned fiercely within me.*

*My artwork became the embodiment of these experiences of conflict and displacement.*



Fig. 7- September 1984

*The suitcase that I carried with me, when I left home in 1984 at the age of sixteen, was a sea blue one made by Samsonite. I also carried a cream colour fabric shoulder bag and my mother's old brown handbag. These, became my companions on my journey to Beirut, and then on to the USA. The bags contained the only few possessions that I had brought with me from home.*

*It was a Sunday afternoon in September 1984 when my father telephoned from Beirut to inform me that my plane flight to America would be either on Tuesday or Thursday. I had to leave promptly on Monday morning. My mother scrambled to pack a few belongings for me. She tried to persuade me to stay but I*

*was determined not to disappoint my father, who wanted me to go to America to continue my education under the care of his brother. The war was intense in the south of Lebanon, and we were continuously missing school because of being displaced. My mother had frantically attempted to run away with us between bombardments and often managed to relocate us to safer places. We were three siblings; I was the eldest, my brother was eight and my sister just two years old. My mother's nerves were deteriorating and my father, who was an art teacher, tried his best to send us to safety, which placed a huge financial pressure on him. The morning after my father's phone call, I said good bye to my mum and my siblings, and was driven by a neighbour to a nearby town to catch the bus to Beirut.*



*Fig. 8- September 1984*

*When I got on the bus and sat down I felt very lonely and found myself hanging on tight to my mother's handbag which I held close to my heart. The bus stopped half way between my home and Beirut. There were hundreds of people waiting stranded at that spot because of the intense fighting in the capital which had prevented them from entering the city. It was an extremely hot day, the sky was beautifully clear in the morning but later turned very hazy; the ground was white with dust and the wind swirled restlessly around us. There I stood with my blue suitcase and my two bags watching the chaotic scene of the Israeli army on one side, pilgrimage buses from Mecca on the other side, and crowds of people, many being women and children trying to shelter from the sun. Sounds and noise were muffled because of the wind, and the day felt quite surreal. I was supposed to meet my father at this point but there was no sign of him. It was dusk when the cars started moving towards Beirut and eventually I was offered a ride which I bravely accepted and for which I was very thankful. A few hours later I arrived in Beirut to be reunited firstly with my uncle, who was a General in the Lebanese army, and then with my father.*



*Fig. 9- On the Other Side*

*My trip to America was long and very emotional but my mother's bags offered me solace and consolation. For a long time after my departure from Lebanon, I continued to use my mother's bags and made sure that my blue suitcase was always in sight in my bedroom. These three objects were my only physical connection to my mother and family; touching them and keeping them close brought me comfort and kept alive the hope that one day I would be back home with my family again.*

*Recently I was reading an article on exile which made me think back to the time when I left home. The article reminded me that at that time I was thinking mostly of the geographical*

*obstacles that I was going to face, and the distance between myself and my mother, rather than the idea of exile itself. My trip felt temporary and unreal.*



*Fig. 10- Golden Words*

## January 2013

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*Today, as I sat in the Garage waiting for my car to be repaired, I thought of a new idea for my sculpture which I labelled *Written Scaffolding*. I visualized it as being an installation consisting of a body of written work, (descriptions, events, poems, reflections, or scribbling), physically piled up together to form a structure, or scaffolding. I envisaged it being a large book with the pages being separated and the words scattered on both the inside and the outside. I wanted to use clay for the structure to give it a warm, solid and earth like quality, sheets of gold leaf to reflect the precious value of the written material, and a layer of varnish or lacquer to protect and preserve it. The book would communicate my belief that imminent shifts and changes are beginning to take place in the world that I believe it is important we should observe and pay attention to. The information within will be my predictions of future wars and losses based on presently unfolding events and historical cycles of war. Scattered words that have fallen out of the book, will embody loss, instability and uncertainty. The use of wax paper will accentuate the delicate and fragile parts of the structure as against the strong and dark clay, whilst the lacquer will be a protective clear layer.*

*I am dreaming about my art projects again, but all I end up doing every day is worrying about the people in my life, particularly my*

*family. The fear of loss that is constantly in my mind makes the future unpredictable and unforeseen, regardless of my predictions.*



*Fig. 11- Silence 1*

*The losses that I encountered during my childhood because of the war in Lebanon remain present and alive in my mind. Living through a war, being displaced on numerous occasions, and then being sent away by my parents to live in America instilled in me a feeling of alienation. I feel that I spend most of my time alone, even when I teach, mentor, chat to my colleagues, talk to my family on the phone or see my husband at weekends. I feel alone and distant from all the people around me even as I talk to them. This feeling of being alone affects my behaviour and the*



*way I relate to the outside world and other individuals. I believe it causes in me a kind of existential, perceptual or social decomposition. When my colleagues are laughing and joking at work I can seldom find the reason for their laughing. Of course it is sometimes simply a problem of translation but at other times I just can't find the funny side of their jokes. I often feel that I live in a different dimension from those around me. I've tried to analyse my feelings of being in a different dimension from others but the only explanation I can think of is a feeling of guilt. I have a constant feeling of guilt because I am safe in another country, outside of the war zone in my homeland, whilst my parents are not.*



*Fig. 12- Silence*

*When I was sent to America at the age of sixteen, my whole family was still living under a state of siege with violent bombardment and indiscriminate shelling and shooting. Why should I be safe and happy when they are not? Why can I walk to the shop, or go to school, return home to eat a meal and go to bed without jumping from fright or running to safety from bullets or fighter planes flying over my head? Now I have a normal life, I don't seem to know how to live it. It seems upside down.*

*From this sense of alienation and living in a different dimension came a series of sketches and sculptures which I named *Silence*. I first produced a series of sketches for *Silence* (Fig. 11, 12), from which I developed *Silence* 3D wire maquettes (Fig. 13) of a person carrying an umbrella, a cat watching and looking down on the other side of a see-through floor, and a bird standing near the cat. When viewers look down on the maquette, will they feel the silence? Is it because they are under the surface? Is it because they are on the other side? I am in bed now, tired at the end of the day, but before I fall asleep I want to mention that I have been reading 'Nausea' by Sartre. I am on page 28 so far and I feel that the novel strongly describes me!*



Fig. 13- *Silence 3D*

### ***Past blending into present***

*I'm in bed and ready to sleep but I need to reflect on today's events first. I had to have a scan this morning at the John Radcliffe Hospital. I walked through the same wards, corridors, and staircases that I've been to many times over the past seven years. As I walked through these places I felt quite unsettled and queasy. I was remembering everything again, but today I felt that I was a different person from the one that walked through these places over the past seven years. I don't even see myself as the same person in the mirror. The clock seems to have stopped somehow or somewhere over the past year or so. I can't find myself. The world seems empty and still.*

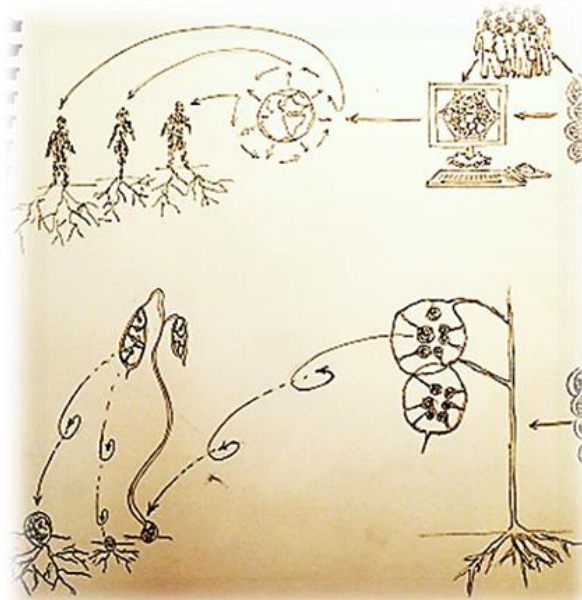


Fig.14- The Hybrid

*I feel that past events have occupied my body and I've become just a biological entity lacking its spirit.*

*Reflecting on certain events, thoughts and feelings has become crucial for my PhD project, and gives me a comprehension of the connection between my memories and my artwork. Everyday events, whether mine or others, feed and help build the details of my Hybrid residues series (my memories). The invisible web of communication between all creatures marks existence. If we all existed but did not communicate, would life be the same? Would people still feel that they existed if they didn't talk to each other or do things together? What if our vocabulary was limited*

to only ten words which we used continually to communicate with each other?

Would that stop us from achieving as much? Would it make us communicate less? If I recorded messages to myself, listening to them at different times without contacting others, would I feel content with my existence? I am still building on an earlier idea, that of communication becoming overwhelming and causing an individual to swell up with all the thoughts, words, news and feelings he is bombarded with, eventually exploding and becoming an entity of pure communication, shedding the skin it no longer needs. This idea led to another chain of ideas, that of Seed Pods carrying their DNA data and spreading it far and wide from its initial roots. These seed pods contain communication DNA, traces of words and thoughts. As small sculptures or objects, can these pods promote/prompt active participation of the viewer?



Fig. 15- Sensorial

### *A grain of sand*

*I am reading 'Nausea' again in bed, very tired. My mind keeps thinking about the PhD meeting I had earlier this evening, even as my eyes are still reading the words. My eye caught a word which made me go back and read the same sentence again to make sense of it, a sentence that fits with the thinking of my PhD project. I have also just noticed that my hand writing points to the right as I begin a sentence, then points back to the left as I finish the sentence. I need to talk about my project which I've been working on at the end of each week and thinking about every day. It is all around me, in my head, in my eyes, ears, veins, in my heart. It is all around me like the sand on the beach, but like the sand on the beach when I try to hold it in my hand it falls through my fingers. I need to be able to grab it and hold it. I liked some of the ideas in tonight's seminar, the sound of our heart through our bones (amplified heartbeats from a stethoscope), and a video of someone building a box in silence in a beautiful garden, in black and white. Nature, just watching it, the way the leaves and the trees sway gently from side to side with the wind. Watching it makes me feel like I am back in the cradle, secure, content, belonging, excited, happy, hopeful and at home. I want more of it. Even when I watched it in black and white, in silence, I felt good. Nature is poetry and rhythm. I read it, I feel it, and I belong to it. It is my teacher; it is my parent and my hero. I wish I could see how our human energy (talk, thoughts, mood, and noise), the invisible things about us*

*that we can't see with our eyes, are affecting nature. But  
maybe I don't really want to see that.*



*Fig. 16 Silence*

## November 2015

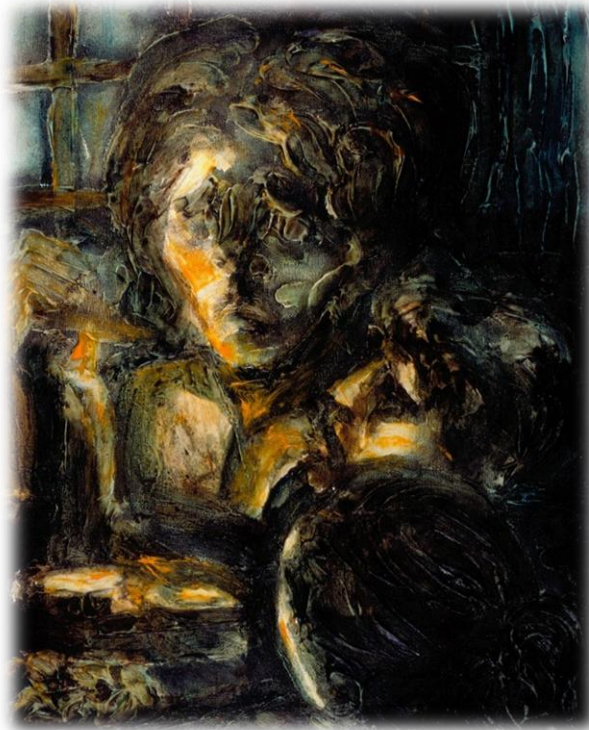
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### *Mountains of bread*

*I'm always a few minutes late to staff development days, only because I think they should start a little bit later in the morning than regular teaching time. I suppose my lateness is a form of rebellion! However, as usual I went into the cafeteria to get a drink and something to eat. The Principal had started her speech, so I got a cup of tea and a pastry and sat down at the back. One of my colleagues came in all happy and full of hugs and kisses, then informed me that she would be running one of the workshops for us; I remember thinking that's not great!! But it went really well. The reason I'm writing this recollection is because of something that happened at lunch time which reminded me of times when my family and I were displaced because of Israeli bombardment. After running around from one workshop to another every 45 minutes, lunch time came and we were so tired and hungry. As we walked to the cafeteria to stand in a very long queue, someone leaving the cafeteria mentioned that lunch consisted of just soup and bread. I laughed in disbelief; I thought, we've never had only that before, so why would we now? As we got to the food area, the loud noise of everyone chatting and laughing became subdued, almost to the point of silence.*



*Everyone started whispering. There were mountains of bread and huge pots of very hot soup and on the side there were muffins. Reality hit! We really were going to have just bread and soup. I felt depressed, not only because we didn't have a variety of food (as we usually did), but because this reminded me of the war time at home in Lebanon. When electricity was cut off for days because of the bombing, we were not able to use the refrigerator. We had to eat hard bread and a dried out type of cheddar cheese when we were not able to go to the shop for fresh food.*



*Fig. 17- Dinner*

*I remember one night we were so hungry that my mother was determined to cook something for us despite the fact that there was no electricity or gas to use for cooking. To the amusement and astonishment of my brother and me, mama poured alcohol on a piece of cotton wool then placed it in a little pot and lit it with a match. She cracked an egg into a frying pan and held it over the flames for a few minutes. And there it was! The wonderful aroma of hot fried eggs for dinner. We were so happy and thought that she would be our hero forever. I never thought about her anxieties, trying to protect and feed two children on her own whilst having to run away all the time. We seemed to adapt quickly and do what we were supposed to do.*

*Going back to the staff day, I looked at the silent people around me. They were holding their paper cup of soup with both hands near their mouth and just staring. The activity felt out of context! Some people were trying to eat so fast, dipping their bread in the soup and putting it in their mouths then scraping the soup cup with their spoon in the hope of getting every last drop. I was reminded of scenes in war documentaries where people sat eating quietly in a sad and hopeless situation. Although the college setting and the lecturer's clothing were nothing like those of war time, the café, and the mood and the atmosphere were chillingly similar!!*



Fig. 18- Tea - Don't let's Play Pretend

***Reminded her of 'wood shavings'***

*Lecturers from the art department decided that they wanted to spend their second day of the staff development learning new drawing techniques. At first, I wasn't going to join in but then decided that maybe I should! I have never really talked about my art with my colleagues. On the few occasions when we have talked about art it seemed that they were mostly concerned with the techniques and processes rather than the essence of the*

artwork. To me, techniques and processes were the vehicle to the essence, or the structure/skeleton of the essence. Anyway, I suppose I didn't want to seem to be this isolated person again. I didn't know what to take with me to the session, whether I should take sketchbooks, drawings, paintings, 3D pieces? So I didn't take anything except my sketchbook. When the time came to talk about ourselves and our artwork, I asked to make my presentation at the end. While others were presenting, I was still thinking and worrying about what to introduce. The night before, I was working on my PhD project and had made a hand full of wax paper scrolls with writing and markings on them. These little scrolls were still in my pencil bag. When my turn came, I started by introducing my background and explaining how I ended up in England, and then explained my PHD project. While I was doing this, I remembered the scrolls, so I got them out of my pencil bag. Momentarily interrupting my presentation, I put the scrolls in the hand of the person next to me and asked them to try to remember the first thing that came to mind when they felt and heard the scrolls.



Fig. 19- Scrolls

*The scrolls were passed from one person to the next whilst I continued my presentation. Everyone seemed quite genuine when they explained how they felt when they held the scrolls. My initial anxiety was soon replaced by relief and surprise at the sincerity of the feedback I got. I was pleasantly shocked at the level of empathy my audience felt for the little artefacts I had shared with them. The person who held the scrolls first was the person I thought most likely to make fun of what I was introducing. To my surprise she was quite serious when asking if the scrolls had religious writings inside, or if they had any religious connotations. People held the scrolls as if they were very precious and apologized when a scroll fell on the floor. One person became particularly emotional when she held the scrolls and had to leave the room. Later she told me that the feeling of the scrolls and the noise they made reminded her of when she was little and used to help her dad in his workshop. The scrolls*

reminded her of wood shavings. So how did the reaction of my colleagues to the scrolls develop so quickly, and why? Later, I created much larger size scrolls to see if size has something to do with the intrigue. I wanted to see if an increase in the size of the scrolls would produce a corresponding increase in their impact on an audience. When I showed the two different sizes of scroll to my PhD colleagues, they were actually more intrigued with the small scrolls and paid much less attention to the larger size. My husband thought that the larger scrolls had a very different feel being more like structural objects. To most people, this larger size of scroll still conveyed some religious connotation.

People were more interested in the smaller scrolls because they could hold them in their hands, making the relationship of the viewer and the artefacts closer and more intimate, as if they became a part of each other, or became as one. By touching, feeling and seeing they come to know each other, they come to both exist together in close proximity.



Fig. 20- Overwhelmed

***I must be dysfunctional..!***

*It was amazing talking to my second supervisor. I've come up with so many ideas since my meeting with her, but I need to write them down. When I left our meeting and was walking back to my car, I was still thinking about her words, and the questions our conversation raised. Life seemed very serious and complicated, and I could even feel my facial expressions becoming very tense!*

*Before I reached my car, I noticed a man on his bike. He was waiting at the barrier to get out of the car park with a big smile on his face! Even as he cycled away, with cars careering all around him, he was still wearing a broad smile! How could he do that? I would have been so terrified riding a bike with all this traffic*

coming at me. I remember thinking to myself: *I must be missing something in life.* I thought that perhaps I must be dysfunctional in some way! Anyway, I kept walking but I stopped thinking about my life, my art, my project, where I was, and where I was going, and started to notice my surroundings. Because of the bike man I started noticing what other people were doing, how they were walking, cycling, driving, talking and so on. Then, as I approached my car, I walked past a set of traffic lights. The lights turned red and the cars stopped. Between the cars was another cyclist, a girl, who sat on her bike looking very relaxed and comfortable, her long hair swaying gently in the breeze. Leaning to one side of her bike, with her bright white shirt and blue shorts, she looked like a mermaid. I envied her serene look and poetic stance amidst the chaos of rush hour traffic, a quiet beauty amidst the frenzy of modern life.

This reminded me of one night when I was in bed and heard the dogs outside running and barking. I heard footsteps, then machine guns started going off outside. I was 16, in Beirut and sleeping at my dad's friend's house because the next day I was supposed to fly to the US. I was feeling very sad as I had left my mum, my baby sister and my little brother three days earlier, and at that moment I was also feeling frightened as I heard the men in the house preparing their guns. I could see their silhouettes on the wall in front of me; they were looking out of the window with the moonlight shining outside, clothing the room in blue and silver light. The blood in my veins froze, I couldn't move. My limbs were cold and painful; they felt stiff as if they would break if I moved. This lasted for a few minutes until someone came over



*and talked to me. They hurriedly explained the situation and asked me not to move and to get down on the floor if they had to fire from the windows. I felt sick in my stomach. I didn't have my family with me anymore but I was still in Lebanon, my home. At that moment I felt that I had travelled so far and been away for so long.*

## **December 2016**

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*Not a good day, not a successful day. I feel like I am walking in the shadows where no one can see me. I'm deafened by the loud noise of the wrong in the world around me. This feels like a situation that keeps happening to me, like in 'Ground Hog Day'. I can't get rid of it, and I don't see it coming. I feel like I'm always living behind clear walls, I'm on one side and everyone else is on the other. Just when I think I've got through to the other side of the wall and I'm being seen and heard by others, I disappear behind the clear walls again. How long will this continue to happen? Even so, isolated on my own side of the wall, I'm still thinking about my ideas, my art, my PhD.*

*My PhD seminars, which take place every Monday evening, have started to take on the sense of a game or a puzzle in which I attempt to organize and make sense of these feeling of isolation and displacement which have had such a pervasive impact on my life ever since I became a refugee in Lebanon. Displacement has represented itself in my art in so many ways and forms of late. I'm drawn to the idea of a sculpture that consists of fragments of objects with drawings within those fragments.*



*Fig. 21- Shedding skin*

*The first time I saw missiles flying in the sky I was about three years old. The neighbours came up to our house and were talking to my mum in the kitchen. The conversation sounded serious. Then one of them shouted "look, there's another one". It was dark outside, but we were able to see a reddish orange light shooting across the horizon in the sky. I thought it was fireworks and ran to the window to see if there were more. The missiles were fired from Israel at the next city along from us in the south of Lebanon. We couldn't hear them explode, but we could always hear when they were fired.*

### **Childhood**

*We lived on the third floor of a six story apartment building. My best friend lived on the sixth floor. We used to play with his matchbox cars when we were at his house, and play cowboys and Indians when he came to my apartment. I was also very close to my cousins, my mum's sister's children, who lived about a block away from us. My second cousin was my best friend, and she lived about three blocks from us. During the holidays, we used to put on new clothes and shoes, and then my mum would take us to visit my cousins. My aunts and uncles gave us money during the holidays. My cousins and I used to go to the fair to buy ice cream and go on the swings. My best friend and cousin (Souha) was not allowed to go to the fair; her family were wealthy upper class and wouldn't go to just any public celebration. My dad was*

*an artist, and an art teacher at a public girl's school in Sidon. He was also a part time lecturer in art at a university in Beirut.*

*During the early part of my childhood I remember sitting quietly watching him paint for many hours in silence, and the same with my mum as she was an artist too. She taught art history at a school in Tyre where we lived, but stopped teaching when she had her first child, me.*



Fig. 22- Don't Let's Play pretend

### *Yellowy orange light*

*I was about four years old and sleeping in my bed when, in the middle of the night, my mum picked me up and started walking nervously back and forth in the corridor between our bedrooms. I thought I was dreaming at first but when my mum kept telling me not to be scared I realized that something was wrong. I asked her what was wrong but she was not making sense. The only thing I understood was when she pointed to the orange lights outside. There was no loud noise, no shooting, no bombing, only the orange lights in the black sky and a sort of muted humming*

noise. My dad didn't know what was going on either. My mum decided to put me in the bathtub with my pillow and blanket so that I could sleep there. The thought of sleeping in the bathtub was not nice, I just wanted to go back to bed, but during the war bathrooms and bathtubs were considered the safest places in the house during bombings.

When the fighting escalated, we all went down to the lower level apartments and hid in the corridors and bathrooms there.

Many times when the situation worsened still further, we had to pick up just a few essentials items, put them in plastic bags and run.

I felt really bad for my mum when my brother was born as the fighting was intensifying at that time and we had to run away and come back continuously. I remember that on one occasion she was changing his nappy when the Israeli fighter planes started an attack. She quickly picked up my brother, took my hand and started running down stairs to the neighbour's house, but I had to stop her on the way down because I realized that in her panic she was carrying my brother upside down. I remember the air raids being very intense and frightening, knocking us off balance so we would fall down. Some of the missiles hit next to the building where we lived and the pressure wave would throw us a few feet against each other or against the wall. I remember once being thrown against the wall then on the floor where the rest of the children piled up on top of me. I thought then, that they might have been badly injured, but they only had shattered glass hit them. Sometimes the pressure of the missiles exploding close by

*used to affect our hearing for a while. I also remember, when I was seven, a nice summer with warm sweet air, beautiful music, dancing and laughter. My family all went around visiting each other, talking, laughing, enjoying good food, and even*

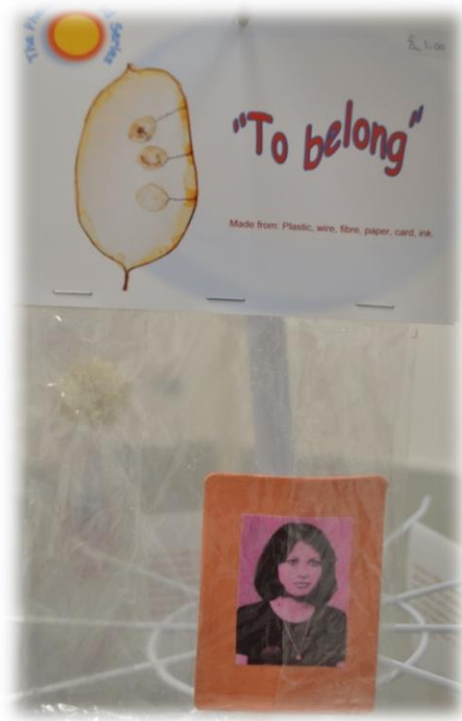


Fig. 23- Aunt Huda

*teaching me how to cross stich and knit. One night I heard my mum talking to her younger sister trying to convince her not to go to Beirut as the civil war was intensifying there. My aunt Huda was studying for her university degree in English literature*

*as well as teaching English. She was like an older sister to me. When she had her university breaks, she used to come and stay with us and give me lessons in English and Maths.*

*Disregarding my mum's advice, my aunt Huda and her sister in law ended up going back to Beirut despite knowing how dangerous the situation was. Later that week, my mum asked me to put on the radio while she was cooking in the kitchen. There was news of renewed bombing in Beirut, followed by Red Cross messages giving the names of those who had been injured in the bombing and calling on their families to come and donate blood. They called parents and families from all over Lebanon. Then I heard my aunt and her sister in law's names, and the Red Cross calling on my uncles to come to donate blood to save their lives. I alerted my mum about the announcement of my aunt's name, but she didn't believe me until the Red Cross repeated their calls. My mum was shocked and stunned; she didn't believe what she heard. Then neighbours came and confirmed the news. My uncle contacted my mum and said that they were going to Beirut to help. This was a very long day. My mum took my brother and me to one of her friends and left us there because she didn't want us to see what was going on with the family. But I couldn't stay away, and decided to pick up my brother and walk home. My aunt and my uncle were not back from Beirut yet, and my mum was not at all happy with me coming back home. She was too upset to take care of us that day, so she decided to put my brother with our next door neighbours and told me to stay either in the kitchen or the bed room. The house filled up with people, all upset and anxious. Most of them stood on the*





Fig. 24- Purge

*balcony waiting for my uncle's car to come back, bringing my aunt and her sister in law home alive and well. At about 6pm they arrived and everyone looked down quietly to see who would get out of the car. My uncles got out with their heads bowed and hands over their eyes. My aunt Feryal, who had gone with them to help, also got out of the car, crying, but no one else appeared.*

*My mum yelled down "where is Huda", "where did you leave her"... but there was no reply from down stairs. While all this was happening, I sneaked between all these people and looked down from the balcony. I was trying not to let my mum see me there as I was not supposed to witness all this. I ran back to the kitchen. The bell rang and the front door opened; there was some talking but I couldn't really hear what was being said but*

*then the crying started. I felt cold and alone. I realised that my aunt had died. I cried on my own in the kitchen. I wanted to be with my mum, to hug her and comfort her, but I was not allowed. About an hour later every one left except for my mum and my two aunts, Feryal and May. My aunt Feryal found me crying in the kitchen. She talked to me for a bit then took me where my mum and her sister were sitting in the formal living room. My mum could not speak to me; she just went to bed that day and stayed there without eating or drinking for a several days.*

*My mum is the eldest out of all her siblings. When she was seven or eight years of age, her father suffered a ruptured appendix and died. Her mother had to leave, and went to her parents house taking the youngest child with her, but was not allowed to take the rest of her children. She had six children, four girls and two boys. When she left, my mum, the eldest daughter, was 7 or 8, and her sister Huda, the youngest, was not even a year old. They were brought up by one of their aunts for a couple of years, but were split up between different uncles and aunts after that. Because of this, my mum always felt that she had to keep an eye on all her siblings even though she was not able to keep them together.*

*My aunt's death hit my mum very hard and she changed noticeably afterwards.*



Fig. 25- Disconnect/Displace

### *I blame the war*

*Another unfortunate incident was to occur later in that same year. My mum decided to go north to see my grandparents, her in-laws. She invited her sister Feryal to travel with her. I still remember that day as my mum seemed more herself. We were traveling in a car driven by my dad's uncle, stopping to buy fresh fruit and water on the way. One of the fruits we ate was fresh figs and I still remember their smell, colour and taste. My aunt couldn't stop saying how good they were, and as we went on in the car everyone seemed to actually be happy for a change. I sat in the back next to my aunt who had my brother on her lap. My mum was in the front passenger seat with my uncle driving. We were very close to Baalbek, our destination, when my uncle*

pointed out where the Syrian army was (at that time, in the seventies, Syria was fighting Israel on Lebanese land). As my uncle was pointing a car stopped ahead of us and started reversing. My uncle was too busy talking. I saw what was happening but did not have time to say anything before we collided with the back of that car. My mum's head went into the dashboard, into the radio and her seat collapsed onto her. My aunt was thrown from the back of the car, over the top of my mum's seat and out through the wind screen. She was not moving. My uncle's chest hit the steering wheel, I hit my face on the back of his seat, and when I looked down I found my brother, unharmed on the floor of the car. I picked him up; he was nearly two years old.

People gathered and my uncle took my brother from me, then an ambulance came, taking my aunt first as she had a head injury and was unconscious.

Paramedics tried carefully to remove my mum's head from the dashboard. She was awake, her eye lid was hanging over her eye and her upper lip was split to her nose. She was bleeding badly. Someone offered to take my brother and I, with my mum, to hospital and so that's what happened. All the while she was asking me about her face and I was trying to describe to her what I could see. We got to the hospital where a team of paramedics received her and took her to the operating room. They checked my uncle and released him after a few minutes. My brother and I were taken to my grandparents' house in Baalbek where we stayed for a few weeks. We visited my mum in the hospital a few days

after the accident. I remember being shocked when I saw her. Her face and head were wrapped in white bandages like a mummy. I was able to see one of her eyes and her bottom lip. She couldn't talk and could only drink from a straw with difficulty.

I had almost lost my mum and her sister, it was one sad thing after another, and I blamed it on the war!

I don't remember my dad being with us much at this time. In my mind I remember him in glimpses. He was teaching and painting all the time; that was his life. It was my mum who had to move from one place to another, with two children at first, and later with three. Both of my siblings were born during the war. Even so, I remember some good times with our family before the war got really bad. My sister was born during the bombardments when East Beirut was fighting West Beirut during the civil war in Lebanon. The Lebanese people, having differences of opinion over the Palestinian situation, started killing each other and destroying our county. Of course this is putting it very simply, but one can complicate issues to the point of being beyond comprehension, or, simply state the bare facts.

Whenever we ran off with my mum our world seemed was very small; it consisted of only me, my mum and my siblings. We didn't know the towns we moved to, we didn't know the people, they were often of different religions (that made it more interesting, it didn't bother me or my mum), but they sometimes spoke with a different dialect which made communication a little difficult. But moving away from home because of the bombing and ending up living in the mountains

didn't seem as hard as moving to another country. It was as if somehow your body knew you were still on your own soil, in your own land. More immediate difficulties were coping without food, medicine and clothes. We lived in a rented house, the rent being discounted because we were refugees, but my father was still in the south living in our own house and trying to go to work whenever he could. He was an art teacher, and teachers were still being paid by the government so that was a plus for us but of course my father now had to pay two lots of rent, so money was short to say the least. School was hard for my brother and I because we spoke differently and we were new. Because we moved so much we were behind in our schooling and ended up not doing well. We struggled to fit in at first but after a few months we were able to make friends. The climate was another struggle for us. It was bitterly cold in the mountains, always snowing and freezing and we didn't have the appropriate clothes at first. Even when we got the right clothes we seemed to feel the cold more than everyone else because we were from the southern coastal area, which has a warmer climate. Somehow, even after three years of living there, a village in the mountains still didn't feel like home. All our family were scattered in the mid-northern region of the country. There was always a sense of living a temporary existence, a sense that we would soon move again. But in a way even what had once been home, remained home only in the mind because after being away for a few years everything had changed; the town, the people, the situation, even we had changed. We never went back to our old home again. My dad

*cancelled the lease and moved closer to where his work was, in Sidon.*

*The fighting and bombing finally caught up with us in the mountains. I was older then, about 13. My perception and understanding of the war had become more serious. I was going through changes in my body, extra hormones bringing a different outlook on the meaning of life and everything around me, just like any other teenage girl. The war can't stop biology from taking its normal course. Of course I fell in love with the boy from next door, or the next building I should say. The war was just a side show which created an inconvenience whenever we had to hide or run away. It meant that I won't see that boy! I remember one summer before we had to run away again. It was a summer like no other. The air was sweet, full of scents of all kind of flowers. The beauty of the mountains around us was vibrant with so many colours and textures. The moon was so big and pink. Some nights, life seemed quit unreal; everyone went out in the evening for a stroll around the village, the cafés were open and food and drink were served.*



Fig. 26- Smell of Love

## Love

*The air was filled with the smell of good food, sweet scented flowers and pine trees, and the sound of laughter. I remember one night standing on the balcony watching life going on when a gardenia flower fell on my head. I looked up and it was him. He threw another flower down to me which I caught. The smell of the gardenia was divine. I think I smelt it till there was no scent left in it. That moment I felt that life was beautiful, that life was not the war. Somehow the meaning of life and the war had been muddled up together in my mind. Before the moment of the gardenia I thought life was all about the war, but when I felt love, life suddenly had nothing to do with war. It was beautiful, precious and peaceful.*



*A short while later the war became more intense and different factions of people became ever more vicious towards each other. We were told not to go into the streets. War planes started coming and dropping what they called "grape bombs". The "grape bombs" were quite small but many of them were dropped at once, causing fire at first and then explosions. The village became silent, the air smelt of gun powder and fire, and I could no longer see the moon after that. A tunnel was dug from inside our building to the hotel next door so we could get to where everyone had assembled without going outside. We brought food and water. My mum had to bring milk, bottles and diapers for my baby sister who was less than one year old. When we went through the small tunnel and down a few steps that were formed from bricks piled up, we entered a very large basement room. The room was completely open with no partitions or walls. It had columns in the middle and a low wall on one side with bushes and trees, this side being open onto the street. There were small rooms on the other side of the basement, all bare concrete with no furnishings. When villagers brought mattresses we realised we would be sleeping in the basement. By night fall armed men from the village said that there might be an attack at night so it was best to stay awake and be ready. From midnight until the break of dawn we didn't sleep. Our blood froze in our veins once or twice when we heard footsteps coming from the street above us. The room we were sitting in had a small window which was high above us but level with the street and the pavement. It was from that window we saw the shadow of boots and heard the footsteps of someone trying to sneak around. The armed men*

spoke of massacres that had happened in the neighbourhood villages. The newspapers confirmed their stories, so we felt lucky that we didn't suffer that fate. At my age, I didn't understand the politics behind the war around us. I was able to understand who was killing who but not why. After a few nights of this kind of fear, and bombardment in the day time, my mum decided to take us to the north east where my grandparents lived. After a long hard trip trying to reach Baalbek, taking an extra-long route to avoid any clashes, we finally arrived. I felt sad, dusty, tired and thirsty but a lovely thing happened as it always had since I first started visiting my grandparents' house. My grandma opened the tall, green, heavy metal door, which squeaked deeply, and adjusting her white head scarf she threw her arms out and said with a gentle warmth "ahlan, ahlan", a welcoming phrase coming from the bottom of her heart. I could sense the depth of feeling in her words as she welcomed us with a love so truthful and pure. It was as if her heart was calling to us. Her welcome always made me feel so happy and peaceful. I felt better just hearing her voice, seeing her smile and burying myself in her arms. I wanted to stay there forever. Of course she had a large brass tray laid out with all kinds of food ready for us.



Fig. 27- Mezza

*The smell of the food was exquisite. Different aromas rose up in the room combining with the smell of slightly damp air coming from the river outside in the court yard. The sensation of an ancient roman city; aromas of fig jam, pickled eggplants with garlic and walnuts, soured milk and wheat dip, cheeses, and stone baked bread, not to mention the smell of the Arabian tea, very strong and slightly bitter but delicious. Whenever we sat down to eat like this, I remember the polished black concrete floor being unbearably cold underneath our feet in the summer. It was July, the sun was out, birds were singing and the leaves were fluttering gently on the trees. There were no sounds of bombs or gun fire. The smell of fresh grape leaves, which my grandma had planted around the court yard entrance, pervaded the air. We didn't have much with us, just one suitcase and a few plastic bags. I didn't have any toys this time; normally I would bring my Barbies and*

*set up a house for them under the chair in the bedroom that we slept in. Setting up a house for my dolls, and designing and making clothes for them had always been one of the joys of visiting my grandma. But this time I had to leave my dolls in Faluga, the village we had just left, as well as my favourite cat Zarzur and, worst of all, the boy I loved.*

*So there I was at my grandparent's house, the house that had always represented joy, love and family. It still represented all that for me but this time I felt differently. I was very conscious of our losses and my own emotional instability. We had not seen my dad in a couple of months.*

## ***December 2017***

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### ***How did we cope?***

*It's the beginning of December now, the sky has a silvery soft grey tint and there is a chill in the air. I can see the sky from where I am sitting, here in my conservatory, warm and cozy with my cup of tea. The birds are still singing outside and my cats are playing around me, all happy. My mother has just sent me a voice message on Whatsapp to tell me about a new remedy she has heard about which can help with her tooth ache.*

*I am thinking back to the days when we were scrambling for safety during the war in Lebanon, trying to contrast events in my life now with events during the conflict. I ask myself how were we able to cope with problems and difficulties that are an everyday part of the biological and physiological cycle of children growing up in normal times, but which must surely have presented much greater hardships during the war... I'm trying to remember...did I ever have a tooth ache or stomach ache or did any of us, perhaps, have a cold when we were running for safety from the bullets and the missiles? Did I have upset stomach or need to use the toilet during the bombardment? How did we cope? We were lucky to have our neighbours take us with them in their car when we had to evacuate, but I can't imagine the suffering of present day Syrian families with children walking in the freezing cold or even living in tents in the icy and snowy conditions. When we had to escape to live in the mountains during the Israeli invasion of the south, we were not able to see much of my father as he had to stay in our house in the south and, whenever possible, go to work. The mountains were much cooler than the south and during the winter months we didn't have radiators or running hot water. The only form of heat in the house was what we called the "Soobia" which was a kerosene burner that looked like a narrow rubbish bin with a huge flue pipe that extended through a hole in the ceiling to the outside. We used to sit around it all day in the winter with all the doors shut. Sometimes if there was a big freeze and the temperatures were in minus figures, we slept in that same room, which was normally the sitting room. We stayed in the mountains for nearly three and a half years, between 1979 and 83. It was only my mum, my brother and I, and later my new born sister. We were constantly worried about my father living under the Israeli*

occupation. Many times he wasn't able to get to us and so we ran out of money. My brother and I continued to go to school, but soon fell behind in our education as we missed so many lessons because of the constant evacuations. I made friends but my brother hated school and was not doing well. Choosing our schools was hard for my mum because in Lebanon placing children in schools depended on their chosen second language. Both my brother and I started our schooling in the south with English as a second language. Being older I was able to travel to a school where I could continue to learn English even after we fled to the mountains. However, because Yehya (my brother) was very young, and constantly ill, my mum wanted him to go to the nearest school in the same village we lived in. Unfortunately, this school's second language was French and this change seriously affected Yehya's learning and liking for schooling. After leaving the south, but before my mum decided to settle in the mountains away from the clashes, we lived for a few months in the capital Beirut and attended another school there. I hated it; I felt so alien and didn't have my friends or cousins as I did in Sour, my home town in the south. I also fell far behind in my level of education, to such an extent that I felt embarrassed during English reading sessions and I failed both Mathematics and Physics. The bus trip home from school was very long and I often got confused, forgetting the addresses of the hotels that we were living in when the driver asked. This again caused me great embarrassment and made journeys on the bus a nightmare. Of course, compared to living under a hail of bullets it was a good life until the conflict expanded again from other parts of Beirut to the area we were living in.

At one time, as the civil war intensified, the fighters decided to split Beirut into east and west along an imaginary 'green line'. It

*was a brutal time when snipers targeted anyone who tried to cross this line and the dead often stayed in the streets for weeks before anyone could bring them back to be buried. There were packs of stray dogs roaming the streets at night and eating anything they could find!! I don't remember the birds singing during the war and my cats ran away after the clashes. During intermittent breaks between shelling, I remember a particular type of silence, a silence of waiting, and of listening. Everyone was quiet.*

*When I try to recollect this period in my life I concentrate on certain 'landmark' events which stand out in my mind and help me in mapping out my past. Thinking back to my childhood inevitably leads me to remember the war, but I always find myself trying to find a happy memory amidst the unhappy ones.*

*It is now January and I have just finished installing my final exhibition for my PhD. I always wonder what people think when they view art about war and conflict, especially a conflict that they have not experienced themselves. I pursued the idea of sensorial empathy which requires sensing other people's situation without the use of words if possible. I sometimes see the spoken language as a barrier when emotions are involved. My last piece was called 'Don't Lets Play Pretend', a title which came to me as I was making the last pieces of work, which were suitcases, utensils and tools all made with translucent Sellotape. While I was making these pieces, I became very caught up in the way I remember events from the war. This made normal present-day events, such as cooking and shopping, seem unreal, as if I was play pretending.*



*Fig. 28- A toy I lost*

### *How to survive a war*

*Wouldn't it be great to have a manual for everything in life including a manual on what to do to survive a war? Such a manual would give some people, like me, more confidence and guidance on how to understand the post emotional stress and anxieties.*

*If I had to write a guide on how to survive during a war these would be the headings of each chapter:*



- *Expect Life and people around you to become completely different.*
- *Expect to keep moving to areas of safety; this might mean moving to other cities or even to the mountains.*
- *If you see orange lights in the sky go to a hiding place.*
- *During clashes and bombardment always hide in smaller rooms like hallways and bathrooms.*
- *If you can't leave the house during clashes, place your children in the bathtub.*
- *If you can't go to the shops but have dry cheese, you can soak it with a little hot water to re-hydrate it.*
- *Always keep oil and cotton wool around you as you can use them to cook an egg if you don't have gas or electricity.*
- *Always keep a torch, candles and matches near you.*
- *When you have to run away on the spur of the moment, use plastic bags, they are lighter to carry and can hold many items.*
- *Make sure you have a bottle of water, bread, biscuits, money, medicine and cigarettes. Don't forget the matches!*
- *Always stay friendly with neighbours if they own a car, they may be able to help you run away.*
- *When you get to the city or the mountains and you are safe, buy your children a cheap doll from the local shop (fig. 28). It will make them feel better.*
- *Take a picture of all your belongings so you can remember them in the future.*
- *Write a diary every day and read it when you are older.*
- *To wash, just boil the teapot and pour it in a bucket then add cold water. Use ladles to pour water over you. Three for rinsing the soap from your hair, and four for rinsing the soap from your body.*

- *To re-hydrate dry stale bread, spray a little water on it and place it over a heater or in the sun.*
- *Don't have pets because you can never take them with you when you run away.*
- *Read books to escape reality.*
- *Don't stop telling your story even when peace returns.*



*Fig. 29- disPLACED/together*