Rose Rigley

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MFA1

Research Paper

Introduction

"The personal is theoretical." Sara Ahmed[1]

As the independent, youngest child of a hoarder mother and a collector father, I grew up in a home where space was not freely available – it had to be claimed. For as long as I lived in my parents' houses, preparing and eating a meal required clearing a kitchen work surface, making room at the dining table, and liberating a chair from its contents – three times a day, every day of every week. These daily acts of endless negotiation within my domestic environment became rituals that introduced me to the relentless, repetitive labour required to make space for myself. The act of cleaning became an entrenched routine. It was my way of asserting control over the household chaos that surrounded me, and, fundamentally, over the deeper sense of displacement – an un-homing – I felt about home.

This personal experience of domestic labour reflects broader social patterns. There is an unchanged gender disparity in these ongoing physical and emotional maintenance processes. Historically and culturally assigned to women, domestic work is grounded in repetitive tasks that rarely culminate in a definitive outcome. While remaining undervalued and invisible, the structural labour is also performative, shaping feminine identity through everyday habits. This performance is both outward and inward, either reinforcing 'Angel of the House' expectations or providing a platform for resistance.[2] Consequently, such acts become a site where dominant ideologies are reproduced or gradually shifted.

My process is autobiographical: I am the artwork. Feminist theory has consistently positioned personal chronicling as an essential structure for exploring identity through repetition and narrative reconstruction. Although completely situated, autobiography becomes a means of supporting an evolving, performative self. The fluidity of selfhood intersects with the material creation of artworks and stream-of-consciousness writing (Appendix 1), as if each is intimately interlinked with the other to make the being whole.

[1] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 10.
[2] Catherine McCormack, *Women in the Picture: What Culture Does with Female Bodies* (London: Icon Books, 2021).

Central to this investigation are the conceptual frameworks of un-homing, homing, and re-homing.[3] **Chapter One: Un-homing** considers dislodgment from domestic space and selfhood, including an analysis of Mierle Laderman Ukeles' performative maintenance work and Judith Butler's feminist theory. This chapter traces my personal un-homing and discovery of Feminism, as revealed in artworks *Breath* and *Tapeworm*. **Chapter Two: Homing** scrutinises the reclamation of belonging and self through feminist theories, including Sara Ahmed's concepts of dwelling, alongside the artwork of Louise Bourgeois. This section concludes with a description of my durational piece, *Re/fuse*. **Chapter Three: Re-homing** gestures toward speculative futures in which memory and agency are co-constructed, as contextualised in the writings of Karen Barad. This chapter draws on the artwork of Cecilia Vicuña and Posthuman Feminist theories of Rosi Braidotti. My evolving artwork, *Dark Wood*, formats art as a method of resistance and intentional acts of recollection. In this way, the autobiographical becomes both a physical and a philosophical reality.

My creative methodologies are structured around care, repetition, and a beginning engagement with the more-than-human. Reflecting on the concept of stitching as both a site of mending and rupture, I consider whether this process might also bring about inner restoration. Sewing punctures the symbolic surface, becoming both wound and repair. This inclination shapes my research question: Is transformation through creativity a possibility?

How do artists use feminised, ritual labour and everyday materials to enact healing, resistance, and *not-forgetting*?[4] Can embodied stitching convert piercing into emotional repair, where each hole invites psychological illumination, and the act of repetitive rupture becomes the transformative work?

[3] Un-homing, homing, and re-homing are each powerful tools embedded in Feminist theory. Linking the three concepts together is for my own creative purposes. While not a specific term used in feminist theory, un-homing involves challenging traditional domestic roles assigned to women, critiquing patriarchal structures that define home as a site of control or confinement. Feminist homing practices involve embodied rituals of care, healing, and making, reclaiming domestic space as a site of agency rather than oppression and using materials and memory to rebuild connections to selfhood. Re-homing decentres the human and embraces interconnectedness, where memory and ritual become tools for healing and resistance.

[4] Posthuman Feminism's *not-forgetting* is a creative, ethical practice that reconfigures memory beyond anthropocentric frameworks, emphasising relationality, ecological entanglement, and embodied vulnerability.

Chapter 1.

Un-homing: Domestic Labour as Ritual

"My working will be the work." Mierle Laderman Ukeles[5]

I Have Always Cleaned

Throughout my life, domestic labour became a quiet performance of resistance – rituals learned in childhood and repeated in adulthood that asserted my presence amid the disorder of life. In an intuitive need to mark my agency and non-erasure, these actions held an unidentified emblematic weight. In reclaiming this space, I thought I was controlling and shaping my own identity. Autobiographically, home had become a negotiation zone for emotional survival, and domestic maintenance a gesture of making space for selfhood.[6]

Unsurprisingly, as a woman situated within an androcentric society, I remained unaware of the extent to which I had internalised the role of the 'Angel of the House'.[7] Virginia Woolf famously contended that the 'Angel' had to be metaphorically killed to reject this ideal of feminine submission.[8] However, Feminist theory was not part of my everyday vocabulary, and my engagement with these ideas resembled a blind navigation through murky cultural norms. Separating from lifelong embedded beliefs is a glacially slow progress.

Part of that process was a catalytic pursuit of an art career in my forties. My early practice reflected an autobiographical entanglement with my cleaning rituals: gendered and process-based, durational, and excessive, it mirrored the invisible labour that I had long performed. These works – stuffed, overfilled, layered, and suffocated – were re-organised manifestations of both my childhood and a life lived in service to others, while struggling to find space for myself (Figures 1-6). They were unrecognised enactments of my own gendered history, shaped by twenty-two years of single parenthood and the relentless performance of care. In retrospect, they were the beginnings of the *everyday* as a potential site of transformation.

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[5] Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969! Proposal for an Exhibition "CARE"*, Queens Museum, accessed September 25, 2025, https://queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles-Manifesto-for-Maintenance-Art-1969.pdf.

[6] See Appendix 1

[7] Catherine McCormack, *Women in the Picture: What Culture Does with Female Bodies* (New York: Icon Books, 2021)

[8] Catherine McCormack, *Women in the Picture*.

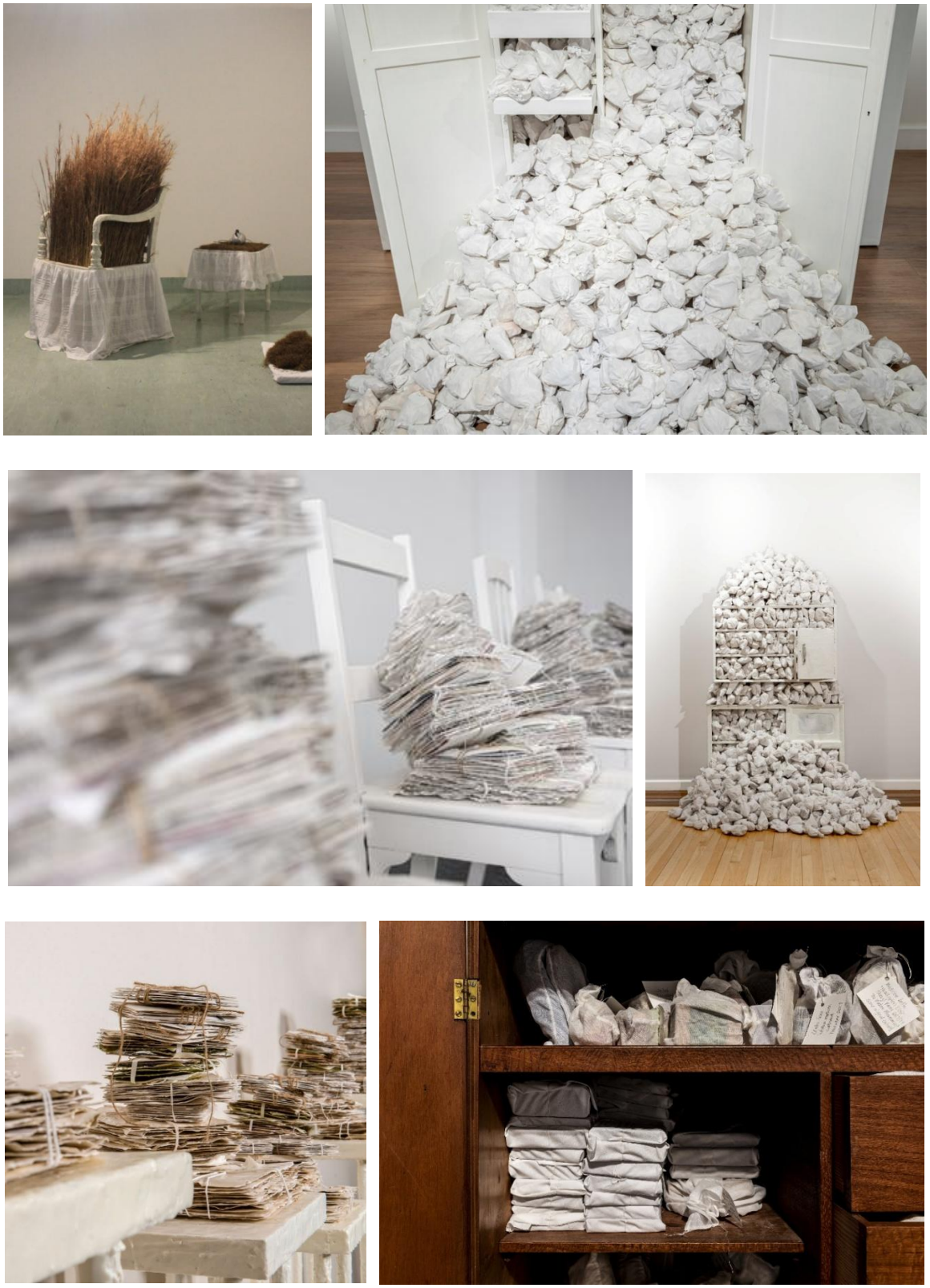

Figure 1-6. Rose Rigley. Previous artworks. L-R – artwork from solo exhibition, *The Space Between Words*, 2018, detail of artwork from solo exhibition, *Object*, 2023, detail of artwork from solo exhibition*, Peripheral*, 2022, artwork from group exhibition, *FNQ Contemporaries*, 2017, detail of artwork from solo exhibition, *Letters to my Father*, 2014, detail of artwork from solo exhibition, *Object Project*, 2020. https://www.roserigley.com/works.html

Un-Homing and Finding Feminism

To effect meaningful change, it is sometimes necessary to undertake a complete rupture of habitual and entrenched roles. In releasing myself from my life in Cairns to attend the National Art School (NAS) in Sydney, I was able to challenge my patriarchal indoctrination. The liminality of un-homing myself from this former place of comfort and confinement became the very platform for an internal redefinition. This dramatic action, which became both a physical and symbolic disruption, was necessary to break with inherited scripts and reclaim my own (unknowable) agency.

Initially, Sydney was a threshold marked by transition; the negotiation of this vast, humming metropolis, with its swarming population and hodgepodge urban fabric, was both exhilarating and daunting. My first temporary residence in Sydney was at Five Dock. I recognised the space as being uncannily familiar. Reverberating with an echo of my childhood, this in-between house blurred the lines between anarchy and cosiness. During these first four months, I did not clean this dusty dwelling, while cleaning other external domestic spaces for paid employment.

Concurrently, at NAS, my supervisor directed me towards an artwork by Mierle Laderman Ukeles that proved significant in reframing my understanding of cleaning and caretaking. The artist's *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance/Outside* (1973) performance elevated hidden and mundane domestic labour to the public realm (Figures 7-9).[9] The very performativity of Ukeles' work challenges the nature of its invisibility, reclaiming the drudgery and mundanity of maintenance work as a creative and relational act.[10] Layered with a feminist ethic of care, the durational work interrogates the complexity of motherhood, critiquing the traditional patriarchal power dynamics and asserting that the endlessness of gendered work is not only

[9] Andreas Petrossiants, "Mierle Laderman Ukeles' Maintenance and/as (Art) Work," *View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture*, no. 24 (2019), https://www.academia.edu/38539285/Mierle_Laderman_Ukeles_Maintenance_and_as_Art_Work.
[10] Allison Johnson, *Radical Care as Social Action: Mierle Laderman Ukeles' Manifesto and Maintenance Art* (master's thesis, Harvard University Division of Continuing Education, 2022), https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37371694.

performative but exclusionary.[11] In bringing into question the often hidden constructs that shape and confine women's lives, the artist offers a platform for resisting those structures.



Figures 7-9. Mierle Laderman Ukeles. *Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance (Outside).* 1973. Black and white photographs of performance. https://elephant.art/a-manifesto-for-maintenance-art-taught-me-the-true-value-of-hard-essential-work-14122021/.

Correspondingly, and after strong resistance, I pursued feminist writings that resonated with my understanding of domestic labour and identity. My engagement with these philosophies proved pivotal.[12] Theorist Judith Butler critiques the performativity of the gendered roles that I had long reinforced through repetition.[13] Within this framework, functional domestic labour is an ideological performance that maintains gender-normative behaviours through habitual and perpetual mundane routines.[14] My own and Virginia Woolf's archenemy, the 'Angel', can be viewed as not a fixed identity, but a role that is learned by formulaic

[11] Nil Gulari, Anna Dziuba, and Astrid Huopalainen, "Connecting Art, Maintenance, and Motherhood: How Ukeles's Maintenance Art Shapes Understandings of Maintenance," *Gender, Work & Organization* (2024): 1–26, https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13169

[12] When my supervisor, Bridie Lunney, proposed Feminism as a foundational theory underpinning my creative practice, I baulked at the idea. However, feminism turned out to be an intellectual un-homing of great magnitude.

[13] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York; London: Routledge, 2006).

[14] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," Theatre Journal 40, no. 4 (1988): 519–531. https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893.

enactment and sustained by androcentric structures. Crucially, Butler suggests that individuals can interrupt these performances and untether themselves from the confining predicament of the 'Angel' through artistic and subversive gestures.[15] Suddenly, I became cognisant that my habitual domestic processes have the potential for empowerment.

Ukeles' *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance* and feminist theory provided a mirror for me to re-examine my own relationship with domestic labour. The artist's four-hour cleaning at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art was neither passive nor private. While Ukeles' performance was disorienting in its familiarity, Butler's gender performativity concepts provided the idea that feminist care ethics was a dynamic interplay between creative acts and determined resistance. By utilising maintenance rituals as an act of self-care, I began to renegotiate selfhood through the application of feminist theory.

New Gendered Repetition and Performative Expression

Dislocated by new knowledge, I attempted to move beyond language – beyond recollection and rhetoric – to access a more embodied truth. In this silent space, a different kind of knowing emerges – raw, wordless, pulsating – something that cannot be named or explained. It seeps to the surface so gently that I do not even recognise it, produced by an intra-action between self and materials. My work, *Breath,* arose from such intuitive making, shaped by these early experiences in Sydney.

Installed in my studio doorway following my first critique, *Breath* became a soft, fluid counterpoint to the rigid architecture – a daily visual and auditory marker of presence and belonging (Figures 10-11). Constructed from five sheets of white tissue paper, machine-stitched and suspended over a wooden rod, the curtain-like form remained free to do as it pleased. If the work was torn or damaged, it was either replaced or repaired in a continuous cycle of care and labour. Responsive to air currents, it wrapped around me as I worked, reached outward like a restless appendage, and enshrouded me upon entry. The use of tissue paper – a fragile, everyday material often associated with wrapping breakable

[15] Gerasimos Kakoliris, "Judith Butler on Gender Performativity," *French Philosophy*, June 2025, https://www.frenchphilosophy.gr/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Kakoliris-G.-Judith-Butler-on-Gender-Performavity.pdf.

valuables – offered a sculptural language of care. In its quiet constancy, *Breath* evoked a different kind of un-homing: self-nurturing, receptive to innovative ideas, and curious.[16]

Figures 10-11. Rose Rigley. *Breath* (iteration 1, iteration 2 and 2 as remnant). 2025. Tissue paper, machine stitching, found object. Approx. 500 x 75 cm.

I sewed the damaged iterations of *Breath* into *Tapeworm*, a ground-based sculptural form composed of torn tissue remnants and machine stitching (Figure 12). Using domestic labour, the work converts fragile, discarded materials into a representation of relationality and transformation. The process of monotonous sewing becomes a durational act of care, echoing Ukeles' performance, and reframing the endless maintenance to a different status. The work is situated within feminist care ethics, in mutuality and shared vulnerability,

[16] See Appendix 1

resisting neoliberal capitalist values of autonomy and productivity.[17] Aligned with Butler's theory of gender performativity, the work re-contextualises my historical 'Angel'. From its horizontal position, *Tapeworm* refuses monumentality and instead grounds itself as a representative of feminist theory.

Figure 12. Rose Rigley. *Tapeworm* (iteration 1). 2025. Tissue paper, machine stitching, found object. Approx. 1000 x 10 cm each.

Mounted in the middle window of the top floor in Building 26 at NAS, another iteration of *Breath* occupied a space of freedom in the outside world, animated by air and light (Figure 13). Its ephemeral and performative movements – reaching, straining, pausing – evoked a quiet joy, tempered by the awareness of the work's inevitable disintegration. What remains of this version is a small triangle of tissue precariously attached to the window, fluttering like a symbolic flag of surrender to forces beyond its control (Figure 14). The rest has vanished, accepting impermanence. This persistent fragment fires my imagination; I can still hear

[17] Jacqueline Millner, "Care Ethics and Contemporary Art: Imagining and Practising Care," *Thesis Eleven* 183, no. 1 (2024): 103–18, https://doi.org/10.1177/07255136241284659.

Breath's crinkly whispering, suggesting to me in this noise that home is not a fixed place but a felt presence, intimate, mobile, and always in flux.

As a metaphor, *Breath* embraces its own fragility and surrenders to the unknown. Empowered by the more-than-human, it claims its feminist agency and welcomes its transformation. As an artwork, *Breath* bridges the invisible, unconsciously driven, repetitive labour – both nurturing and exhausting – of my previous practice and existing maintenance strategies, with a new intentional feminist reclamation of the ordinary and the domestic. In the making and remaking of *Breath*, the autobiographical process becomes the artwork; it highlights the domestic tension between care and constraint while providing an acute, uncanny awareness as old patterns are un-homed.

Breath and its iterations, including *Tapeworm*, challenged my internalised hierarchies of power while asserting that the domestic, the ephemeral, and the overlooked are worthy of attention and central to feminist artistic practice. The work became the epitome of possibility and open-endedness. Importantly, *Breath* is a deeply personal, entangled relationship, a metaphorical representation of my own feminist un-homing.

Figures 13-14. Rose Rigley. *Breath* (iteration unknown and as remnant). 2025. Tissue paper, machine stitching, found object. Approx. 500 x 75 cm.

Chapter 2.

Homing: The *Everyday* as Embodied Reclamation

"The act of sewing is a process of emotional repair." Louise Bourgeois [18]

The *everyday*, ritual, and homing

The *everyday* is a powerful site of non-verbal, embodied memory, where gestures, materials, and routines serve as mnemonic agents.[19] Material-discursive practices allow Individuals to reclaim unarticulated, unconscious histories, or "accidental archives", that may have been overlooked or forgotten.[20] Giving structure and form to thought, these phenomenological interactions and creative processes catalyse personal transformation and challenge traditional models of recollection. The role of the body and the material world in sustaining memory and identity is especially prevalent through everyday personal and habitual encounters with familiar objects and spaces.

Ritual and repetition are central to transforming everyday actions into relational and performative memory practices. Rituals – stylised, prescribed sequence of actions, both verbal and non-verbal – create a heightened experience of time, space, and power systems.[21] Through repeated gestures, rhythms emerge that forge somatic knowledge and emotional resonance, enacting and reinforcing memory, and connecting the past and present.[22] Such embodied processes enable an individual to navigate a complicated and unpredictable range of variables that operate beyond conscious explanation. My memories are preserved, and potentially reshaped, through these routine, performative motions.

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[18] Attributed to Louise Bourgeois by Beth Ward, "The Sisterhood of Stitchers," *The Bitter Southerner*, accessed September 25, 2025, https://bittersoutherner.com/the-sisterhood-of-stitchers-sewing-crochet-craftivism.

[19] Stephen Johnstone, ed., The Everyday: Documents of Contemporary Art (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2008).
The everyday in art refers to the use of ordinary, habitual, and seemingly insignificant materials, practices, spaces, routines, gestures, experiences, and narratives as a foundation for creative expression.

[20] Liedeke Plate, "Remembering Things: The Materiality of Memory and the Memory of Materials," in *Dynamics – Mediation – Mobilization: Cultural Studies and the Politics of World-Making*, ed. Birgit Neumann and Gabriele Rippl (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), 260, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111439273-035.

[21] Stephan Feuchtwang, "Ritual and Memory," in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 281-298, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c999bq.23.

[22] Feuchtwang, "Ritual and Memory."

Homing is an everyday practice tied to the reclamation of identity and memory. The work of many contemporary artists, including Do Ho Suh, clarifies homing as a reconfiguration of domestic spaces through embodied recollection.[23] Ayşe Aydoğan posits that such creative endeavours reconstruct autobiographical narratives, through the artist's spatial and material decisions, into larger sites of political remembrance.[24] Expanding on this idea, Caitlin Mulcahy describes the "homing of the home" as acts of making, arranging, and inhabiting – particularly through gendered practices – that enable individuals to assert their right to remember, to belong, and to shape their environments.[25] Through an individual's emotional and archival labour, these autobiographical and performative gestures construct home as a fluid space of identity and interruption.[26] Therefore, homing becomes a remaking or retaking of space as an extension of performative experience and relational memory.

Formulating Feminism as an embodied dwelling, Sara Ahmed considers the ritual of everyday actions as fundamental to advocating presence, belonging, and resistance. Affirming Aydoğan and Mulcahy's writings, Ahmed suggests that domestic routines function as ceremonies of homing which, in turn, shape and sustain subjectivity.[27] The theorist proposes that will-fulness and the navigation of patriarchal systems reveal the power in ordinary practices.[28] Aligned with Butler's view of gender performativity, Ahmed suggests that individuals remake their domestic surroundings as extensions of themselves, and vice versa, through repetitive, relational acts.[29] Consequently, homing becomes a continuous, performative habit of remaking space while transforming the self.

Artist Louise Bourgeois's creative practice is situated within feminist theory and psychoanalytical recollection. *Ode à l'Oubli* (2004), or *Ode to Forgetting* in English, is a process-rich autobiographical methodology (Figures 15-17). Composed from remnants of personal fabrics – worn clothing, used linens, and household textiles – "charged with

[23] Ayşe Aydoğan, *Remembering through Space and Materiality: An Analysis of Contemporary Art Practices* (master's thesis, Sabancı University, 2019), ahttps://research.sabanciuniv.edu/id/eprint/36708/1/10195085_AyseAydogan.pdf.
[24] Aydoğan, *Remembering through Space and Materiality.*
[25] Caitlin Mulcahy, *The Homing of the Home: Exploring Gendered Work, Leisure, Social Construction, and Loss through Women's Family Memory Keeping* (PhD diss., University of Waterloo, 2012), https://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/bitstreams/2354c8bd-7962-4a8b-bcaf-ff49e9499684/download, 330.
[26] Mulcahy, *The Homing of the Home*.
[27] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).
[28] Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*.
[29] Ahmed, Living a Feminist Life.

meaning and metaphor", the cloth book reconstructs these collected remnants into mnemonic devices.[30] It is the artist's tactile interaction with the materials that activates somatic memory, turning these domestic fabrics into powerful mediums of emotional engagement for Bourgeois and her audience.[31] Beginning with a personal narrative, the work becomes part of a larger feminist dialogue.

Stitching holds an autobiographical and psychological power for Bourgeois. Part of the artist's mythology centres on her early exposure to sewing with her female relatives in the family tapestry business.[32] The domestic skill becomes a reparative act that redresses past trauma through a performative gesture of healing.[33] Paradoxically, *Ode à l'Oubli*'s title inclines toward disremembering; however, the process of regenerative stitching is a feminist idea of sitting with past pain until the intimate and repetitive engagement turns it into something different.[34] Credited with the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, Bourgeois exemplifies Butler's gender performativity and Ahmed's domestic remaking of self; with each stitch, the work enacts a ritualistic process of both recollection and resistance. Consequently, *Ode à l'Oubli* becomes a new narrative of homing and reforming selfhood.

Bourgeois is not a discovery for me; I have shifted my investigative focus – a narrowing of my gaze and the intensity of my scrutiny towards her gender-specific sewing processes. I am interested in the quiet, perhaps demure, "fabric sketchbooks" created in the decade before the artist's death.[35] These neat, small books seem premeditated to lull me into a sense of safety, as if their small size and colourful patterns are a reassuring sign that Bourgeois has concluded her often brutal, self-psychoanalysis. This reassuring methodology is somehow Freudian, as if "the uncanny is familiar, the homely at the same time unheimlich, [and] the

[30] Catherine Harper, "Louise Bourgeois," *Selvedge Magazine*, no. 18 (2007), 35.
[31] Ferren Gipson, *Women's Work: From Feminine Arts to Feminist Art* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2022).
[32] Lotte Johnson, Amanda Pinatih, and Wells Fray-Smith, eds., *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art* (Munich: Prestel, 2024).
[33] Katrina Mitcheson, "Louise Bourgeois' Technologies of the Self," *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology* 2, no. 1 (2015): 31–49.
[34] Robert Storr, *Intimate Geometries: The Art and Life of Louise Bourgeois* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2016).
[35] Harper, "Louise Bourgeois."

threat often from within the supposed zone of safety".[36] The works are masterful in their subterfuge.

Figures 15-17: Louise Bourgeois. *Ode à l'Oubli (Ode to Forgetting)*. 2004. Fabric illustrated book with 35 compositions: 32 fabric collages, 2 with hand additions, and 3 lithographs. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Details: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/98440. Full work: https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2021/thinking-in-four-dimensions-leading-women-sculptors/ode-a-loubli

[36] Harper, "Louise Bourgeois," 36; *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (London: Vintage, 1999), 217–256, originally published in 1919, https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/freud1.pdf.

Everyday Process as Homing

In the loneliness of uncertainty, personal narrative and layered memory keep me company. These "small stories" float above and thread through, making complex ideas more accessible through a lens of vulnerability and humanness, reflecting the way memory is experienced – through disjointed flashbacks, subtle anticipations, and felt sensations.[37] Shifting the state of "unsettled-ness" creates a bridge between the repetition of process and autobiographical memory, offering new directions for the making, unmaking, and remaking of self.[38] As a tool for navigating the divide between embodied knowing and cognisant awareness, this new narrative extends into a methodology of becoming homed again.

Just as *Ode à l'Oubli* transforms discarded fabrics into a tactile archive, *Re/fuse* emerged from a similar engagement with the *everyday* as a site of healing and storytelling (Figures 18-20). The first iteration – a human-sized blanket – was constructed from machine-sewn sheets of tissue paper, forming a semi-translucent, fragile skin that was stuffed with seasonally fallen, dried leaves and pages from a found book, laid haphazardly on the floor. The piece evolved intuitively; my body's empirical knowledge made connections to autobiographical narratives long before my conscious mind and language could articulate them. Informed by repetition and ritual, the artwork becomes an extension of my own body, imbued with a life of its own, carrying its own presence and pulse.

[37] Paul Green, *A Framework for the Consideration of Narrative in Creative Arts Practice* (PhD diss., University of Plymouth, 2018), 22.
[38] Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *The Domestic Space Reader*, ed. Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 144; Linda Anderson, "Autobiography and the Feminist Subject," in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*, ed. Ellen Rooney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 119–135.

Figures 18-20: Rose Rigley. *Blanket work* (first iteration of *Re/fuse*). 2025. Tissue paper, machine sewing, book pages, organic matter. 300 x 150 x 10 cm. Red Gallery Project Space

After responding to feedback and engaging in discussions with my supervisor, I initiated the process of emptying the blanket pockets of their contents and re-fusing them with needle and thread (Figures 21-23). This mending was systematically undertaken: a small cut expanded into a larger opening, followed by a gentle, ritualised discarding of the internal contents, and a careful re-fusing of each opening. Some sections of the blanket were left partially open, others were completely sealed, some were entirely emptied, while others preserved remnants of what had once been contained within. Hand stitching into tissue paper is never easy; the act of repair often introduces new damage to the fragile surface, a puncturing and rupturing that paradoxically accompanies the mending. Yet, through this process, the work became a mended, puckered reinvention of itself.

A quiet yet persistent unravelling dance unfolds in the creation of this artwork. The delicate movement centres on the unlearning of deeply embedded beliefs and unworking past events, then relearning of more compassionate narratives and expansive ways of existing in the world.[39] It is a slow, often faltering, embodied process of realisation and reorientation,

[39] Susan J. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 118.

where each gesture in the making becomes both a release and a repossession. I recognise that in this silent, rhythmic, phenomenal production, where memory and time are fluid and recursive, I am co-participating in a form of intimate revolt[40]. In this state, time often folds in on itself, and I find myself living the artwork and living with the artwork as I create it, caught in an uncanny loop of experience and expression.[41] The process is emotionally consuming, which, when completed, left me so bereft of its company and purpose that I needed to make the work double its size, then larger again.

[40] Julia Kristeva, *Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeanine Herman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
Kristeva introduces the concept of intimate revolt as a deeply personal, internal process of resistance and transformation. For me, this revolt is about unlearning of my own self-imposed androcentric tyranny.
[41] Alexandra M. Kokoli, *The Feminist Uncanny in Theory and Art Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

Figures 21-23: Rose Rigley. Blanket *work* (second and third iteration of *Re/fuse*). 2025. Tissue paper, machine and hand sewing, book pages, and organic matter. 200 x 500 x 10 cm. Artist's NAS studio, Drawing Gallery (B25).

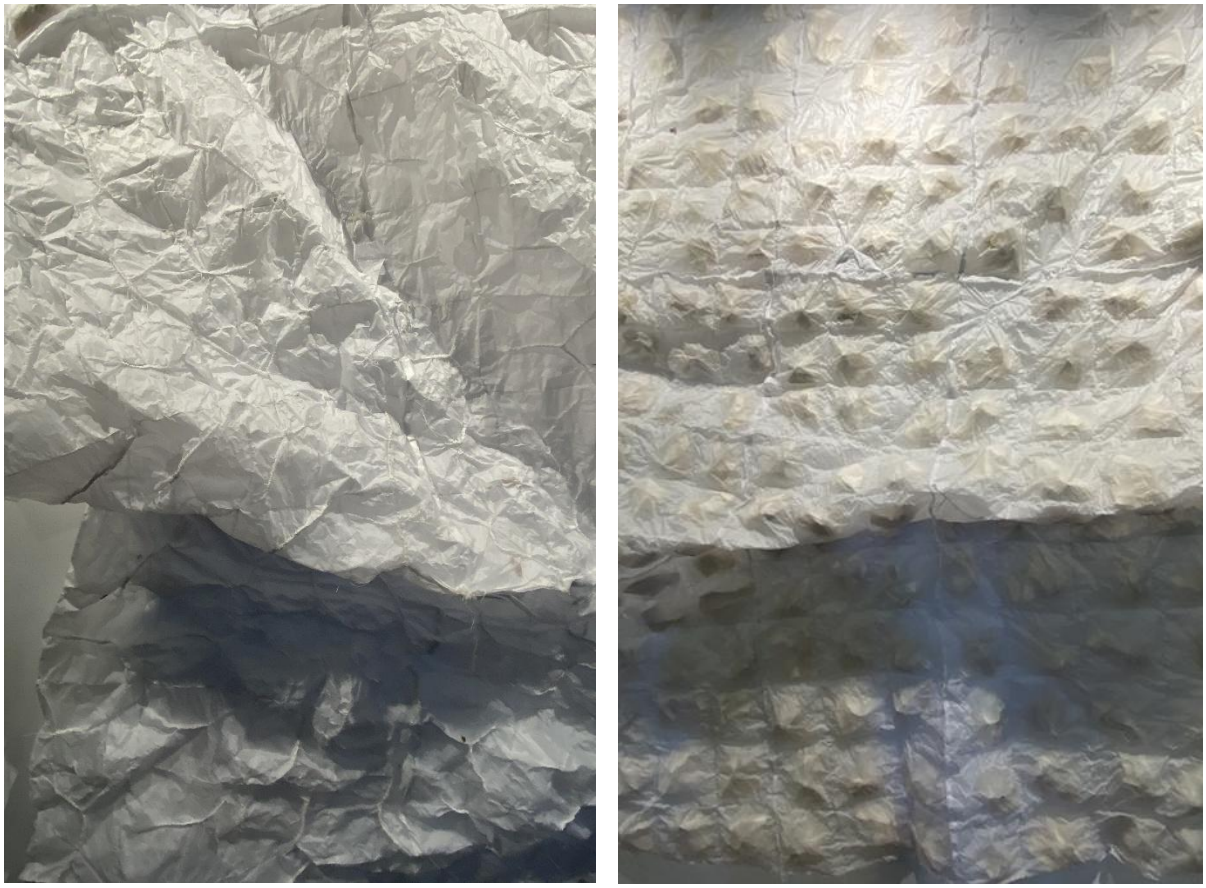
When I finally felt the blanket was finished – now a five-metre by three-metre experiential mega-being – its conclusiveness, at the end of semester one, hung on the NAS Art Wall (Figures 24-26). Once on display, the work affiliates with the broader context of feminist art, which has long rescued the *everyday* as a site of intimate and political resistance. Personal narratives dissolve the boundaries between public and private spheres, where the elevation of feminine-coded processes, ephemeral materials, and repetitive makings suddenly became a tactile rebellion against the very structures that existed within my self-imposed tyrannical belief systems.

Aligned with Bourgeois' practice, *Re/fuse* sits within broader social and political frameworks. The act of sewing – repetitive, meditative, and deeply gendered – serves as a metaphor for care and repair, echoing feminist ideas of embodiment, invisible labour, and the cyclical rhythms of lived experience.[42] These performative gestures evoke shared emotional truths and speak to both Butler's gender performativity and Ahmed's domestic resistance, just as the quiet residue honours the overlooked and undervalued. Feminist ethics of care allows trauma to be sat with before reconfiguration through material engagement and repetition.

The process of homing is durational; the liminal present, the disjointed recollections, and the fragile materials amalgamate into a co-construction. Throughout the solitude of making, the blanket offers companionship, grounding the work in a slippery temporality and fluid reality.

[42] Maura C. Flannery, "Quilting: A Feminist Metaphor for Scientific Inquiry," *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 5 (2001): 628–645, https://www.jstor.org/stable/45238923.

Through cyclical and intimate acts, the artwork provides a space for regained belonging, where the unsettled self is tenderly dismantled and reassembled, and where the *everyday* is reimagined as a radical feminist gesture of care and resistance.



Figures 24-26: Rose Rigley. *Re/fuse* (and details). 2025. Tissue paper, machine and hand sewing, book pages, organic matter. Approx. 300 x 500 x 10 cm. NAS Art Wall.

Chapter 3.

Re-homing: Posthuman Feminist *Not-forgetting* as Reconfiguration

"Rehoming is not about going back to a mythical origin, but about constructing conditions for cohabitation and sustainability ..." Rosi Braidotti[43]

Re-homing as a Reorientation of Selfhood

Re-homing is entwined with the Posthuman Feminism's concept of *not-forgetting*. This memory theory involves a deliberate, distributed, performative, and materially entangled practice that resists linear, linguistic, and anthropocentric models of memory.[44] Rather than treating memory as a private, cognitive archive, the approach emphasises embodied co-creation with the more-than-human as a mnemonic collaborator.[45] Such ideas are linked to Karen Barad's agential realism, which rejects individual agency of entities and instead supposes that matter and meaning are co-constituted through mutual intra-actions.[46] According to Barad, memory is a performative and continuous restructuring of the present through ongoing entanglements between both living (human and non-human) and non-living forms.[47] Subsequently, remembering can be thought of as a continually enacted process, not merely a retrieval of the past.

If memory and, therefore, identity, are co-constituted, the concept of re-homing also becomes entangled. Drawing on Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity theory, re-homing is seen as a creative and perpetual reimagining of selfhood, one that welcomes fluidity and transformation.[48] For Braidotti, re-homing is a state of endless *becoming*; for Julia Kristeva, it is the motility of a *subject-in-process*; I like to think of it as an ontological unfolding. Braidotti posits that the re-homed self is emptied and re-situated as a nomadic being within a web-

[43] Rosi Braidotti, "'We' May Be in This Together, but We Are Not All Human and We Are Not One and the Same," *Ecocene: Cappadocia Journal of Environmental Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2020): 26–31, https://doi.org/10.46863/ecocene.2020.3.
[44] Deniz Gündoğan İbrişim, "Feminist Posthumanism, Environment and 'Response-Able Memory'," *Memory Studies Review* 1, no. 1 (2024): 93–111, https://doi.org/10.1163/29498902-20240004.
[45] İbrişim, "Feminist Posthumanism, Environment and 'Response-Able Memory'."
[46] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
[47] Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway.*
[48] Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

like multiplicity of more-than-human relations.[49] Consequently, the ideas of *not-forgetting* and re-homing invite a different understanding of belonging, with a new inclusivity that forges a space for more expansive connections.

The material and affective scope of Cecilia Vicuña's quipu installations is a practical application of these Posthuman Feminist theories. The artist utilises open-ended collaborative processes that invite more-than-human contributions, including rituals to reanimate suppressed Indigenous knowledge systems aligned with ancestors and ecosystems.[50] *Quipu Womb* (2017) invites a shared act of becoming; the thick, red strands of unspun wool hang fluidly like veins, roots, or umbilical cords, connecting the body to both earth and cosmos (Figures 27-28).[51] Vicuña's material choice – fibrous, natural wool – invites the potential of transformation, as if in this raw state, it embodies Posthuman Feminist ideas of 'not-yet'.[52] Significantly, the material has its own connective memory, one that personifies care, tenderness, and interdependence, affirming the possibility of reconnection. *Quipu Womb* becomes a ritual site, where both the artist and audience members activate the fibres as mnemonic collaborators.

Ceremony is central to how Vicuña enacts re-homing. Through performance – chanting, breathing, and communal knotting – the gallery becomes a sacred space of co-metamorphosis.[53] For the artist, such rituals do not reenact the past but blend Indigenous cosmologies with feminist and ecological concerns of the present.[54] Functioning as an intentional resistance and remembering, Vicuña's quipus assert the right to dwell, to belong, and to co-create in the face of powerful, strategic erasure.[55] Linked to this ancestral wisdom and feminist ethics of care, *Quipu Womb* can be seen as a collaborative political act of refusal to be displaced, erased, or silenced.

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[49] Rosi Braidotti, "Posthuman Feminist Theory," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 673–698, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199328581.013.35; Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory*.
[50] Catherine Gander, "Re-visioning the Archive: Cecilia Vicuña's Permanent Impermanence," Open Library of Humanities 11, no. 1 (2025), https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.18449.
[51] Jacqueline Witkowski, "Threading Together Politics and Poetics in Cecilia Vicuña's Fiber Art," in *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, 2019, https://doi.org/10.32873/unl.dc.tsasp.0016.
[52] Guisela Latorre, "Cecilia Vicuña's Precarious Universe," Wexner Centre for the Arts, July 9, 2019, https://wexarts.org/read-watch-listen/cecilia-vicunas-precarious-universe.
[53] Gander, "Re-visioning the Archive: Cecilia Vicuña's Permanent Impermanence".
[54] Gander, "Re-visioning the Archive: Cecilia Vicuña's Permanent Impermanence,"
[55] Witkowski, "Threading Together Politics and Poetics in Cecilia Vicuña's Fiber Art".

Figures 27-28: Cecilia Vicuña. *Quipu Womb* (The Story of the Red Thread, Athens). 2017. Wool, dye, rope and thread. Tate Modern, London. Details: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/vicuna-quipu-womb-the-story-of-the-red-thread-athens-t15921

Vicuña's work brings a greater understanding of how Posthuman Feminist concepts are practically considered and embedded within creative practice. My own ritualised ceremonies are a testing ground for transformative potential. Considering *Quipu Womb* brings an expansive sense of possibility for reclamation through *not-forgetting* and the re-homing of my selfhood within feminist ethics of care.

Dreaming: Un-making, Making, Re-making

In my small Five Dock bedroom, recollections surfaced not as linear narratives but as affective encounters, dreams of my mother that carried a quiet weight, shaped by childhood experiences and the relational space her absence has created. These dreams emerged through the porous threshold between sleep and waking, becoming a distributed, performative process enacted through my subconscious and the textures of the *everyday*.

Although I recorded these dreams upon waking, I often question whether the act of conscious thinking and writing – translating sensations into prescriptive language – reconfigured the experience itself, stabilising and domesticating it. This nightly practice became a form of psychological re-homing, where the bedroom, my body, and the dream itself collaborated in a process of becoming-with, reshaping my agency.

The pursuit of a language capable of articulating my internal psychological state has always informed my practice. Earlier artworks, grounded in intuitive and psycho-sensorial processes, sought to express what eludes conventional linguistic frameworks (Figures 29-30). Emerging from an engagement with unspeakable, insistent, fragmented memories and emotional residues that continuously surfaced and resurfaced, I developed a ritualised methodology of making. What distinguishes these earlier efforts from the work produced at NAS is the condition of being un-homed and the new and impactful understandings of Feminism this state enabled.

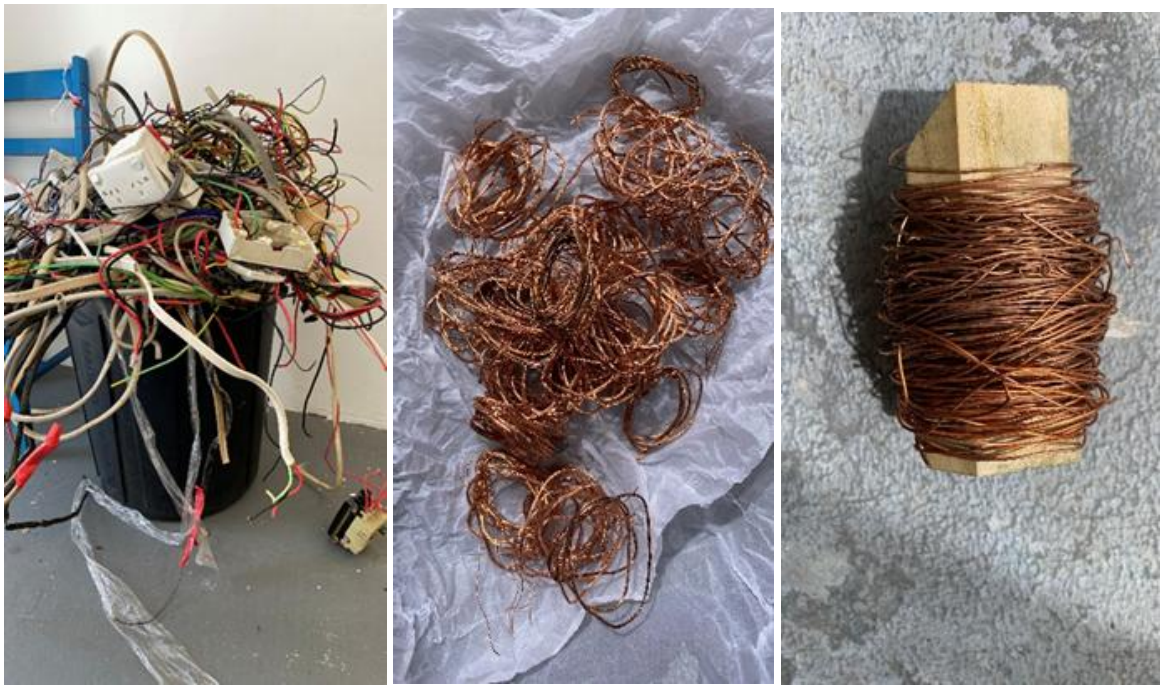
Figures 29-30: Rose Rigley. Previous artworks. L-R – detail of artwork from group exhibition, *Meanwhile*, 2022, detail of artwork from group exhibition, *A Tidy House*, 2024. https://www.roserigley.com/works.html

Dark Wood (un-homing) emerged through intuitive creative 'play'. It involved machine-stitching tissue paper to cover the door that concealed a narrow cupboard housing a fire hose, in the project space. Into this interior space, I placed tall, thin branches, previously sawn from a crepe myrtle tree at the Five Dock house, leaving the door ajar so that the wood remained partially visible (Figures 31-33). This quiet intervention became a site of affective tension. Through interaction with my supervisor and critical reflection, I came to understand that the work gestured toward a recurring residue of childhood trauma. The realisation that certain psychic spaces within me were inaccessible – or seemingly unsafe to access – marked a pivotal moment of creative revelation. In this sense, *Dark Wood* enacted a feminist tenet that allowed the material, spatial, and symbolic elements to collaborate in the un-homing of memory.[56] It was a performative act of becoming-with trauma, where materials co-constituted a space for relational and embodied remembering.

Figures 31-33: Rose Rigley. *Dark Wood* (un-homing iteration and detail). 2025. Machine stitching, tissue paper, crepe myrtle. Red Gallery Project Space.

[56] İbrişim, "Feminist Posthumanism, Environment and 'Response-Able Memory'"; Susan J. Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

Upon arriving at NAS, I began a durational process of unravelling discarded electrical detritus and stripping copper wire from its plastic casing (Figure 34). These repetitive gestures – echoing the practices of my past life – functioned as a grounding and unmaking mechanism, enabling me to settle into the unfamiliar space through embodied labour. The act of sorting and binding wire became a quiet methodology of care and order, materially entangled with memory and affect (Figures 35-36). This process later proved foundational to the next iteration of *Dark Wood* (homing), as I recognised the symbolic weight of the branches previously used in the work. I cut some segments into firewood-sized lengths, stacked them, and eventually encased a small bundle in crocheted copper wire recycled from the NAS electrical uninstallation (Figures 37-39). The resulting sculpture stood upright, precariously balanced, both contained and adorned within its new metallic skin, becoming a temporal gesture of reclamation.



Figures 34-36: Rose Rigley. L-R: Electrical detritus original state and organised (sourced from NAS uninstallation).

This work resists linear narratives of resolution and foregrounds the processing of my body's knowledge through critical reflection and stream-of-consciousness writing. Autobiographical memory is being restructured through the making process as an intra-action between my

internal self and the more-than-human. The intuitive choice of copper wire, ‘dangerous’ wood, and durational gesture is a continually negotiated act between the unconscious, material and spatial entanglements. As a reorientation of selfhood and agency, the copper-bound wood becomes a site of homing. Previously unmanageable and unspeakable narratives are made visible, tactile, and relational. The work is not a return to safety, but a becoming-with the past, where embodied making enacts a performative and ethical practice of remembering.

Figures 37-39: *Dark Wood* (original state, homing iteration and detail). 2025. Crocheted copper wire, crepe myrtle.

In line with Ukeles, Bourgeois, and Vicuña, the next iteration of *Dark Wood* (re-homing) unfolded as a durational performance of endurance sewing and embodied mending (Figures 40-42). Using the structure of a greenhouse, I constructed a fragile, quilt-like skin from single sheets of tissue paper, patterned through machine stitching and reinforced by hand where necessary. This delicate form was supported by a coffin-like base made from recycled wood, mounted on castors, and held upright by crepe myrtle branches, cut to size, wrapped in a muslin bandage to prevent tearing, and inserted into custom-built holes. Materialising as a

precarious house of the mind, the work was a metaphor for cognitive interiority.[57] The physical care became a comfortingly symbolic act of *not-forgetting* for my psychological self.

This version of *Dark Wood* offers a re-homing; it considers memory as a distributed, performative, and materially entangled process. The tissue paper, muslin, and wood do not merely support the structure; they co-create it, acting as mnemonic collaborators in the unfolding of affective meaning. The temporality and performativity of hand-sewing the damaged sections of the fragile material foregrounds a feminist act of care and a mode of remembering that is non-linear and embodied.

Figures 40-41: Rose Rigley. *Dark Wood* (re-homing iteration and detail). 2025. Tissue paper, machine and hand sewing, wood, muslin, crepe myrtle.

[57] Paramita Atmodiwirjo and Yandi Andri Yatmo, "Interiority in Everyday Space: A Dialogue between Materiality and Occupation," *Interiority* 2, no. 1 (2019): 1–4, https://doi.org/10.7454/in.v2i1.56.

Re-homing challenges normative logics of identity and domesticity, offering instead a vision of dwelling-with. In my work, this occurs through the conduit properties of copper, the ecological power of organic matter, the self-narratives of durational feminine craft, and the ritualised acts of self-kindness. As such, memory is not internal or linguistic but distributed across material and ecological entanglements, echoing Barad's theory of agential realism. The creative process becomes a space of personal renewal – my own re-homing – a site where autobiographical memories of past trauma are in flux. The work is not fixed, and nor am I in any sense of this word, but we are participating in Posthuman Feminist *not-forgetting* and are in the process of becoming. *Dark Wood*'s iterations do not merely recall; they re-home, creating spaces where belonging is possible again, but differently, through feminist acts of care and co-creation.

Figure 42: Rose Rigley. *Dark Wood* (re-homing iteration with rupture about to be repaired). 2025. Tissue paper, machine and hand sewing, wood, muslin, crepe myrtle.

Conclusion

"… at home, every room of the house can become a feminist room …" Sara Ahmed[58]

In writing this paper, I have traced my first year of the Master of Fine Arts program at NAS, reflecting both the external development of my artworks and the internal transformation that these endeavours have facilitated and encouraged. Through the making of *Breath*, *Re/fuse*, and *Dark Wood*, Posthuman Feminist creative acts of care have emerged, rooted in material, embodiment, and relational practices grounded in the *everyday*. The gentle repetition of this year – stitching, walking, cleaning, wrapping, remembering, being – has become a method of resistance and reparation. These ordinary actions have been an intimate revolt that enacted memory rather than simply preserving it. My understanding of the domestic, the home, and the feminine has been reframed, allowing my memory and identity to be renegotiated.

The *everyday* has proven to be not only a foundation for creative practice but also a space of ethical and political transformation. Domestic processes, autobiographical fragments, and relational rituals reveal how memory is distributed across bodies, materials, and internal landscapes, always shifting and always being remade. Consequently, I have reimagined previous maintenance and order strategies as tools of feminist reclamation and creative resistance.

I left behind a familiar life in pursuit of the unknown, arriving at NAS without a clear context. What unfolded was a metaphorical gutting, a complete opening of self, where everything internal spilt out into the figurative mud. Symbolically, I have had to slowly and carefully reinsert these parts, stitching myself into a new form of selfhood. For me, this enactment is not about closure, resolution, or even transformation; it is about staying with the unsettled, engaging in the cyclical and often muddy work of making, unmaking, and remaking the self and the world. The past has been reactivated, re-embodied, and is in the process of being reimagined.

During MFA1, I have used feminised, ritual labour and everyday materials as methods of healing, resistance, and Posthuman Feminist *not-forgetting*. Embodied practices have

[58] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 4.

transformed the domestic and the mundane into sites of memory and agency. Durational methodologies, including stitching, have provided the time and space for psychological re-evaluation. I have found that the act of repetitive rupture becomes a transformative process, enacting healing through material engagement and ritualised gestures of compassionate care.

However, none of this investigation has been brought to a resolution, nor is it ever likely to be wrapped up or concluded. These creative actions, much like the invisible labour of domestic maintenance, are, by their very nature, part of a continuous process of making space for selfhood that can never reach a finite outcome. Next year, I will continue to stitch myself back together, engaging with psychoanalytic theory as I consider new ways of visualising memory and somatic knowledge. The process is ongoing; this alone is confirmation that feminist artistic practice is not a destination but a continual unfolding – a *becoming* – that honours memory, embraces uncertainty, and reclaims potential in the *everyday*.

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List of Figures

Appendix 1

Stream-of-consciousness writing

I was un-homed the moment I was born into the chaotic fullness of a family life that already existed, into the confining collections of unread newspaper piles and unclear parental strategies, into the anarchic assemblages of unwashed dinner dishes and unspoken love words, into the compulsive clusters of unfolded laundry mounds and undiagnosed intergenerational trauma, into the amassed assortments of undusted ceramic ornaments and unchecked anger triggers, into the confusing curations of unfinished book stacks and unpredictable older siblings.

Inside the house,
there was no space for me
and so, I escaped
to the empty-ness of outside
to the patio,
to the swing set,
to the front garden,
to the street,
to the park,
to the swamp,
to the creek,
to the beach,
to the bushland.

And sometimes, I would find
my home in the noisy quiet
of an imaginary escape
into the liminal beyond.

This thing reaches up and out, straining against
confinement and leaning into destruction.
I can almost hear its crumpled yearning.
I want to keep it safe,
to keep it from harm,
but it moves against my wishes,
it breathes its own air
and moves towards the
elements that will be its
ultimate end. A beautiful state.
What is my resistance?
Should I let it go? Should I untie it?

I want to, but I have
a strange attachment to it,
so, I cannot yet let it go.
I am bound to keep it safe,
to suffocate it within the
constraints of safety.
This is a false safety, for there is no such thing.
It tells me not to be afraid.
It will meet its end soon enough.
Is this the death drive?
To lean into annihilation?
If so, you are braver than I.
And yet, the previous iteration
has now been transformed,
like all things that reach towards
life, there is an ending
of sorts, but perhaps not
a complete end.
I am unsure.
I listen to the straining for freedom,
as I sit in this uncertainty,
a counterintuitive position for me,
and all the while, the thing moves,
edges, reaches, stretches towards
its change and its end.

I am in my family's house,
looking for my mother.
Outside is my freedom,
I must find my own home.

I am in my husband's house,
imagination carries me away.
Only eggshells remain,
I must find my own home.

I am in my children's house,
performing acts of care.
It culminates in the future,
I must find my own home.

I am in my mother's house,
watching her slowly dying,
there is still no space here,
I must find my own home.

I am in a stranger's house,
removing others' detritus.
Time comes in fragments,
I must find my own home.

I am in my paper dwelling,
sewing together all the tears.
Light is from the punctures,
I have found my own home.

I am in my eternal house,
held in forgetful memory.
Only perfect silence remains,
I have returned home.

I am breathless,
and yet I breathe in the air of my surroundings.
I am beatless,
and yet each day my feet touch ground in rhythm.
I am homeless,
and yet I anchor myself each night into the earth.
I am placeless,
and yet I find great solidity around and below me.
I am lifeless,
and yet my body does rise and fall with the cycles.