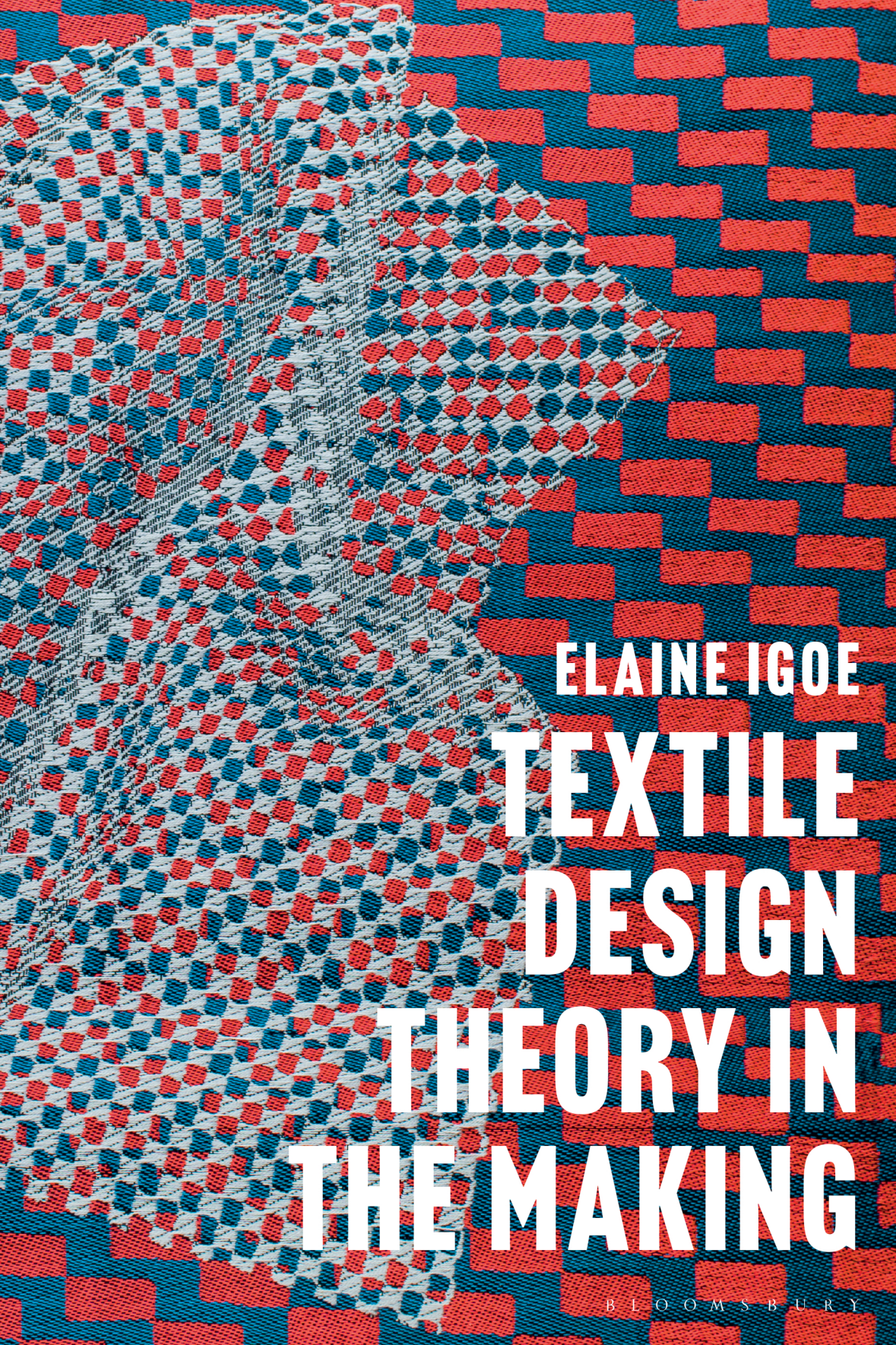

ELAINE IGOE

TEXTILE DESIGN THEORY IN THE MAKING

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Elaine Igoe

with contributions by Daniela Calabi, Elena Caratti,
Marianne Fairbanks, Tom Fisher, Marion Lean,
Mark Roxburgh and Rose Sinclair

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Elena Caratti, Architect, MA in e-design and PhD in design, is currently Associate Professor at the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano. Her research interests cover visual cultures and editorial design. She teaches visual cultures at the Design School of Politecnico di Milano and BA and MA courses in communication design. She also teaches research design critique at the PhD School in Design of Politecnico di Milano. In 2017 Caratti was co-editor with Giovanni Baule of the book *Design Is Translation. The Translation Paradigm for Design Culture* (the first edition of the book was published in Italian with Franco Angeli in 2016). It resonates with her contributory chapter reinforcing the concept for the reader and leading them to make comparisons with other fields of design (in this case communication design) while introducing new perspectives. Dr Elena Caratti is also an associate editor of *Studies in Material Thinking*, a peer-reviewed international online journal.

Marianne Fairbanks is an assistant professor in the Design Studies department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, United States. She received her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and her BFA from the University of Michigan. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally in venues

including the Museum of Art and Design, New York; the Smart Museum of Art, Chicago; and Copenhagen Contemporary, Denmark. Her work spans the fields of art, design and social practice, seeking to chart new material and conceptual territories, to innovate solution-based design and to foster fresh modes of cultural production.

Tom Fisher has been Professor in the School of Art and Design at Nottingham Trent University, UK, since 2007. He has led research funded by the AHRC and Defra, participating in work funded by WRAP. He is a member of the AHRC Peer Review College and reviews research bids for AHRC, ESRC and EPSRC. He is a member of the Design Research Society Council and lead the Special Interest Group OPEN (Objects, Practices, Experiences, Networks). He has led funded research on sustainable clothing (Defra) and industrial heritage (AHRC).

His background in craft practice (1985–94) has fed his work focused on embodied knowledge, the ethics of design and technologies, design, culture and innovation. He has led research on the textile heritage of Nottingham, particularly, as this relates to future innovation in an international context and has been the basis of his involvement in networks of researchers concerned with innovation. His recent work has included an AHRC-funded network that has focused on innovation in electronic textiles, and he is currently drawing on his work as a maker to develop work in the industrial heritage field on skill acquisition and transmission.

Elaine Igoe is Senior Lecturer in Textiles and Fashion at the University of Portsmouth, UK, and currently Visiting Tutor (Research) in the Department of Textiles at the Royal College of Art, London. Her research is concerned with theories of design as they relate to the creation of textiles, materials and surfaces. Igoe's doctoral study, written autoethnographically, was significant in developing new understandings of textiles within design research. She is a Review Board member for the Journal of Textile Design Research and Practice and for conferences internationally. Her recent articles and chapters focus on textiles in the post-digital era and the ethics of textile production methods.

Marion Lean's doctoral design research at the Royal College of Art, UK, explores methodology for implementing practical material engagement in experiential research encounters including workshops, public exhibition and ethnographic study. The findings suggest new spaces for inquiry and new references for design research which employs material approaches and methods including prototyping

and object creation, physical, sensory experience and relationship building. Outcomes are working methods which contribute to the positioning of textile thinking as a means of knowledge production in design research. Previously, Marion worked in design, public engagement and communications roles in London having completed her masters in critical design from Goldsmiths in 2012 and textile design from Dundee in 2011.

Mark Roxburgh is Associate Professor of Design at the University of Newcastle, Australia. Mark's research interests cover design research, visual communication theory and practice, photographic theory and practice and user experience design. His PhD explored the central role that visual images and visual perception play in design, with a specific emphasis on how photographic images condition us to perceive, experience and transform the world in a self-replicating manner. His ongoing research pursuits have been developing a phenomenological theory of photography to counter the dominance of critical theory and semiotic deconstruction and developing a theory of design as a form of embodied perceptual synthesis to counter the dominance of the design problem-solving metaphor.

Rose Sinclair is a Design Lecturer (textiles) in the Design department at Goldsmiths, University of London, UK, where she teaches textiles- and design-related practice at postgraduate level. Her doctoral research focusses on Black British women and their crafting practices, and textiles, through the lens of textiles networks such as Dorcas Clubs and Dorcas Societies, through which she discusses migration, identity and settlement. Rose is also interested in the use of textiles networks as a form of participatory craft practice and public engagement in crafts. Rose continues to explore her textiles practice through participatory immersive workshops in localized pop-up shops, installations and presentations in museums and diverse spaces such as the V&A Museum London, the Bruce Castle Museum and House for An Art Lover. Rose has authored several textile books, her most recent being *Textiles and Fashion, Materials, Design and Technology* (2015). She is a member of the advisory board for Textile: Journal of Cloth and Culture and a member of the AHRC Stitching Together Research Network.

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I acknowledge the contributions of the other authors of this book – not only for their work but also for their advice and patience. I reached out to these individuals to suggest a slightly different approach to academic bookmaking and I am glad to say that I found the right people. I recognize that they too have their own supporting structures to thank. In respect to this I specifically thank Anthony Burton on behalf of Marianne Fairbanks. New academic allegiances have been formed, and existing ones strengthened in the production of this book. In the course of making this book, other individuals have given of their time and energies and although the constraints of professional life meant the involvement had to end, your participation is appreciated. Thank you to the reviewers who give their time to undertake such activities of academic citizenship. I am grateful for the good guidance and support of Frances Arnold and her assistants at Bloomsbury Academic. Many thanks to the committee of the Pasold Trust for supporting this publication with funding for image permissions.

My entire family has offered all types of support as I navigate what it is to be a first-generation academic and author. To my parents, my sisters and my brother, I feel your pride in me. Simon, Nara and Esmé, thank you for giving me joy and balance.

Elaine Igoe, January 2021

Introduction

This book is a conversation about textile design and what it means to approach design from textility.

'Textility' is derived from a common etymological root of the Latin *texere*, meaning 'to weave', and the ancient Greek *techne*, meaning 'to make', and as such offers a model of making that is concerned with the 'slicing and binding of fibrous material' (Mitchell 1997: 7; Ingold 2010: 92). Mitchell goes on to highlight the further connection with 'text', offering textility as inference to a very particular way of making, speaking and writing, but also states: 'It is clear that textiles are not words and the differences between them benefit the conceptual apparatus of thought at the expense of its sensory equivalent' (Mitchell 1997: 8). Webster (1996: 99) explains theories of textuality and writerly texts via Roland Barthes's '*S/Z*', in which he frequently uses textile and network metaphors to discuss the structure of texts and describes them as 'a surface over which the reader can range in any number of ways that the text permits'. The tension between the textuality of this publication and its relation to the concept of textility is consistent and apparent throughout this text. Negotiating the tension of this relationship, this *textasis* (see Chapter 15) has become my text-ile practice. I discovered this term 'textasis' in a 2009 essay from Maria Damon. She recounts her residency in Riga in 2008 for the E-text and Textiles Project. Damon's practice combined active poetics with textile practice and she produced small cross-stitched textile works that she sent to friends and colleagues, requesting their interaction and response on the pieces' textuality. One piece, 'B: Tiny Arkhive', was sent to Jewish-Canadian poet Adeena Karasick. BET or b is the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet and in this position is considered as female. Its numeric value is 2, which Karasick sees as signifying a doubling or a multiplicity. It represents a house, an archive – closed on three sides and open on one.

> 'You are an "Open House", which is at once in place, while deprived of any one place. In its place and in place of; re-placed in hyperspatial interplays, you, my tiny archive, displaced en plaisir.' 'Little archive cross-stitched and emanating,

> I read you as an embroidered network of socio-linguistic and hermeneutic relations.' (Damon 2009)

Karasick described the piece as 'an inscription of textasis'. This simple term is derived from the ancient Greek *tasis*, meaning stretching, tension or intensity. The example of this collaborative textile work connects ideas of gendering, the matrixial and relational, textuality and textility, representation, symbolism and the quantum, key concepts at various points in this book (Damon 2011).

Mitchell and Ingold's explication of the word 'textilic' should be held as one of the touchstones of this publication. I pick up from Ingold's 2010 paper *The Textility of Making* which outlines the marginalization of textilic approaches to design and making against the primacy of the architectonic model during the Enlightenment. To be textilic is to be textile like – a network, expansive, applicable. It sits between the architectonic and the hylomorphic as paradigms for thinking and making. I expand the notion of a textilic concept of knowledge-making into the matrixial (Ettinger 2005) which allows a feminist expansion of models of design and affords a connection between the exegesis of the design cognition and the designer (maker). The concept of the matrixial denotes trans-subjectivity in regard to the context, the designer(s), the process and the designed outcome.

I suggest that a matrixial approach sets up the connection between the designer and the outcomes and consequences their design spawn. The rhizomatic nature of the matrixial sets up the basis of an unending situation, only broken by external forces acting upon the scenario (see Chapter 13, *Making, Problems and Pleasures*).

Notions of textilic design and matrixial critiques and approaches to design here have been developed from an exploration into what textile design is at a fundamental level. However, my intention is to echo Anni Albers provocation at the start of her book *On Weaving* (1965: IX). *Textile Design Theory in the Making* is not only for those who identify with the disciplinary field of textile design but all those who find it difficult to associate with oversimplified, transactional or convergent models of design. Johan Redström's book *Making Design Theory* (2017) was one of the first to challenge these tenets and suggest that the development of design theory must recognize fluidity, complexity and indeed practice. On a less significant aspect, Redström (2017: 143) points to the lack of imagery in his book and this book too is sparsely illustrated. This may seem unusual, particularly for a book concerned with textile design. It is again an intentional move and an enactment and recognition of relational textile

practice. The publication of this book is long preceded by Beverly Gordon's richly illustrated and veritable tome *Textiles: The Whole Story* (Gordon 2013). The image research to be found in Gordon's publication is extraordinary and, to date, unmatched. In many ways, this book cannot be read or fully understood without referring to it; certainly, it provides the best global and historical visualization of notions of how textility exists in the world.

In her preface, Gordon explains her discovery of the story of the Veil of *Maya* within Hindu philosophy (2013: 15). She points out that everything we think we know of our individualistic world is *Maya*. There exists a shimmering veil of Maya which has a purpose of shielding us from the essential wholeness of being but yet is there to remind us of the illusion of our incarnate existence, we are 'caught by its materiality'. Gordon presents her book as a textile installation which mimics the action of the veil of Maya.

I too got caught up in philosophical stories of mesh-like structures when conceptualizing my approach to bookmaking on textiles and the Buddhist philosophy of Indra's net struck me as significant.

> Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net which has been hung by some cunning artificer in such a manner that it stretches out infinitely in all directions. In accordance with the extravagant tastes of deities, the artificer has hung a single glittering jewel in each 'eye' of the net, and since the net itself is infinite in dimension, the jewels are infinite in number. There hang the jewels, glittering 'like' stars in the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring. (Cook 1973: 2)

Indra's net is an infinite mesh, matrix, grid, lattice, cat's cradle, weave, knit, cloth, fabric: but not only that, it is decorated and decorative, ornamental, glittery, bejewelled, draped so as to please the Gods. But the clever maker of this dazzling matrix remains unnamed. I have responded to the metaphor of Indra's net in both forming and representing the epistemology and methodology that evolved in the structure of this study. But rather than conceal the identity of the maker, through methods of autoethnography, the significance of my identity is not only allowed to surface but is also embodied by the infinite mesh I am adding to. In terms of structure this book is non-linear, borrowing and referencing the notion of an expanding matrix, studded with texts that I hope capture the reflexivity of

the research process as they project and reflect onto and into one another in a recursive way. Each chapter is interstitial.

Chapter 1 *Too much to tell* outlines the feminist research approach that has shaped this book. The autoethnographic, narrative style used throughout is explained and the source of the guiding research questions is described. Adams and Holman Jones (2008: 379) outlining the dominant critique of autoethnographic research.

> . . . too much personal mess, too much theoretical jargon, too elitist, too sentimental, too removed, too difficult, too easy, too White, too Western, too colonialist, too indigenous. Too little artistry, too little theorizing, too little connection of the personal and political, too impractical, too little fieldwork, too few real-world applications.

This book's approach may be too much or too little for you. There may simply be too much or too little of its unapologetic narrative style. I intentionally use direct quotes heavily across the text, often suspended between paragraphs as an invitation for personal thought and interpretation before I offer my own. I aim to represent a multitude of voices rather than simply my own singular narration or interpretation. You will have already noted the purposeful use of personal pronouns. It is a monograph in many ways, but one in which I have invited discursive participation from scholars inside and outside of textiles. Their responses are included here alongside mine and collaboratively evidence 'the making' referred to in the title of this book.

Ramia Mazé talks of 'bookmaking as a feminist practice' (Mazé 2018). She describes her experience of being an author, editor and reviewer of several publications and says that

> my work reported here can be understood as a kind of 'practice-led' research, in which my reflections and conceptualizations have accumulated gradually on the basis of multiple experiences of bookmaking.

Mazé refers to and applies Jane Rendell's five modes of critical practice to her feminist bookmaking practice/practise (Rendell 2011 in Mazé 2018), namely collectivity, interiority, alterity, materiality and performativity. In *Textile Design Theory in the Making*, *collectivity* is manifested in the presentation of the book as a report on a methodology that is an actively and collectively developing one. *Interiority* supports philosophical approaches that explore connectedness and interdependency and here is developed through Ettinger's concept of the matrixial in Chapter 2: *Matrixial meaning*. *Alterity* is explored in the discussion of gendering in design history and the development of its theories in Chapter 7: *A story of hard and soft*. This book is *performative* in its autoethnographic approach

(Chapter 1) as well as the breadth of genres and ideologies it espouses and is played out in its structure, its *materiality*.

Chapter 3: *Talking textiles* is a short reflective text that encapsulates my research methods and tells a story – a truth about how interactions with the subject of my study – textile designers – played out and my agency within it as the researcher.

Chapter 4: *Design, thinking and textiles thinking* outlines research into the industrial structure of textile designing as well as pedagogic research in the field. This is contrasted with the development of design research and subsequently design thinking. Textile thinking as a concept is traced through the literature and 'textilic design' proposed as a development of such. After which begins a series of chapters whose content is extrapolated directly from conversations with textile designers and makers. Anonymous excerpts from these conversations are blended into polyphonic, non-linear texts called 'meshes' that intersperse the chapters.

Chapter 5: *Translating and transforming* investigates the role of the textile designer and textile as translator and semantic object, looking at design as an action of response, pledging back and gift- giving. It is paired with a chapter from Elena Caratti and Daniela Calabi on design as translation which is explored through notions of texture design.

Jessica Hemmings (2010) advocates the scholarly application of fiction, narrative and populist writings to develop an academic canon for textiles. Chapter 7: *A story of hard and soft: Modernism and textiles as design* takes a work of fiction by Paul Scheerbart entitled *The Gray Cloth* as a metaphor for the marginalization of textiles within modernist ideology and the subsequent impact on conceptions of textiles as design. The metaphoric comfortable emerald room (Scheerbart 2001) was for too long a space where textile designers quietened their expertise and subscribed to ideologies of craft and applied art.

This is further expanded in Chapter 8: *The gendered textile design discipline* which also draws on aspects of Chapter 5 to define how the discipline of textile design became gendered. In this chapter I expose a number of gendered metaphors for the entity of textiles, encompassing designers, designed outcomes, process and contexts. This is balanced by work from both Marion Lean and Rose Sinclair. In Chapter 9, Lean extends these ideas in the context of contemporary textile design practice and recent applications of textile thinking. Sinclair's contribution in Chapter 10 exposes the specific challenges for women of colour within the field and the invisibility of both race and craft skills in our understanding of textile design.

In Chapter 11: *Paraphernalia and playing for design* I take on notions of playing in the process of designing, particularly with reference to playing cognitively as well as with materials at hand. The role of objects – stuff – for textile designers is the starting point for this chapter which picks back up notions of translation and taciturnity discussed earlier in the book. In Chapter 12, Tom Fisher provides us with a text in which he turns his attention to some objects he has made or found and their function in his career in 'making' with wood and in furniture design and design academia.

In Chapter 13: *Making, problems and pleasure* I return to earlier questions explored regarding design as problem-solving. I apply this to the field of textile design; mainstream textiles as well as innovation-led textile research. What 'problems' does textile design address itself to? Following this Mark Roxburgh develops an argument against the problematization of design. Through the work of Merleau-Ponty and Flusser and his own field of practice as an image-maker, Roxburgh critiques the prescriptive foundations of design theory and posits the perceptual basis of design as an alternative model for our understanding.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 15: *Elevated surfaces*, returns to relational conceptions of design and picks up the topics of the preceding chapters as it proposes definitions for what textile design is and how textilic design could be expanded. I have deliberately avoided approaches to concluding this book neatly; it is after all *in the making*. Instead the last pages provide an interruption of play, a breakage of the rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 10), a point of inflection in the Deleuzian fold or a jewel in the (Indra's) net of textilic practice. In fact, this book closes not with my own words but an offshoot into the work of others – an epilogic account from Marianne Fairbanks, a textile practitioner across art, design and innovation. It is her work in fact that wraps this book, so, fittingly, she provides a co-emergent insight into how the thoughts drawn together in this chapter influence her textilic practice.

Writing this book has been an activity of looping, mending and reweaving. Repair as reparation to older ideas that myself and others have built upon. I naturally weave in work from others that has been created in the meantime or that now seems to have a place. My previous work has been cited by others and their work naturally critiques, builds, extends and applies those ideas. I wish to present this truthfully, allowing the layers or time and thinking to be apparent. My aim for my writing practice is that it similarly unfolds using feminist practices through narrative inquiry methods – representing multiple voices and truths through story, metaphor and critique.

This emerges from observations made through the contextualization of the textile design discipline within modernism, reappropriation and re-signification of textile metaphors, conversation, storytelling and restorying as analysis, often subsequently blended and meshed. You will notice that each of these research methods involves a dynamic: something is in something, something is in relation to something else, something combines with something else; notions of relationality, in inevitable partnership with tension, permeate the epistemology of this book at every level. This is attended to in the contextual discussion of design in regard to metamodernism in the concluding chapter, Chapter 15: *Elevated surfaces*.

My research methodology is a montage of qualitative methods, using autoethnography, storytelling and conversation to support textile designers in describing their own process and thinking. My aim is to situate these different stories in relation to the established context of design research. This volume aims to find a location between the types of fictional, poetic, social, cultural, political, historical writing found in textile culture publications and the current and broadest discourse of design theory. Daniela Rosner's book *Critical Fabulations: Reworking the Methods and Margins of Design* (2018) provides a significant influence on this publication. Rosner's work similarly uses narrative, first-person, feminist approaches to expose and 'rework' the margins of design. Key to her study is her exploration of textile structure and computation. Indeed a 'critical fabulation', as defined by Saidiya Hartman and later Rosner, is what I propose. This book aims to sit alongside *Critical Fabulations* in developing a body of alternative writings on what designing is.

I have invited contributions from authors whose research practice varies across forms of art, design and craft and who can offer additional viewpoints on the propositions of the key chapters. At the outset the editing relationship was set up as a dialogue. Their contributions are responses to my draft chapters and subsequently my final texts have been influenced by theirs. Their chapters have been minimally edited to retain style and voice and to respect authorship, avoiding any perceived hierarchy. The contributors include early to mid-career academics and distinguished professors. Three of the contributors I have never met but I sought out to find individuals who would be able to extend and probe my ideas in an interesting way. One is a long-standing and respected associate and another is one of my completed doctoral students. Our grouping of authors does not yet go far enough in terms of diverse representation or in decolonizing academia. Initial proposals for this book included further contributions that could address these long-standing issues. The inevitable permutations of

personal lives and global pandemics alongside the structural machinations of academic bookmaking prevented the realization of this initial proposal. Where this project has fallen short, I have engaged in citation politics (Mott and Cockayne 2017) referencing a majority of woman scholars. As mentioned earlier, Mazé and her collaborators' approach was not without obstacles set in place by the conventions of academia and publishing. This is my attempt to develop an additional example of how bookmaking can be a form of feminist design practice.

As you read, you will note marked differences in the style of writing and research approach throughout. This is intentional and communicates a very real shift that I experienced from an objective research style to one where my subjectivity became vital to the research. This shift occurred in response to several contingent factors in both the personal and academic realms of my lived experience.

> The individual is both site and subject of these discursive struggles for identity and for remaking memory. Because individuals are subject to multiple and competing discourses in many realms, their subjectivity is shifting and contradictory, not stable, fixed, rigid. (Richardson 2000: 929)

I wanted to make my own discursive struggle evident across these pages, to use mine and others' writing, as Richardson suggests, as a method (and as such, record) of qualitative inquiry.

When I learnt printed textile design, ensuring that you trim your sample so that it appears as if it is cut from a roll of fabric with no borders was one of the first presentation conventions we encountered. In terminology borrowed from graphic design or photography this would be called a 'full-bleed' method of presentation. My textile practice bleeds into and reflects onto the written and visual work of others, some of which have been directly referenced and some not; some give their names and contributions here, others not. All are respectfully acknowledged as essential to this polyphony.

> There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject. (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/2008: 25)

1

Too much to tell

Autoethnography

Developed over the past fifty years as a response to colonialism and issues of representation, autoethnography is used as a critical approach to knowledge-making across a range of fields. Carolyn Ellis, a leading autoethnographer, tells how she came to develop her autoethnography as a poststructuralist, postmodern, feminist researcher contesting issues of authority, representation, voice and method (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis 2015: 3). She describes how, as an approach to her field of ethnography, it united her 'sociological eye with a communicative heart'. Autoethnography was a way to overcome the crisis of representation, to avoid generalizing and homogenous positivism and to recognize the subjectivity of the situated researcher.

> Autoethnography is a qualitative method – it offers nuanced, complex, and specific knowledge about particular lives, experiences, and relationships rather than general information about large groups of people. (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis 2015: 21)

The research presented in this book began as personal questions, doubts and stories I told myself, about myself and my situation. I came to a point in my career in design academia where these feelings and thoughts surfaced in direct confrontation to what I was rationally, objectively researching. It got to a point where I was forced to deal with them. Autoethnography permitted me to take the route that allowed for complexity and subjectivity, recognizing this juncture as a 'personal-cultural entanglement' (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis 2015: 22). I aim to achieve the four principles for evaluating autoethnography as set out by Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis (2015: 102–4).

1. Make contributions to knowledge
2. Value the personal and experiential

3. Demonstrate the power, craft and responsibilities of stories and storytelling
4. Take a relationally responsible approach to research practice and representation

This book seeks to contribute to design research and develop design theory. It does this through valuing collective subjective experience in the field of textile design, expressed through narrative methods, both directly told and restoried or fabulated. It is structured through and upon a framework of critical relationality – informing both its premise and its delivery.

Ellis and Bochner's paper *Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject* (2000) tells us a story about what it is to be an autoethnographer, what it is to learn about autoethnography and how the approach developed within the broader field of narrative enquiry. Its storied style makes it easy to read and accessible, even though its content is complex. Reading Ellis and Bochner's work inspired me to write large the changes that have happened throughout my research journey, accepting that edges of my various bits of writing are ragged and frayed, not smooth and sharp. They overlay, enmesh and entangle; they don't tessellate. And I won't try to make them, either.

> [T]he researcher's personal experience becomes important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under study. Reflexive ethnographies range along a continuum from starting research from one's own experience to ethnographies where the researcher's experience is actually studied alongside with other participants, to confessional tales where the researcher's experience of doing the study becomes the focus of investigation. (Ellis and Bochner 2000)

Through reflective writing, through co-creating stories with other textile designers, through the structuring and presentation of this book, I am expressing an autoethnography. I am expressing my life, my character, my constraints, my relationships and my position on textile design in the world. In this book can be seen the evidence of the story of its development. In some ways I wish I could be braver, dating each piece of writing, placing it firmly at the point at which it was thought, written and rewritten, resisting polishing and tessellation. I do consider this text as my creative research practice. My textile design aesthetic is experimental, conceptual, revolving around processes, drawn to texture and nature. My research approach is drawn to equivalent qualities within research methods and methodological design.

Conversation

The key tool I have used to retrieve the fragments of experience is the recorded conversation. The key thoughts presented in this book were based on a series of fifteen recorded conversations which took place between February 2009 and March 2011 and developed through countless informal conversations, emails and further academic work in the years since. These recorded conversations were initially set up as unstructured/semi-structured interviews, but most played out as conversations. At the time, I berated myself as researcher for jumping in and talking, but it was too difficult not to. I was talking to textile designers. I am a textile designer. I teach textile designers. Most of the so-called 'interviews' had been arranged through mutual contacts, or we were fellow alumni. I was inextricably connected to the people I was talking with. I felt at ease and let myself seep into the talking. The individuals I spoke to were students of textile design, world-famous textile designers, textile studio owners, designer makers, textile innovators, commercial textile designers, textile design lecturers, embroidery designers, print designers and weave designers. Some I was in awe to be speaking to, others were literally old friends. They took place in my research space, in cafes, in their studios; I spoke to friends over the phone while they were at work and strangers invited me into their kitchens to talk over homemade soup. Each scenario was interpersonal: trans-subjective encounters, to use Ettinger's terminology.

For the first set of conversations in 2009, I arrived with a list of specific questions that I hoped to pop when the moment should arise. They covered these main areas: working and thinking methods for textile design, communicating design ideas and outcomes for textiles, self-awareness and identification with the concept of textile design. This list of questions often stifled the conversation as it began to emerge. The talk would then begin to loosen and I would steer it ridiculously back to my questions, the dialogue jumping about wildly.

One particular question proved problematic: why do we design textiles? The designers found this question difficult, both to understand and to answer. This question later morphed into me asking about the 'role of textile design'. I wanted to know how the textile designers see the significance of their work.

For the ensuing conversations from 2010 and 2011, I allowed a more natural flow of conversation. At this stage I was more comfortable with open-endedness and had set down some of the specificities I was targeting in the initial conversations.

My personality, my relationships, my research expertise (or lack of it) and my textile knowledge were all brought to bear on each conversation. This is evident as the textile designers talked to me about tutors we had had in common, shortened names for our alma mater and initialisms for certain trade events. In *Living Narrative*, Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps champion the conversation, specifically personal narratives and everyday storytelling, as a means of exploring narrative for three key reasons. It affords an inherent open-endedness, is a medium for airing unresolved events and it elicits familiarity (2001: 6). They describe how conversational narratives reveal the vernacular and a way of ordering, explaining and establishing a position on experience (2001: 57).

Some of the mutual connections we held were unknown at the outset, only coming to light precisely through conversation, in turn simultaneously building and altering the nuance of the talk. The familiarity that was often established at times turned the direction of the conversation back to myself, the textile designers asking me about my design work and research. Other times, I do this for myself, offering up thoughts and comments for debate that are unique to that specific conversation. This dialogue meant that although I was always the initiator of the talk, I did not hold all the control over it. It became a conversation rather than interview because of its dialogical content. The active participation from both parties changed and altered the direction and content of the talk (Ochs and Capps 2001: 55).

Informal conversations and encounters have naturally influenced my approach to bookmaking. It so often goes without saying but it shouldn't. Conference presentations and invitations to speak at events that seemed to me at first to be a tangent opened up new areas and connections – new words too. Academics finding my (old) work for the first time allowed me to see its currency as well as its flaws. Students using, testing and challenging my work to make their own new work is so directly encouraging and invigorating. Being part of that process as a PhD supervisor is a privilege as well as a prompt as a researcher.

Stories and fabulations

The outcomes of these conversations can be read as narratives, or 'everyday stories', as Ochs and Capps put it, about the lives of these textile designers. These stories include elements of delight, regret, humour, anger, nostalgia, mundanity and reflection. Some aspects have been well rehearsed in prior conversations;

others show new ideas and perspectives surfacing within that moment. The notion of extracting rational 'truth' from these stories is nonsensical. Each textile designer has told me a story about their experience of being a textile designer. Walter Benjamin parallels everyday storytelling with the physicality and materiality of making.

> [A story] does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus, traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel. (Benjamin 1936: 91)

And the structure and content of the stories told to me at that time were affected by me: my own story and my own questions.

> For it is granted to him to reach back to a whole lifetime (a life, incidentally, that comprises not only his own experience but no little of the experience of others; what the storyteller knows from hearsay is added to his own.) His gift is the ability to relate his life; his distinction, to be able to tell his entire life. (Benjamin 1936: 108)

These stories do not hold truths but commonalities of experience that might develop new knowledge and understanding, 'openly or covertly, something useful'(1936: 86):

In fact, one can go on and ask oneself whether the relationship of the storyteller to his material, human life, is not in itself a craftsman's relationship, whether it is not his very task to fashion the raw material of experience, his own and that of others, in a solid, useful and unique way. (Benjamin 1936: 107)

The *Talking Textiles* chapter offers a piece of creative writing for which I used a process recommended by Ellis and Bochner (2000: 752). They suggest using a process of emotional recall where the writer revisits a scene emotionally and physically. In this piece, I blended two conversation scenarios together to help indicate the trans-subjective encounter that took place, focusing on motifs of interconnectedness and reflexivity. Ellis and Bochner highlight the advantage of recalling these emotions as close to the experience as possible; however, for me, it was what I experienced in the years between that allowed me to reflect and connect the two scenarios, offering a perspective on my research methodology and methods.

The writing methods myself and the contributing authors employ are a combination of conventional academic writing interspersed with examples of creative non-fiction (Tedlock 2011: 336). Tedlock characterizes creative non-

fiction as factually accurate, polyphonic and scenical, and centrally positions the researcher/author as character. The various pieces of creative non-fiction that punctuate this book were written at different times: they are independent but are connected through my experience as textile designer and researcher.

Ronald Pelias (2011: 660) describes how writing might function as a both a realization and record. He cites M. L. Rosenthal's quote from 1987 suggesting that writing is 'the unfolding of a realization, the satisfying of a need to bring to the surface the inner realities of the psyche', and remarks on the difference of 'writing up' and 'writing into'. I use words to help me discover what I want to say. Pelias goes on to explain how realizations recorded and brought about through writing can be felt with confidence or some level of doubt, but that these realizations importantly 'unfold on a continuum from the personal to the public', supporting feminist ideology; he then quickly cautions on separating the personal and the public/political. The writing that makes up this book moves between and conjoins both objective and subjective writing styles as required, recognizing that both have their place and that all writing is a record. Older pieces of work have been cut and spliced with very recent writing and reconfigured. Personal narratives sit alongside conventional styles; mythologies and literature are incorporated into analytical texts; the sections do not flow directly into one another but largely rely on the heuristics of the reader to establish the connections.

In *Critical Fabulations* (2018) Daniela Rosner uses 'fabulation' to displace established understandings of design. To fabulate is to talk or narrate in fables – to invent, concoct and fabricate. Rosner takes this concept from writer Saidiya Hartman who developed critical fabulation in her own work as an approach to re-storying. Rosner describes how in her fabulated account of a project which combined quilting and electrical engineering in a design context, she hopes to expand the opportunities for the groups and spaces in which design takes place and in doing so 'reorient what lies ahead' (Rosner 2018: 1). Rosner clearly sets out her feminist technoscience research approach and based on this challenges established design theory. She designates these as four dimensions:

- Individualism – design as an aggregation of individuals.
- Objectivism – design as science paradigm promotes rationality and objectivity.
- Universalism – designers 'imagine' things about their target 'users'.
- Solutionism – to identify opportunities, designers often direct towards predefined solutions.