

[be] holding

light

[be]holding light:

Things unseen and the spaces between

Introduction:

Although the concept of this research project is expansive and multidimensional, it could be summarized (if it must be) in one word: light. Light can mean and be many things in both definition and experience. Its meaning, like its form, is fluid and elusive. *Holding Light* is a paradoxical and whimsical search for understanding and meaning while acknowledging that this, like light, cannot be fully grasped.

This booklet situates my final year project, exploring the multifaceted nature of light and its contradictory manifestations through the materiality and process of the work. Whilst light is often taken to be the agent which makes things known and visible, this project also ponders its limitations: what cannot be seen or is not known, and ironically attempts to use light to illuminate such things. Guided by the characteristics of light and sight, this body of work is an enquiry into the possibility of the unknown, otherworldly and spiritual, and a critique against anthropocentric perspectives.

I will first provide some context on what led me to my themes and inspired my premise. Following this, it expands on the founding hypothesis of my project: that light is a living thing which could be investigated in my studio-laboratory through its interaction with other materials. My project posits that there is life within these material things and seeks to make that force visible and known. It is this premise among other insinuations which bears striking resemblance to theories of new materialism which are then unpacked, leading into an in-depth analysis of my own work. Essentially, I propose that my artistic practice and exhibition are a visual and practical manifestation of the endless entanglements and fluidity of matter and meaning which new materialism argues for.



"For poetry too is a little incarnation, giving body to what had been before invisible and inaudible."

(Lewis, 1958:6)





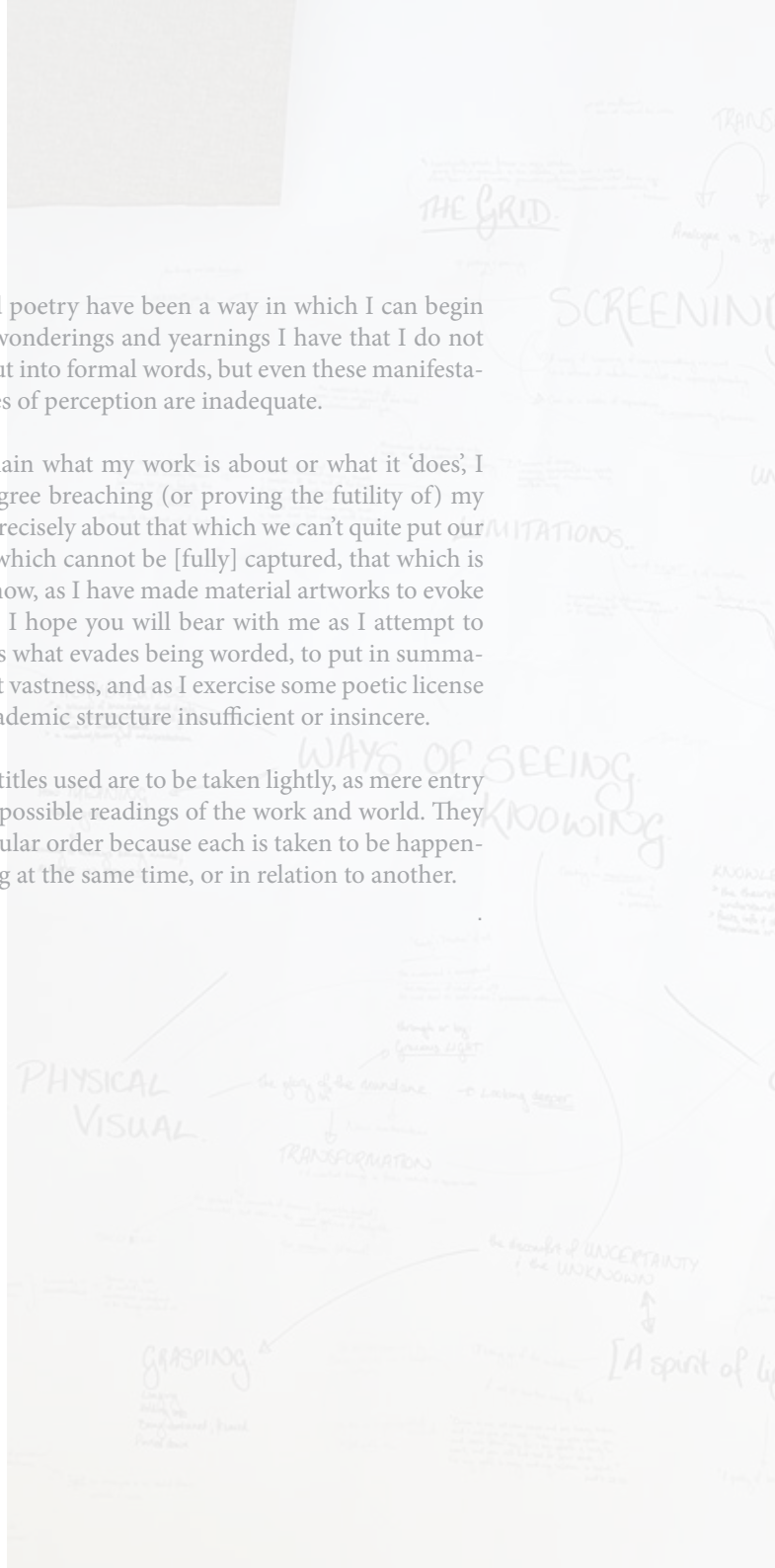
Holding Light (installation view).

Personal notes:

For me, art and poetry have been a way in which I can begin to express the wonderings and yearnings I have that I do not know how to put into formal words, but even these manifestations and modes of perception are inadequate.

As I try to explain what my work is about or what it 'does', I am to some degree breaching (or proving the futility of) my project as it is precisely about that which we can't quite put our finger on, that which cannot be [fully] captured, that which is beyond us. So now, as I have made material artworks to evoke the immaterial, I hope you will bear with me as I attempt to put in sentences what evades being worded, to put in summary what is about vastness, and as I exercise some poetic license where I find academic structure insufficient or insincere.

The words and titles used are to be taken lightly, as mere entry points into the possible readings of the work and world. They are in no particular order because each is taken to be happening or becoming at the same time, or in relation to another.



Background and conceptualisation: A case study of light

During my years at Michaelis, I have been cultivating an expanding fascination with light, from its physical manifestation (aesthetics) to its properties and potential. Born out of a frustration with the stereotypical divisions and rankings of knowledge, as well as a struggle for certainty in life, light has become an embodiment of hope to me as its physical properties and anomalies integrate fields which have typically been separated and reflect a divine essence. Light's extensive and diverse definitions have propelled my final-year project and provide ample space for investigation and meaning to be formed and questioned.

My final year project began with the hypothesis that light was a living thing which could be investigated in my studio-turned-laboratory. Inspired by artists such as Veronica Janssens, this approach simulated the experimentation and research evident in scientific laboratories and the accompanying element of curiosity and discovery (Janssens in Lloyd, 2020). Suggesting that this intangible thing called light could be measured and recorded in physical form, the practice aimed to expose the limitations of human systematisation and knowledge production. The practice also formed part of a personal journey and process of seeking out the supernatural and spiritual amidst the mundane and dark of this world, believing that it is present whether or not perceived. Inasmuch as this project has been about looking for and observing light, it equally infers or even foregrounds the 'experience of darkness' – the uncertainties, calamities and disparities of life.

Although there is value and security in the numbers, words and structures, of science, religion, philosophy and other such fields, they often permeate dualistic or linear thought which results in segregation and denies the tacit – things that are beyond their range of measure (Siegesmund & Freedman, 2018). In this context, I wanted my work to demonstrate that visual research can play a critical role in furthering our understanding – particularly in providing insight to the immeasurable and metaphysical. Whereas science typically prioritises control and what can be known, the artistic laboratory can

find joy, synchronicity and meaning in the uncertain and unknown. Although my work gradually expanded beyond this hypothesis, treating my studio as laboratory and light as the source material and raw material was foundational to my concept because it positioned light as something that can be learnt from.

Whilst I have often battled with the subjectivity and open-endedness of the arts – that there is no ‘right’ answer – I believe it provides a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of life which can make a significant contribution to the pursuit of knowledge. As Siegesmund & Freedman (2018) insinuate, visual research promotes a nomadic enquiry against the comfort of quantitative understanding or labelling. Whilst it is precarious in its ephemerality, visual practice has the ability to represent and analyse tacit knowledge beyond what words can say and beyond what cartesian discourse can do (ibid).

“Words and numbers—those things that are known—can diminish the tacit, for the tacit is what lies beyond our grasp. The image is not a recording. It is not a depicting. It is a reaching. It is a reaching for a potentiality—a tacit dimension.”

(Siegesmund & Freedman, 2018:36)





A studio view.

Theory: a new materialist reading

New materialism suggests that all matter is entangled in relationships, which means that matter and meaning are fluid – always ‘becoming’ (Leonard, 2020). I am interested in the idea of ‘becoming’ and my work aims to show this. To illustrate the ideas I grapple with, I use the article, *The Arts and New Materialism: a call to stewardship through mercy, grace, and hope*, by Nicholas Leonard (2020), as a key text to summarise the main aspects of new materialism and to infer their relationship to the arts and sciences. In this article, the author highlights how new materialism promotes new understanding through cross-boundary, interdisciplinary practice and thereby resists dualistic thought which typically divides and denies different perspectives (ibid).

Central to new materialism is the promotion of new and expanding modes of thought initiated by the idea that agency exists between matter and is thereby never static (Leonard, 2020). Leonard (2020) argues that a new materialist framework promotes an integrative and mutual perspective which can transform the way we interact with and understand the world. He further suggests that artistic practice can contribute to the recovery of our polarized society and thought through its embodiment of new materialist principles (Leonard, 2020). Referencing prominent new materialism theorist, Karen Barad (2007), Leonard (2020) summarises how new materialism takes matter to be interconnected and always in the process of becoming. This is substantiated by terms such as “entanglements” and “intra-action”, used by Barad (2007), to denote the relationality of all matter. Things cannot be considered as isolated elements or predefined entities – they all ‘intra-act’ with each other and have an effect on each other – therefore meanings of a subject which have previously been seen as fixed are called into question (Leonard, 2020). Because everything is entangled, it becomes impossible to differentiate between entities and thus the theory resists polarization (ibid).

To further exemplify the entanglement and becoming of matter, Barad (2007) advises a diffractive reading *through* matter which can observe patterns of difference and overlap. Leonard (2020) ar-

gues that Barad's (2007) concept of diffractive analysis works against dualistic thought and conventional linear understanding because it explores and transgresses boundaries – considering what has been included as well as excluded, and why. In this way, new materialism calls for interdisciplinary and cross-boundary practice and understanding instead of reinforcing the divisions of categoric thinking (Leonard, 2020). It promotes a non-contrastive approach which affirms difference but still finds points of relation (ibid). This non-contrastive attitude is supported by theological new materialism which advocates an appreciation of things in their “sensuous particularity” (Haynes, 2014:145). Dualism instigates opposition between scientific, artistic, theological and other viewpoints, whereas new materialism places them together as shared or co-constitutive endeavours (Leonard, 2020). Leonard (2020) states that both theology and science are about searching for truth and suggests that new materialist frameworks can integrate these endeavours. He even proposes that science involves a degree of faith in its belief that the world operates in logical, discernible and measurable ways (ibid).

The integration of different fields and their knowledge through a new materialist framework can ultimately result in new and ‘creative’ understanding (Leonard, 2020). Since artistic practice and creativity often implicate the crossing of preconceived boundaries, Leonard (2020) argues that art embodies new materialism: through material intra-action, it is able to discover overlap between various domains and thus produce those new perspectives.

Artist intentions: integrating theory and practice

“The tacit points to that-which-is-not-yet. It is the spark that sets off the imaginative quest. It initiates the nomadic”
(Siegesmund & Freedman, 2018:36).

The concept of the tacit, rather than absolute, resonates with my intentions for the work and its themes. In the same way that new materialism supports the fluidity of meaning and subverts dualistic thought, Siegesmund and Freedman (2018) argue that visual research is able to represent and analyse tacit knowledge beyond what semiotic discourse can do. Tacit knowledge refers to understanding which is detected but inarticulable (Siegesmund & Freedman, 2018). Unlike semiotic methods which categorize and fix meaning, artistic practice can give access to that tacit dimension (ibid). By integrating the sensual and cartographic or visual, artistic practice provides transitory “moments of coherence” (Siegesmund & Freedman, 2018:36) and cultivates a “fluid sensibility” (ibid:35). Cultivating an awareness of perception, the authors argue that, more than merely recording, visual material can propel us into the future and inspire new perspectives (ibid). They suggest that new materialism “is extending inquiry out beyond our reach” (Siegesmund & Freedman, 2018:36).

My exhibition *Holding light* is focussed on instigating nomadic enquiry* by inviting the viewers to traverse through and between the contradictions and dualities embodied by or within the artworks. As new materialism opposes dualistic thought by confusing the boundary between such dichotomies as mind and body, living and inanimate, and so on, my work evokes confusion between reality and illusion, physical and celestial, et cetera, to argue for the inadequacy of human systematisation and to suggest the possibility and hope of an understanding which is beyond us. Whilst the processes of making and conceptualising my own work have been deeply personal, my desire has ultimately been for the work to create a space of contemplation between limits and contradictions without being exclusionary or overly prescriptive. The exhibition is intended as an immersive space for wonder and for questioning.

* “nomadic inquiry: A term used by Siegesmund & Freedman (2018) to describe the continuous traversal process of exploring perception.

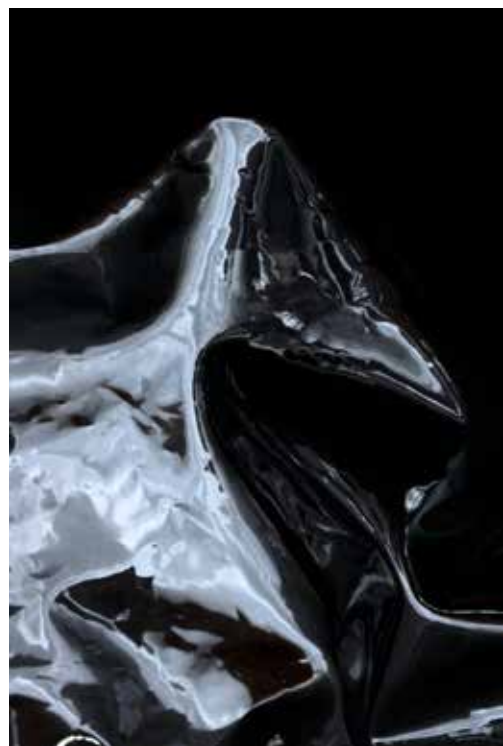
My work could be described as “reaching” as Siegesmund & Freedman (2018:36) phrase it**. Using various materials, lighting and movement, it is reaching to develop an awareness of the invisible through the transiently visible and whispers of the otherworldly through worldly material means. It is reaching between and beyond limits. It is this betweenness which indicates that the work and meaning are still in process – an echo of new materialism’s still becoming (Leonard, 2020). As the installations of this project represent one iteration out of infinite possible iterations, they present a potential ‘moment of coherence’, but are ultimately still in the process of unfolding (Siegesmund and Freedman, 2018). On the one hand the works stand incomplete, but they are full of possibilities and open to manifold interpretations. Thus, this project is reaching in its very plausibility – for putting form to the ungraspable is a ‘stretch’, you might agree, and finding finality remains an incompletable task.

As inferred through new materialism, light transgresses the boundaries of cartesian dualistic thought – the long-embedded disparity between fact and feeling, objectivity and subjectivity – and provokes new modes of thought. Referencing the duality of light, Barad (2007), argues for the intra-activity of all matter: that meaning is formed through the continuously forming relationships between things and thus that the world is in a constant process of becoming rather than having permanent boundaries or definitions. She explains how light can behave as both particle and wave depending on how it is measured, to signify how matter is co-constitutive (Barad, 2007). This integration of quantum physics with humanities (traditionally separated fields) through the phenomenon of light simultaneously argues and evidences her concepts. Although my work focusses more on the poetics of light, it seems fitting that from the outset, the physics of light reverberate its ephemeral qualities.

** “reaching” as explicated in the quote: “The image is not a recording. It is not a depicting. It is a reaching. It is a reaching for a potentiality—a tacit dimension” (Siegesmund & Freedman, 2018:36).

Below the surface. 2021. Series of 6 digital prints on Epson paper. 59x39cm aprox.









Breathe (installation view). Projection on emergency blankets.

Materials, Processes and Manifestations:

As new materialism promotes a reading through various elements and their entanglements rather than predefining and isolating them, the things taught *through* the process of making and *through* the materials used have been pivotal to my practice, concept and the emergence of meaning in the exhibition. Correspondingly, a physical experience – walking through the exhibition – is a fundamental aspect of my work because it stimulates interaction and can thus demonstrate the agency of the work and the world.

The following pages contain some reflections from my intra-actions with the materials during the process of making, experimenting and installing, as well as some poems I wrote during the process.

Notes:

It is perhaps ironic that in the midst of covid-19, where our physical interactions have been so constricted, I chose to create a body of work which really requires human presence and cannot be translated to or understood fully from a virtual platform. However, I believe that the contrastive experience for those who are able to engage the work in person and the very insufficiency of the photographed images in capturing the whole experience, emphasise the limitations of our systems of recording – that there are things we cannot fully capture with our human methods – and reiterate our incredible need for embodied interaction and community.





Initially, in my research, I gathered materials which revealed different qualities of light – shiny things, reflective things, things that let light through – and then those materials became objects of investigation too. **Wire mesh, organza, plastic, emergency blankets** – most of the materials I engaged with throughout the year have had some level of transparency or become semi-transparent depending on light and perspective. This transparency allows for multiple levels of overlaying and integration. Installations such as *Magnification* (Figure 12) and *Bodies of water* (Figure 4) consist of multiple layers or pieces of fabric with spaces between so the viewer can look through them from multiple angles. Even single-layer installations such as *Breathe* (Figure 1) are placed with space to walk between and around so that they too can become part of other works through their semi-transparent appearance from certain perspectives. Through their various levels of overlap, the works are a physical and visual endorsement of how “**things affect other things**” (Siegesmund & Freedman, 2018:36) – a phrase which essentially pre-cises new materialism. Materials, light, shadows and viewers become intrinsically entangled in this exhibition. In support of new materialism, this implies the dynamic intra-action and entanglements of the world against a largely polarized culture (Leonard, 2020).





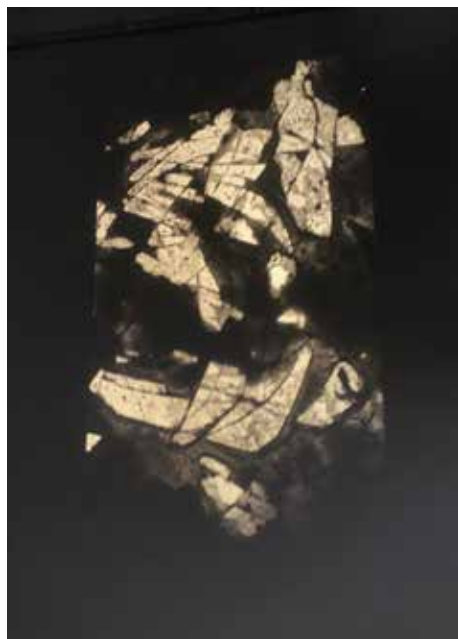
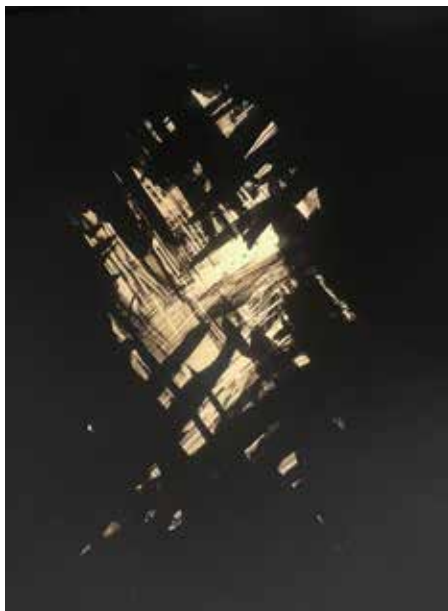


Magnification (installation views). Slide projection on layers of fabric.



Organza, wire mesh,
materials used...

Slides 'containing' various materials.



Examples of original images produced by slides.





Magnification (installation views). Slide projection on layers of fabric.

I stressed the intra-activity of matter and meaning even further by projecting **material onto material**. In *Magnification* and *Breathe*, the subject matter from the projections are actually the materials themselves. *Magnification* consists of 80 different slides projected in turn onto five sheets of material (plastic, meshes, fabric). Each slide contains a variation of material (see Figure 15). The resultant differing images held on each layer of fabric create a mutual awareness – as new materialism does – of what gets included and what gets left behind by the various boundaries constructed by society (Leonard, 2020). The extreme enlargement of images from the original slides also results in transgression of boundaries between macro and micro; internal and external. Some of the slides made with plastic and ink for example produce images resembling microbiomes and cosmic maps, and others containing fine organza create the illusion of heavy-duty mesh. It implicates scientific methods of making the invisible (to naked eye) visible, as well as implying the limitations of such techniques. As my work oscillates between such dichotomies as illusion and reality; limit and limitlessness; visible and invisible; micro and macro, and finding their overlap, it corroborates that these entities are not as definitive or disparate as may have once been thought. It generates a depth of perception and promotes cross-disciplinary understanding.



“things affect other things”

(Siegesmund & Freedman, 2018:36)





Holding light (installation view).





Breathe (installation view). Projection on emergency blankets.

How do you fold a liquid?

How do you create a sense of the infinite?

*The galaxy that's within,
And beyond.
Stretching across time and form.*

*Like trying to lasso the moon?
Or pin down the clouds
Like trying to fold a liquid?
Or scoop up stars from its pond*

*Is it all in vain?
Is it supposed to be reached or touched?
Now?
Not now*

*Do we only live for these moments
When the sky sweeps down
And brushes the earth,*

*When waves crash upwards
And glitter the sky?*



Silver and reflective materials also feature prominently (and often innately) in my body of work because of the way they reflect or intra-act with light. The ephemerality expressed both by the ‘lightness’ of the materials in the exhibition and their fluctuating luminosity nurtures an awareness of the space between permanence and temporality – questioning the boundary between a good thing and an ultimate thing (Keller, 2008). The playfulness of light on the material surfaces reinforces a “**fluid sensibility**” (Siegesmund & Freedman, 2018:35) and entices the viewer to engage with the work.



*Silver and gold
They will never be enough.
The things we build
Out of them,
Even they themselves.
Allure and shine
Draw us in
Can teach us things
Being reflective
But always a gift,
Sign of a greater glory*

*They cannot fully capture
Nor begin to compare
Yet our senses absorbed
In small things (shiny things)
Can forget the Spring*

*What lies behind, and within,
And ahead.
Not silver and gold at the head
But the insufficient pointer
To the more-than-enough
And Always*

*A hand at work,
Not our own.*

28.3.21





In 2020, during the first lockdown in South Africa, a project about shadows led me to discover **organza fabric** as a drawing material. Its semi-transparent quality meant it could be layered to get different tonal intensities, and its loose weave, meant it could easily lose its form or shift out of place and be difficult to handle. These visual and structural characteristics were so in tune with that of real shadows that I pretended organza was **shadow in tangible form**.

I have continued to investigate how fabric interacts with light through-out this year: observing and recording both how fabric ‘holds’ light on its surface and what it lets slip through – the resulting shadows. Imagining organza simultaneously as tangible shadow and graspable liquid, I developed the *Bodies of water* installation. Organza forms are suspended in an ascending order, echoed by a colour gradient (navy and black at the bottom, to silver-greys and ending in whites at the top). The main source of light in the space comes from small scattered LED lights hung at varying heights, shining onto the ascending “bodies” at different angles and projecting shadows onto the surrounding walls (Figure 5). Entering into this dark passageway, one might only notice the dimly lit organza figures at first. However, as one’s eyes adjust to the darkness, their precarious shadows emerge on the walls and become overlaid with the organza forms. The viewer is invited to walk through the passageway and in between the clusters of organza figures. As they do so, they can look through the material forms from different angles and to the shadows produced by them. As with all the other installations involving shadows or projection, the viewer’s own body also becomes entangled with the work. Together with the anthropomorphic scale of the floating beings, this encourages a dis/embodied experience.







Bodies of water (installation view). Organza, plastic, pins, LEDs.

The swirling appearances of the organza forms in *Bodies of water*, were inspired by **ripples and currents of liquid**. Water, emerged as a recurring theme in my work because of its correlations with temporality and the ungraspable, and its interaction (or intra-action) with light. It cannot be held, or, when it is, loses its enchantment. The forms and reflections of water are suggested through the use of light and materials, sometimes to the point where it could be almost **impossible to differentiate** between the two. Examples include the watery reflections in *Breathe* and *Reflections* (Figure 2), and the images of plastic in *Below the surface* (Figure 19). Like the moments of inability to differentiate between the fabric and its shadow in *Bodies of water* (see Figure 5), these visual illusions of liquid reveal how inseparable dichotomies can be. This paradox visually resonates the wave-particle duality of light supporting Barad's (2007) new materialist theory. Whilst the illusion points to the limitations of sight as knowledge, it subsequently encourages the "fluid sensibility" (Siegesmund and Freedman, 2018:35) which recognises that new combinations of reality are always being formed and that matter and meaning can never be fixed.



*A humble cascade
An outpouring of the heart,
Longings*

Fall

*From head to hand
From pen to paper
From thought to fabric*

*My human means
To channel what's not
Down to this earth*

*Splashes catch the light
Some, fall through
Head*

Drops

*A trace of hand, of heart
I dare hope to see
This abundance which drenches me
Brings me,*

To my knees.

*That it would sweep down
On this lowly cup, I am, and
Fill me*

To overflow.







Reflections (installation view). 72 shadowgraphs, LEDs. 600x61cm.



Reflections (aerial view from moderation exhibition).



Holding light (installation test).



Engaging over time with the organza in making *Bodies of water*, I experienced how transitory its forms and thereby its meanings are. In trying to show how fluid-like the material is by manipulating its appearance, the **material's 'disobedience'** in effect proved its fluidity better than my own attempts. As new materialism recognises the temporal qualities of matter positing that it is always in a state of becoming, so the organza bodies have the potential to change shape at the slightest movement/interaction. Their form is defined only for a moment, corroborating the idea that matter and meaning are fluid, always changing, and thus have infinite possibilities. In exposing my limited ability to shape and maintain it, the material embodies those things beyond our grasp and beyond my control.

This experience links to another key point of resonance between new materialism, tacit knowledge and my own practice: the **decentralisation of the human** (Leonard, 2020). New materialism suggests that whilst humans can give matter form, they are not the only active force – matter itself can determine its own and other forms through their relations (Barad, 2007). The human is not sovereign. As Leonard (2020) stipulates, new materialism introduces a reading of the world which is “greater-than-self” and “greater-than-humanity” (Leonard, 2020:9). This shift in perspective supports a practice which is less about imposing order on material and more about allowing the material to establish its own way of being in the world (Haynes, 2014).

In my own installations, I had to let the material lead its own way of coming to be. Navigating through the duality of measure and immeasurable, my work explores how past systems of ordering attempt to separate entities into fixed categories or definitions, and reveals the limitations of such techniques by evoking that which refuses to be recorded. Using **lightweight materials** (and the weightless material, light) as things which might 'refuse to be captured', I adopted **forms of order** such as frames, grids and linearity which perpetuate stereotypical binary world views. I then practiced further forms of control with the materials such as the pinning of organza into plastic, attempting to maintain the angular folds of the emergency blankets, and trapping materials between slide casements. Some of the time, I worked in harmony with the materials, finding that small interventions encouraged it to find its own form and brought it to life. Most of the time, however, my own intentions and desires came into conflict with the materials' own agency and nature. I had to learn how to work in communion with the material and let the forms speak for themselves.

Cloud (installation test), Wire mesh, LEDs.



Using scale, I tried to create an immersive environment in an attempt to bring the viewer beyond themselves, evoking the *something more* which subverts anthropocentric perspectives. In *Breathe*, a vast silver waterfall-like curtain made of 15 emergency blankets, hangs from the ceiling and then spreads along the floor. A video projected onto the crinkled silver surface causes the whole room to oscillate between dark and light as light dances on the material and reflects on the walls in waves of intensity (Figure 10 & Figure 11). Incorporating emergency blankets speaks to the sense of emergency which has accompanied Covid-19, as well as the long-standing and unresolved refugee crises usually associated with the blanket. They indicate humanity's continued need for shared comfort, support and general betterment. The **abundance** of the material makes the human small and echoes a sense of the infinite and beyond. An immanent presence is also suggested. As one walks behind the installation, the draft caused by the body, causes the material to 'breathe'. This breath – the inhale/exhale resembled through movement and sound – seems to infuse the atmosphere with life. Breathing co-constitutively with the viewer as the tides of life (resembled through light) rise and fall around it, the installation could be seen to conjure Kundera's (1999) unbearable lightness of being*.

* The 'unbearable lightness of being' is a philosophical exploration of lightness and heaviness as they relate to the uncertainty of meaning in life and the weight of meaninglessness (Kundera, 1999).







Breathe (installation view). Projection on emergency blankets.





Cloud (detail). Wire mesh, light.

In the darkness of the exhibition space and in the concept of counterparts, I have sought to subtly 'expose' the unseen yet critical processes of printmaking and photography and the philosophical principles they taught me. On the one hand, the shadows and reflections of various installations can be seen as intangible counterparts which question where the focal point ought to be. Since photography and printmaking are essentially about making images with light, the shadows and reflections are instituted as temporary prints or images of an unseen or intangible world. The inverse relationship between shadow and reflection also echoes the positive-negative interchange frequented in photography and print. I wanted to use these basic principles to expose the relationship between the subject matter and image produced and to illuminate that there is more than meets the eye. Additionally, I wanted to disrupt the sense of permanence and fixity of conventional image-making. Like the shadow of the mesh in *Cloud* (Figure 18), these transitory 'wall prints' are living and active, subject to change, able to impact. Denoting in-between steps of traditional image-making processes, the shadows and reflections in the exhibition ultimately insinuate that the artworks and their meanings are 'in process' and therefore still becoming.

The '*in process*' metaphor is more generally inferred through the overarching dark space of the exhibition. In screenprint, lithography and photography, darkrooms are a critical part of developing images. The idea that you have to go into the dark to make images of light encourages reflective thought. It re-contextualizes the work in the 'experience of darkness' and suggests that one often has to walk through the unknown and uncertain in order to find creative solutions. In *Holding Light*, the viewer has to risk stepping into the dark in order to discover the work and its potential meaning.



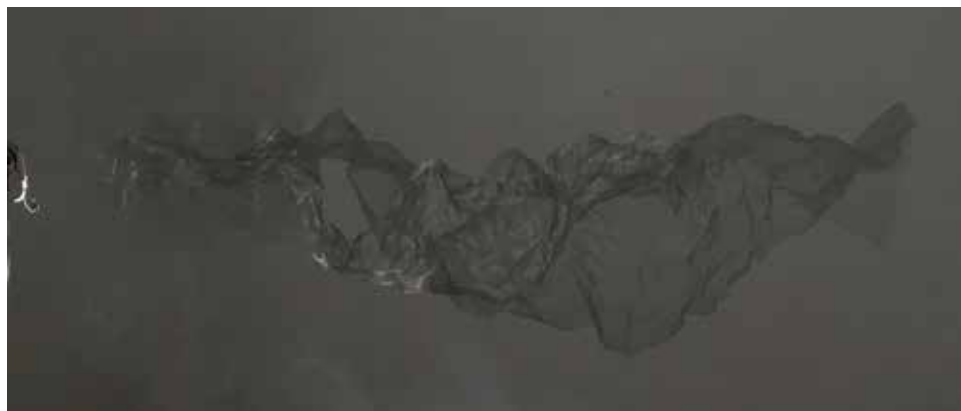




Process work (the making of 'Reflections').

Like the darkroom processes of print and photography, residing in the tension and ephemerality of the work is the possibility of loss but equally the possibility of hope. Hung tenuously, held temporarily, the various installations might seem to be on the verge of coming adrift or falling. Some of the lights echo this form: with the slightest draft or nudge the whole work might change, or counterpart (shadow, reflection) vanish. This tension might be hidden from sight (at least until or unless someone brushes past an element), but I frequently experienced it in the practical process. When I found a display which I thought worked well, I had to fight the urge – driven by fear of losing the ‘best’ effect – to keep it in that exact same form. But if I did not risk that loss by altering compositions or lighting, I could never hope to find something better or something wonderfully different in its own way. Often the results of the material agency and refusal in the installations were far better than I could have imagined for myself. In every experiment this year, the installations have become something new. Always on the verge of changing, not clinging to static form or comfort, they embody what it is to hold things lightly.







Holding light (installation test).

Conclusion:

How do I conclude something that is still expanding? How do I tie ends together when the thread still has so many places to go?

At the beginning of this booklet, I explored how art is not limited to and does not offer the comfort of known structures. Like new materialism, it can transgress and superimpose boundaries which results in new ways of seeing or knowing, particularly within the tacit dimension. I do not pretend to have fully understood the paradoxes presented by new materialism, but it is precisely such moments of perplexity which I have tried to embody through the materiality of light and which I hope will invite my audience into the ample *in-betweenness* space for wondering in my exhibition.

Bridging the gaps between dichotomies through the visual entanglement of materials, light, and audience, the works demonstrate the complexity and non-fixity of meaning. They argue for a cross-disciplinary and more nuanced understanding of the world against traditional dualistic thinking. By posing the work in process, the installations represent just a single moment of coherence within the artworks' fluidity, foreshadowing infinite possibility and recognizing that matter and meaning are always becoming.

In both their transitory forms and limited physicality, the works which constitute *Holding Light* are reminders of human limitation, the fleeting nature of the material world, and thus, of all that is beyond us. In this place of heightened smallness and awareness, the intra-action of light in the exhibition allows the viewer to indulge the possibility of the otherworldly and what those things 'beyond' might look or feel like. Creating an awareness of the limitations of perception, *Holding Light* demonstrates the continuous need for shared enquiry – particularly by a new materialist reading *through* elements – in order to gain new understanding. The experience of the exhibition ultimately provokes one to reach into this unknown – to risk stepping into the dark with the prospect and hope of finding light or enlightenment.



Artist's Endnotes:

How do we make sense of this world? There are some things which we cannot answer or understand in our human terms – both wonderful and awful. There are some things too deep for words; some things we can never fully express. But I have this hope which brings me peace:

“So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

My work hopes to create a sense of the otherworldly and ignite sparks of the ‘there-must-be-more’ – a marvellous mystery awaiting. It does not attempt to overlook the reality of suffering, but proffers that even in and at our worst, there may be more than meets the eye, a tender presence to hold us and hold on to. I cannot control how people might respond to my work but my hope and prayer is that they might catch a glimpse of the hope and light which I have found and enjoy pondering the possibility of the supernatural.



Acknowledgements:

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity and freedom I have been given this year to try and give form to my jumbled thoughts about life and the possibility of after-life. It has been an incredible and humbling process of learning and re-learning, discovering the life and lessons held within the materials used, and making peace with the things beyond my control and understanding. Risking the loss, deciding to fall or let fall – the leap of faith, I have found that each time I am held and carried through. Finding beauty in the unraveling, in the reaching and becoming, I am learning how each thing (myself and viewer included) is given “space to be and become” (Haynes, 2014:144) and endeavouring to put the same into practice in my own life.

To Svea Josephy for her advice and guidance throughout the year, and for humouring all my scattered thoughts and experiments.

To Fritha Langerman and Stephen Inggs for introducing me to the wonders of print and poetics.

To Madelize van der Merve, especially because I never made printmaking simple.

To Sitaara Stodel, for adopting me as a photography student.

To Charlie, Duncan and uncle Stan for their gracious help with technical elements.

To my classmates for being wonderful year group, and being there to support each other when most needed.

To my family, for their incredible love and support.

To Mom, Nico, Murray and Ingrid for sacrificing midnight hours to help me and bearing with all my indecision.

To my friends and UCTU, for making sure I did not live only at campus and talk only about art.

To those who kept me in their prayers.

To the One who has graciously granted me all these gifts.

in excelsis Deo.