"Poke it with a Stick", Using Autoethnography in Research through Design

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Abstract

This paper follows the design and creation of an artifact called "Poke it with a stick", a promiscuous lighting fixture that invites users to play with its tactile operation switch. This ongoing research investigates how autoethnography could be adapted in the context of research through design while support practitioners regarding the contextualization of their work. Autoethnography, an introspective exploration, enables the emergence of narratives that support the understanding of the tacit aspects of creativity. This ongoing research investigates how autoethnography, as a critical approach (Denshire, 2013), could adapt in research through design methodologies, opening up a space evoking self-reflection while dealing with documentation issues.

Using autoethnography the designer/researcher is addressing issues such as materiality, functionality, strangeness and provocation. The presentation and the conclusions of such a personal story bring forward issues regarding objectivity, generalization of knowledge and authorship. Research through design practices are a space where "the internal decision making of the researcher is considered valid and noteworthy" (Duncan & Fellow, 2004).

The outcome of this specific autoethnographic research is an artifact, characterized by a narrative hybridity. Although the created artifact could be perceived as a concrete object, this paper investigates an alternative ontology; the esoteric narratives shaped through diaries accompany the artifact and are equally important to the crafting process by unmasking a creative process that is otherwise magical or enigmatic due to the internal decision making of the craft process.

Keywords

Autoethnography; Narrative Inquiry; Embodiment in Design; Self-Explication; Propositional Artifacts

This study is written by two people, the designer/researcher and the academic/analyst, this is a conscious choice based on contemporary approaches of autoethnography. This study aims to add new knowledge to the discourse of research through design by presented an application of autoethnography in the creation of a new artifact. By presenting thoughts and feelings that emerge during the creative process the aim is neither to put forward a new design methodology nor to come up with empirical rules on how to design better. The goal is to engage the reader to empathise with the designer/researcher, to guide the reader through the thoughts and emotions experience during the creation of the artifact. This work is rooted in a craft approach and the process of designing is undertaken in an open dialogue between the material and the craftsperson. The decisions taken through this process are tacit and making them explicit through reflection and discussion can to shine a light on personal practice and the relationship between the internal and the external.

First and foremost, we both enjoy being designers and we feel the need to share this. Autoethnography offers a perspective that through reflection brings forward the 'aha!' moments of the creative process (Cross 1982), these epiphanies are a mystical moment and by trying to understand where they come from we can better understand our practice.

Most often, autobiographers write about "epiphanies" – remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life While epiphanies are self-claimed phenomena in which one person may consider an experience transformative these epiphanies reveal ways a person could negotiate "intense situations" and "effects that linger – recollections, memories, images, feelings – long after a crucial incident is supposedly finished" (Bochner, 1984, p. 595). Autoethnographers must not only use their methodological tools and research literature to analyse experience, but also must consider ways others may experience similar epiphanies; they must use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders. (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010). The emerging field of autoethnography has been adopted in many different fields creating a wide array of autoethnographic texts spanning from poems to autobiographies and more reflexive texts. We position this work under the 'moderate autoethnography' (Stahlke & Wall 2016) and towards the direction of 'Juxtaposing tellings from more than one point of view' (Denshire 2014).

The study of design leaves the interpretation of the nature of design open. (Cross, 2001) One reason for this is that design exists in relation to its application, it utilizes 'quasi subject matter' (Buchanan1990) and is structured around the problem space it aims to address.

When people think of design, most believe it is about problem solving, twenty years of research have tried to shift the discourse but practice is rarely informed by the likes of Rittel (1973) and Checkland (1990) who claim that a solution to a problem cannot exist as defining a problem is a problem itself, as such we cannot claim to solve a problem but to aim to 'transform a problematic situation to a more desirable one'. In this sense the value of this study lies not as a solution to a problem but in adding personal experience to an existing discourse about tacit materiality in design.

> *"I don't aim to provide a manifesto but invite you to my journey to find one".* (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 10, 4/9/18)

Fig 1. Poke it with a stick: the artifact.

Brief Introduction to Autoethnography

Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010). As a method it acknowledges the centrality of the researcher in the process of research and offers an array of tools that enable increased reflection and structure. In an autoethnography the researcher is writing about his or her experience and through analysis makes it transparent to the reader. The researcher is paramount to this process as the knowledge shared is situated within him or her. Especially in the domain of crafts many decisions are tacit and embodied and as such meaningless if not shared within the context.

Autoethnography is a form of qualitative research that is commonly linked with anthropology and social sciences in general. In contrast to ethnography where researchers analyse a culture as participant observers, Autoethnography shifts the focus to explicit and reflective self-observation. Autoethnography embrace subjectivity and emotionality into the research while recognizing that the personal experiences of the researcher have a great influence in the research process. (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2010; Anderson, 2006).

The most defining feature of Autoethnography is the reflective approach that wants the researcher to perform a narrative analysis of a phenomenon that he/she is intimately related to (Mcilveen, 2014). Autoethnography as a method is both the process and the product (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2010). The product of autoethnography could be a result of diverse interdisciplinary practices of documentation including reflective writing, interviewing, photography, gathering documents and artifacts, etc (Duncan & Fellow, 2004; Spry, 2001). This inseparable relation between the designer, the designed and the context offers a perspective that negotiates between the personal and the scientific. Reflecting on how theory informs practice in ways that might not be explicit has been a strong point for such methods.

Both autoethnography and ethnography are informed by the ideas of post-modernism. Post modernism brings forward the value of narrative methods. For Lyotard (1984) the absence of a grand narrative and the power of scientific narratives over other ways of knowing create the need to consider peoples stories and personal experiences concerning the ways that realities are constructed. For Feyerabend (1993) modern science is no more justified than witchcraft, and has denounced the 'tyranny' of abstract concepts such as 'truth', 'reality', or 'objectivity', which narrow people's vision and ways of being in the world. This openness to personal narratives is what makes autoethnography a robust tool in the intersection of Research through design and material experiences.

Autoethnography and Research through Design

Considering that Design is closely related to anthropology (Zimmerman et al., 2007) it is not surprising that Autoethnography and Research through Design as methodologies share some common ground. Therefore, it would be fruitful to establish it through a literature review and then detect possible ways to conduct Autoethnography as a supporting method in a 'research through design' context.

Research through design is the closest thing to the actual professional design practice, recasting the design aspect of creation as research. Designers/researchers who use research through design create new products, experiment with new materials, processes, etc (Godin, 1993). The main difference between professional design practice and research through design is that in the former the product of the design process is not the means to an end but the end itself. The artifacts, models and concepts produced during a research through design process act as embodied rhetoric (Ballard & Koskela 2013; Buchanan, 1990, 1995, 2001, 2007; Crilly, et al., 2008; Foss, 2005; Friess, 2010 Hart-Davidson, 2007; Quek, 2010; Sheridan, 2010; Wrigley, et al., 2009), as propositions in material form (Walker, 2006) as tools for the prototyping, testing and evolution of new ideas, as 'things to think with' (Ratto, 2011). The hybrid made up of the theory, the researcher and the artifact create new, action related, knowledge that is inseparable from the context.

Furthermore, when the autoethnographic methods are applied in a craft design setting the tacit dimension of the negotiation between the wants of the maker and the possibilities of the material add an extra, invisible layer in the discourse. Extracting useful conclusions from such a process is challenging but the lessons that can arise are worthwhile.

Research through design (RtD) is an approach to scientific inquiry that takes advantage of the unique insights gained through design practice to provide a better understanding of complex and future-oriented issues in the design field (Godin & Zahedi, 2014) Similarly, design knowledge exists in designing activities, in which designers, their creation processes, and resulting artifacts are involved – it is considered 'designerly way of knowing' (Cross, 1982) associated with tacit ways of knowledge (Polanyi, 2009).

Autoethnography is a method that has the capacity to provide research through design by shedding light in personal practice, thought and emotions. It is a method that aims to pinpoint the mental connections that are generated subconsciously and make their way into the designed. Autoethnography can in sense bring increased rigor in practice based designerly research. In addition, the iterative analysis undertaken through autoethnography acts as a mechanism that articulates critical reflexivity that is necessary both for research through design and for theoretically informed creative practices.

Autoethnography as an approach transcends disciplines, as it permits a true ontological and epistemological background in an emerging theory as being socially constructed and in a dynamic dialogue between theory and practice. Autoethnography bridges this gap through the development of a critical discourse and the self-reflection that develops as a natural consequence of it.

Method of this Specific Autoethnography

Autoethnographers recognize that the researcher shapes and guides the process by deciding "who, what, when, where, and how to research" (Ellis, Adams, Bochner, 2010). This is evident from the beginning of in this specific research, where even the subject of the study itself is rooted at the need of the designer/researcher to find her own voice as a designer. As such the goal of this autoethnographic study was ill defined from the beginning. The method was the following, engage in the craft design of an artifact and keep journals about the process and the elicited thoughts.

> *I am currently in a very introspective phase where I reflect upon my creations and try to identify my personal perspective upon the design discipline in general. During the writing of my Thesis I realized that I was very interested in expressing my own struggles of the process, regarding both to academic writing and the creative process itself. This interest in sharing my personal experiences is also embodied in my designs where the inspiration of each concept is rooted in my lived experiences. [...].* (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 4, 15/5/18)

This clearly personal perspective led to autoethnography as a method of research. Research through design implies creating an artifact that cannot be wholly described and that enables the designer/researcher to engage in a dialog with the situation and learn from it (Godin, 1993). In this study Autoethnographic writing is used to support the designer/researcher's embodied involvement in the creative process and it provides means of structuring and unlocking reflectivity. Reading, writing and making mutually supported and influence each other while their boundaries blur dialectically (Nimkulrat, 2012; Spry, 2001)

Without analyst autoethnography is just an autobiography (Anderson, 2006; Duncan & Fellow, 2004). The researcher deals with very intimate and self-related issues throughout the process, thus it is possible to lead to self-absorption and tunnel vision. Thus, following Andersons findings about analytic Autoethnography, there should be a 'Dialogue with Informants Beyond the Self' (Anderson, 2006). That role is assigned to the second researcher of this study who perceive the narrative texts as data and analyses it as such (Mcilveen, 2014). Therefore, in this study there is the designer/researcher (storyteller) and the academic/analyst (analyst), two distinctive roles assigned at the beginning of the research but through the process of experimentation they evolve.

The making process, consisted of the creation of two artifacts based on the same core concept. The process is presented in this section, the pictures and texts of the practical side of it are accompanied with parts of the reflective journals written during the making process. The process is described in accordance with the chronological order of the making. On the contrary, the selected quotes and thoughts belong to different reflective levels and are not necessarily were written after each specific act. The duration of the project was six months while the actual making process spanned over 30 days and the diaries were kept in regular intervals. Every four days the researcher and the designer would discuss the evolution of the process and all issues that emerged while making. Both the designer/researcher and the academic/analyst kept notes of these meetings for future reference. The designer/researcher journals consist of ten excessive entries in which the final two were reflections on the previous entries.

When the artifact was finished the diaries were sent for analysis from the designer/researcher to the academic analyst electronically. After that, the academic analysts sent his thoughts and comments back to the designer researcher. The results of this analysis and the reflection of the process and the adoption of the autoethnographic approach are presented in this paper.

Regarding the creation of the artifact, writing was the central reflective medium while sketching and making were supportive to this introspective exploration. The process of keeping a journal aimed to identify where and when tacit decisions were made. Through this process of reflection writing and analysis the tacit dimension of the process was made explicit creating new knowledge about the tacit dimension of making and adding to the discourse of design. Mäkelä points out that the spectatorial engagement together with thought, material and reflection is at the root of the process, and the research targets the unknown without knowing where the outcomes of the research might settle (Mäkelä & O'Riley 2012, 11). Both artifacts are propositional and not well-defined designs in the sense of function, they are tools of research and introspection.

Poke it with a stick: making the artifact

Finding the Concept

Fig 2. Experience in use.

From the beginning it was clear that there was a need for a propositional concept that calls for further analysis and reflection.

> *One day while I was trying to sleep, I was intuitively searching for ideas that will be used for future projects. I tried to recall memories in order to get inspiration. […] I would like to embrace oddness as a characteristic of this concept because I haven't the chance to experiment while I was working with more rigid design contexts. When it comes to oddness and fantasy I always look back to my childhood […]. I remembered myself holding a stick and pocking a toad, while trying to interact with him. Then, instantly I transformed this act into a luminous artifact where the switch would be located inside its body and the user could only reach it with a stick.* (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 4, 15/5/18)

This initial concept was selected as a starting point for this case study and although the whole study is characterized from the belief that design is not solely a problem-oriented practice, the analysis of the interpretation of this idea was very similar to reverse engineering.
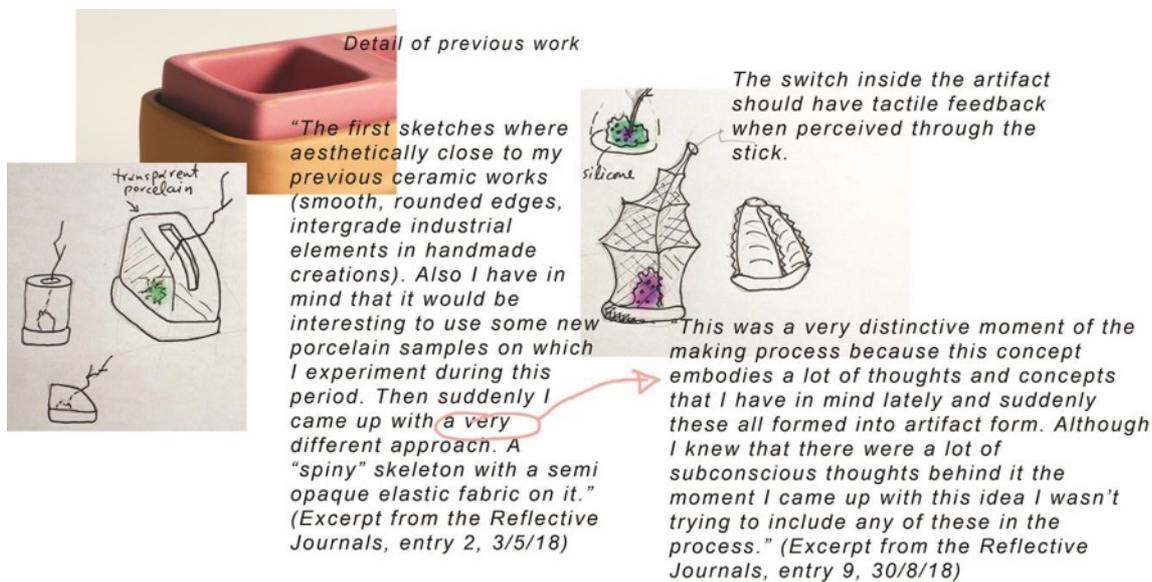
First Artifact

Fig 3. Ideation sketches.

The material that were selected is clay because of the designer/researcher ceramic skills.
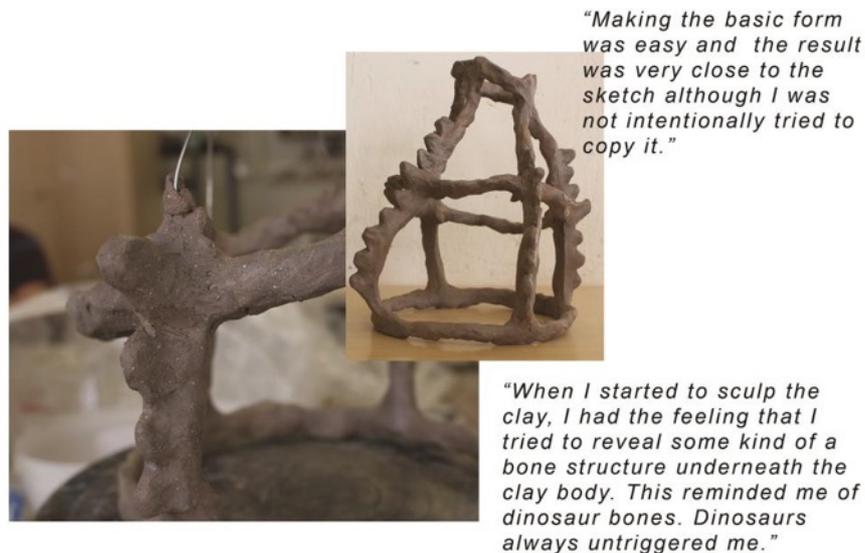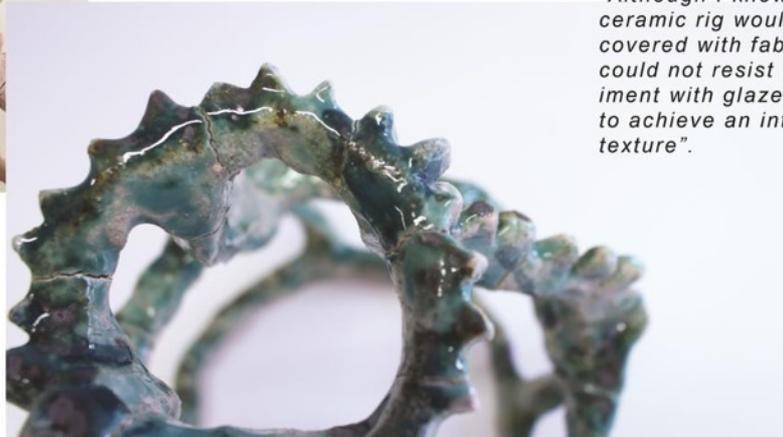

Fig 4. Sculpting the rig (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 2, 3/5/18).

"Although I knew that the ceramic rig would be covered with fabric I could not resist to experiment with glaze and try to achieve an interesting texture".

Fig 5. Sculpting the rig (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 2, 3/5/18).

"The easiest-to-find elastic material that would be used to cover the 'ceramic skeleton' was a pair of tights [...]. I bought one from a small store near my house. The lady who worked there recommended that this was a high-quality product and it was an excellent choice if I was going to use it for ballet performances. I kept silent and didn't mention that I was actually going to rip it off."

"When I "dressed" the sculpture with the rig I felt that I was wearing it on a leg"

"The light effect was achieved based on a last-minute idea. The inspiration was to exploit some resin parts that were to be used in a discontinued a project."

"This alternative makes me feel very excited not only because the result was interesting but due to the fact that I made that connection between the available resources."

Fig 6. Making Process (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 6, 30/5/18).

Second Artifact

Another artifact was created. This was a chance to experiment with a different form. The aesthetic of the first one was opposed the symmetrical forms that the designer/researcher was following on her previous works. The second artifact was designed to be somewhere in between.

"When I formed the basic skeleton it reminded me a cage. And all the following decisions were made in order to get rid of that connection."

"While working with this artifact I didn't achieve the same level of immersion that I had while working with the first one. I kept thinking that this has to be completed quickly and fired soon in order to be able to see it with tights on. Also I knew that this attempt was more rationalized than the first one. I had the feeling that somehow this process defines my ability as a designer in a more conscious level and that made me kind of nervous and blocked."

Fig 7. Forming the second artifact.

"Putting on the tights, I was really excited with the result. I forget all the considerations and insecurities I have when I focus on making. Actually all my considerations didn't matter anymore; with the tights on the result is completely different."
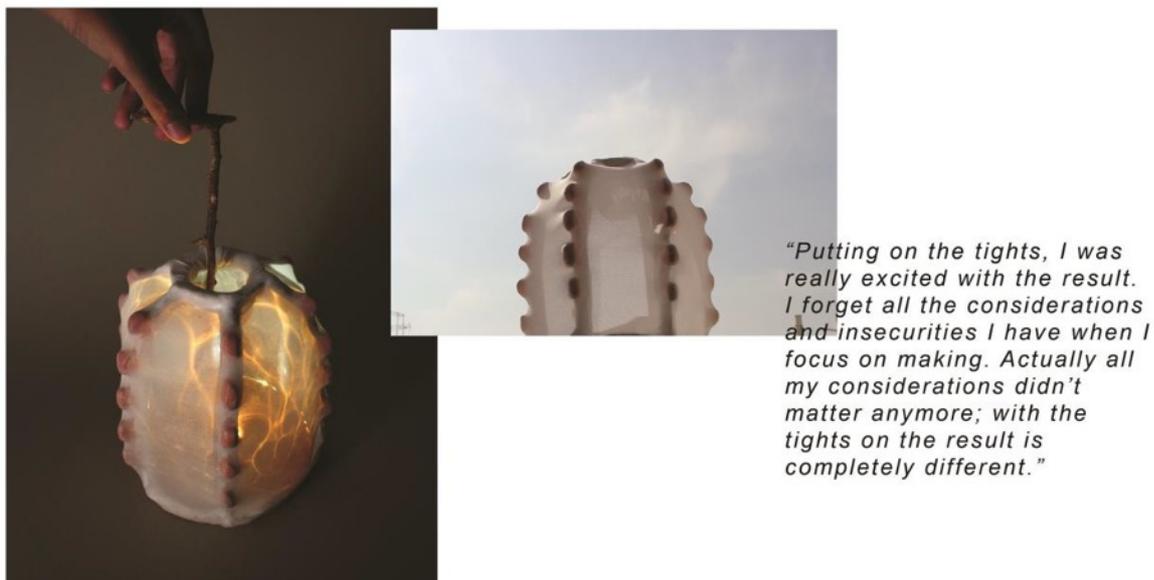
Fig 8. Forming the second artifact (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 7, 23/8/18).

Reflections on Making

In this section the first reflection on the issues that emerged throughout the experiment and their relationship with the theoretical context is discussed. During the experiment there where a continuous feedback between conceptual and linguistic-oriented thinking and physical and materially based making, similar to the one Ratto (2011) described with the term critical making. This process worked as a driver of 'self-explication' (Hayes & Fulton, 2015) in relation to aspects of embodied cognition and supported the creation of novel understandings in relation to the way the researcher-practitioner works (Ratto, 2011). These findings acknowledge and respect the tacit

aspects of the process.

Starting from the practical issues, the dynamics of the situation such as material and equipment resources, the designer/ researcher's making skills, time issues etc. seemed to have a great influence on the process. The designer/researcher usually was aware of this influence; these constrictions sometimes were perceived as restrictive but other times acted as a creativity boost.

One thing of note is that in the reflective journals there are not many references in relation to ceramic as a discipline, although most of the making took place in the ceramic workshop.

This issue arises from the nature of the ceramic practice itself. Many practitioners referring to ceramics not only a discipline but mainly as a way of life. The connection with clay is characterized by a 'vital materiality' (Bennet, 2010) with an influence that is continuously evolving with the engagement with it, and although there are attempts to explain this tacit influence in the reflective journals, they fail to capture the essence. It is our view that this difficulty should not discourage practitioners writing about their work. Although the skills that have been developed through material exploration and tactile experiences are placed within the embodied mind and the knowing body are now taken for granted (Groth, 2016), the documentation of the works helps comparing how the evolution of knowledge of the making influences the perception of the maker (Falin, 2014). This is evident in the parts of the journals where the skills and perceptions acquired from previous work act as the base for new manifestations (technical, conceptual, aesthetic etc.) to come. This reflection on the designers' whole body of work helps to outline their evolution as creatives and also for the understanding about their artist's statements.

Figure 9 Interacting with the artifact.

The nature of this specific case study presented a high level of immersion and the boundaries between the artifact, the researcher-practitioner, practice and actual life were non-existent. The specific design practice is rooted far away from problem solving and the designer/ researcher uses her creative practice as a sense making tool and although the struggles of the process are present, the pleasure that she draws from it is evident. This presents characteristics similar to art but also

similar to play. Groos (1919) agreed with Grosse (1914) that art's main evolutionary foundation is play and noted the common features binding art and play: Enjoyment of regularity, rhythm, imitation, illusion and attraction toward intensity and difficulty. (Nadal & Gomez- Puerto, 1991) and that playful character is also embodied at the artifact.

The tacit aspects do not end on the tangible side of design crafting but extend to its conceptual aspects in relation to synthetical acts. Throughout the journals the designer/researcher's feels the urge to find the roots of every concept and identify the unconscious thoughts that inform to choices that led the decisions that shaped the artifact in this specific way. "*Through our physical experiences of the material world, we create mental images that we rely on in the design process, thus the body provides information also in the planning phase of designing, even before material manipulation*" (Groth, 2016). After the form-making process it is possible to reflect on more connections (Tonkinwise, 2010) and understand the way some metaphors work that was not consciously intended but seem to be very well designed. During the making process the form emerged organically. By analysing the designed we notice how the researcher/practitioner's past experiences are embodied in the artifacts and translated into multi-sensorial characteristics. At the same time these embodied dynamics are also used as a blueprint for its future interactions with the viewers. These characteristics mystify the process and could be resembled as reversed engineering.

Now that designers and craft practitioners are also included in higher academia, they have the opportunity to conduct organised research on their own practice. The researcher/practitioner has an intrinsic motivation to reveal his/her experiential and embodied knowledge; thus, design and craft research gain access to the practitioner's point of view (Groth, Mäkelä & Seitamaa-Hakkaraien, 2015).

Writing the Autoethnographic Reflective Journals

In this section the designer/researcher and the academic/analyst present the main findings of this study. The conclusions emerged through a process of dialogue between the two, and by sharing notes and ideas around the reflective journals kept during the making. The reflections presented in this section are very project and person centered. A critical understanding is required to apply them in different contexts as they are rooted in a personal practice, influenced by time, character and other external factors.

Making and Writing Being Immersed into the Research Context

Throughout the process of reflective writing, the need of the researcher to understand autoethnography as a method by implementing it were evident. Also, this ongoing reflection on actions immersed the designer/researcher completely in the design process of the artifact of this specific study.

> *I moved from the autoethnography of the creation of an artifact to an autoethnography of writing a paper about it […] I realized that the notes that I took in order to define the paper's structure was actually another page of the reflective journal.* (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 10, 4/9/18)

The academic/analyst believes that this context specificity points to the difference between research through design and commercial design practice. The reflective journals are as much a part of the project as the clay that makes up the artifact. The process aims to create new knowledge not an artifact, so it stands to reason that making and writing are inseparable. The difficulty of this process for the designer/researcher is rooted in the fact that these types of explorations pose a different set of problems that traditional product-oriented design education does not address.

Issues Related with Time.

When writing an autobiography, an author retroactively and selectively writes about past experiences (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010). The reflective journals took place after actions but

there was an attempt to analyse the actions on the time frame they took place. Also, the need to define 'now' is evident. The need for a coherent time frame also arises from the narrative character of epiphanies, the struggle is documented at first and the solution later. We also consider it an epiphany when some abstract thoughts and statements of the researcher are grounded implicitly with findings of the literature review. These moments are characterized by excitement but in the reflective journals the need for the existence of these thoughts before the researcher reads them in literature is also evident. This also led to various restrictions during the writing of the reflective journals. For example, when the writing started the researcher tried not to read any research. Additionally, the designer/researcher did not read previous pages of the journals until the creation is finished.

> *"I narrate a making process that happened in the past. The presence is me narrating"; (entry 2, 21/7/18) "I have the need to distance myself from the action (mostly actions referring to making). I would like to "digest" them first and then re-embody them through written language"; "I cannot write every day"* (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 6, 3/5/18).

The issues of time, authorship and self-censorship would rise in every discussion the academic/analyst and the designer/researcher would have. Academic writing is usually very structured and formal, as such the designer/researcher kept second guessing the rawness of the journals kept. Also, she had trouble selecting the style of writing in relation to time. The fact that the reflective journals were written at the end of the day provides an excellent chance for reflection but can act as a filter on the thoughts and feelings that arise through the creative process at the time.

Continuous Effort to Avoid Generalizations and Being Explicit about What is Personal.

The designer/researcher actually mentions this in one of her entries tries to map the external and personal points of inspiration that inform her current project and the same time to *"avoid useless generalizations that are rooted in shallow connections, they interrupt my internal, tedious yet substantial quest for meaning"* (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 7, 23/8/18).

Writing in such a personal style is something that designers are usually taught to avoid, at the same time the academic/analyst mentions on the notes on the first analysis that he *"feels like an auteur looking through a glass"* and *"even though the journals were written for me to read I feel like I am invading a personal space" (*Analyst notes*).* The personal nature of the texts manages to bring forward new knowledge on professional design practice that is necessary but just as the author needs to be acclaimed to such a way of working so does the reader.

Issues Related to the Documentation of Tacit Aspects

When it comes for the description on tacit actions there is an idea that try to rationalize them and describe make these acts also lose their meaning and the narrative very technical. Although these tacit aspects were approached by describing the emotions and feelings experience during the procedure.

> *"When I describe the technical parts of making I feel that is waste of time and I do it only for consistency at the documentation"; "I feel that this type of clay inspires me to be more relaxed and I do not try to achieve a perfect smooth result"; "I was anxious and I have not enough patience"; "I was confused."* (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals)

> *"Although I knew that the ceramic rig would covered with fabric I could not resist to experiment with glaze and try to achieve an interesting texture"* (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 4, 19/6/18).

Emotions have been connected to sensory experiences, and even decision-making (Damasio, 1994, 1999). Emotions seem to guide the progress of the making situation, especially when the material qualities and affordances vary, and a successful outcome depends on the embodied knowledge of the maker (Groth, 2016). This was the main goals and point of emphasis of this

study. We argued that using autoethnography in the context of research though design would provide a unique perspective to the tacit aspect of the creative process when undertaken in a craft setting. As discussed in the previous section it is hard not to jump to simple causation for the thoughts and decisions, we and autoethnography in general tries to avoid these as they can lessen the value of the raw experience. We managed to avoid the temptation of providing simplistic correlations for all the quirky or weird choices, but it was something that would always come up in our discussions.

Existence of an Imaginary Listener/Observer

Believing you are being watched can have the same effect as being watched on your behaviour. The reflective journals were written with the intention of doing an autoethnographic study and as such they are not pure internal thoughts that were written to never be read. The existence of an observer changes the discourse and sometimes felt even like correspondence that also called 'half dialogue'.

This imaginary audience is also present during the act of making, where it triggers the practitioner to describe to some extend with words what she was doing subconsciously. This imaginary audience could also be the very real but future users/viewers that will interact the designed artifact and this dialogue would be what will shape its meaning (Zingale & Domingues, 2015). Depending the form this imaginary audience takes it can help the designer/ researcher to direct her thoughts through different reflective levels through a continuous reflective zoom in and zoom out. The basic structure is based on the narrative of the creative process although the focus is not its description but the reflection on it. The researcher uses clearly defined acts to find a starting point that enable her to unlock reflexivity. This iterative cycle of divergence and convergence is central to design practice.

We always zoom in and out trying to reframe the problem space. This also applies to research, shifting layers of abstraction to try to find correlations and causation between different organisational layers. Writing as a medium inspire the researcher to focus and to trigger her analytic mechanisms.

> *"There is a fear for the blank page" Horror vacui "The majority of these thoughts belong to a secondary reflective level"* (comment of academic/analyst).

At the same time, most of the texts were already reflective, as mentioned on the second section: "issues related with time". Understanding the characteristics and the limits of these narratives is necessary in the process of writing and analysing. The academic/analyst cannot approach the text with naivety and must question the reflexivity embedded in every word. Not because the data have to be untainted but because a deeper understanding of the layers of meaning and action behind the words will lead to useful results and a bridging of the explicit reflection and the embodied action that through the dance of the creative endeavour brought forward a new artifact.

Thoughts on Analysing Autoethnographic Texts

The job of the academic/analyst in this project is, much easier than that of the designer/researcher. Textual analysis methods are a staple in humanistic sciences, however being the neutral arbiter is much harder in practice than it initially seems. In this section the analyst of the autoethnography reflects on the process and echoes the sentiments of the designer/researcher's as they were presented in the previous sections.

Firstly, we both shared the need to avoid rationalization, to try and make this process appear scientific and to rationalize parts of the process. One of the last notes on the academic/analyst's journal reads:

> *"I wonder if it would be possible to break down the designer/ researcher to parameters that inspire her and use them to compare different autoethnographies when we collect them. This seems like scientism and a counter intuitive, ABSOLUTELY AVOID IT"*

The analyst is an academic and working in a school of engineering has at times felt found himself pressured by the coils of scientific operationalism, this mental juxtaposition between hard science

and the necessity of understanding the tacit dimensions of design are a constant internal struggle. The designer/ researcher does not share this stress, operating outside of academia her views are much different. This points to the Insider/ Outsider Dilemma (Maydell, 2010) that states that "*conducting research within my own cultural group presented both advantages and dilemmas.*" For example, during our research, the academic/analyst's comments on the reflective journals show that he is more empathetic towards academic issues than making issues. And perhaps we create a new unity that can overcome our biases and point towards a complete designer-researcher-analyst that will be free of the literary and epistemological patterns of contemporary academia.

This insider-outsider relation was also apparent in our discussions of the initial reflective journals where the academic/ analyst would connect notions in the texts with bibliography that the designer/researcher was not aware of. We frame it as part of the 'Dialogue with Informants Beyond the Self' calls for dialogue with 'data' or 'others.' This relation provided many interesting directions and, in a sense, gave us a new appreciation of the bibliography taking it from the realm of theory and finding new interpretations rooted in real world experience.

However, not all issues were analysed, abstract issues and tacit knowledge are part of the making. There isn't always possible to define if the outcomes are referring to actions related to making, to thoughts in relation to autoethnography, or to academic writing in general. In addition, analysing an autoethnography does not provide answers or outcomes but more questions, this can be very negative in the context of modern academic publishing, but we staunchly believe that these questions and sharing of said questions are more useful than conclusions.

Reflection-Discussion

Poke it with a stick as a statement work in different intellectual levels and could also describe the whole process of autoethnographic writing. "During the reflexive journals it was like poking my brain with the stick in order to trigger the embodied and unconscious thoughts to reveal themselves in order to finally realize that it does not exactly work that way" (Excerpt from the Reflective Journals, entry 10, 4/9/18) Autoethnography does not try to confront and rationalized the ways the designers do their magic. Autoethnography points this magic. The whole study, from conducting autoethnography in design to the artifacts created is about to point out the need for empathy in design, design as a discipline, as a science as a product.

This case study is a critique to designing as well to the designed. Although the first intention of the concept was to make a critique of the designed world around us. It is surprising how well the artifact portrays autoethnography as a method of reflexivity. Curiosity, intimacy, epiphany as well as awkwardness indiscreetness and feeling lost are feelings meant to be evoked during the experience with the artifact but also are very present during this autoethnographic attempt. And that points out the ability of research through design to gain better understanding and reframing the research question.

Poke it with a stick: I design for the sake of design, a designer's statement:

> *Dealing with issues that balance between the rational and the irrational, order and entropy, reality and fiction I perceive Design as a space where these binary models could be overcome enabling be to experiment with the amalgamations happening whilst combining these constructions.*

> *As much as I am charmed by the creative process itself, I am enchanted by its outcomes as well. I am capable of identifying what is fictional and even so, I consciously choose to believe in it and even bring it to life without destroying its magical powers.*

> *With this artifact I aim to highlight the silent interactions we perform everyday with the inconspicuous man-made creations that coexist in the material world around us. The experience with this artifact calls for the encounter to further explore it in order to find out how it functions. This experience presents a variety of sensorial aspects that*

increase the awareness of the bodily role of the final perception of the interaction. The result of the interaction is related with light and vision, but the rest of the experience is clearly tactile aiming to provide the sense of being in a play but also a sense of control over this material experience.

Curiosity, pleasure and control are characteristics of the experience that aim on a positive affect [sic]. *At the same time these characteristics act as a critique on how demanding we are in relation to design. What someone could perceive as curiosity another could translate it as lack of tact. The fact that the artifact embodies characteristics of a living organism triggers empathetic emotions and also highlights a sense of responsibility on the material world in general. The stick could be perceived as a symbol of design evolution posing a fundamental question about what should be perceived as a design object.*

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