

**INTUITION IN A  
SMALL INTERIOR  
DOMESTIC SPACE**

**- 2011 -**

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This exegesis is submitted to  
Auckland University of Technology  
for the degree of Master of Art & Design

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Master of Art & Design. AUT University: Auckland  
October 2011

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Lee Huey Ming  
October 2011

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## ABSTRACT

This practice-led research project explores the potential of paper as a medium to communicate complex ideas and emotions. Through this exploration I will employ the notion of water as a conceptual lens through which I will consider ideas related to the small domestic space. The project work will not set out to overtly represent water but will be used as a way to imaginatively retreat from and respond to the small domestic space. Through these conceptual strategies I intend to test the way paper can be manipulated and question if it is able to communicate the subtle and complicated ideas which underpin this research.

## Positioning statement

I am Malaysian Chinese, and grew up in Penang, Malaysia. When I started primary school at the age of seven, I have to admit that I was not good academically. I always felt that I had let my parents down because of the grades that I brought home. Because I failed to stand out academically, I felt that I was overlooked, classed as nothing: that I was part of the unconsidered in everyday life. To get away I built tiny buildings out of Lego. Undisturbed, I usually sat there in front of my Lego buildings, daydreaming. It felt like an escape or a retreat to a different world. It was this experience that prompted my interest in the miniature.

As I got older I shared a room with my two younger sisters. To share a room with two girls can be tough because of the limited space. The room was taken up by beds, toys, clothes and books. But I enjoyed it. Then I noticed that there was a connection between the small space and me. Small spaces inspire me to imagine, to think creatively. Working with miniatures, in a scale not bigger than the palm of my hand, allowed me to engage with my imagination.

What inspires me to imagine? When I imagine retreating from this world, water is like a portal or a gateway; it opens a door into a whole new different world. For example, in the city when I stand beside a puddle of water I can see the reflections of the buildings which make it look like there is another city on the other side. Each puddle of water is different in the same way each individual is different and unique.

Today, I stay in a small urban apartment in central Auckland, surrounded by buildings. I work in the same space where I watch television, cook and eat. Living in a small space since childhood I am used to adapting to the small environment. I have learned to organise my space. Working in a small scale reminds me of the Lego buildings that I used to build when I was young. It is a sense of meditation; the process makes me forget about the space of the room. On the other hand, in a way it makes me feel like I am making the room bigger when organising my work in grids, because that way I create extra space for more artefacts.

Being used to small and shared spaces I prefer to work at night because that is when I am allowed to be my complete self. I usually work in the dark with my working lamp on, so that I am neither disturbed nor distracted by the things that are around me. I am in my own imaginative space under the spotlight. In this, I relate to Robbins (2000), who states “the studio was a place where I received permission to be completely myself; to immerse myself in the smell, dirt, feel of my medium” (pp. 11-12).

Intuition in a small  
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# CHAPTER ONE: WHY PAPER?

## 1.0 Paper

One of the reasons I chose paper as a medium is because paper reminds me of my ancestors, as paper was invented and first used in the East. According to Williams (2005):

Paper was created in China around the end of the first century for the court of Emperor Ho Ti by Ts'ai Lun. As chamberlain, he was responsible for the imperial library and was determined to find a better form of recording information than the bamboo and silk that was used at the time. He worked with craftsmen over many years, developing existing techniques previously used for making cloth and wrapping. Experimenting with many different materials, he found the bark of the mulberry tree provided the best source of paper fiber. It produced a smooth and flexible sheet - the forerunner of writing paper today. (p.7)

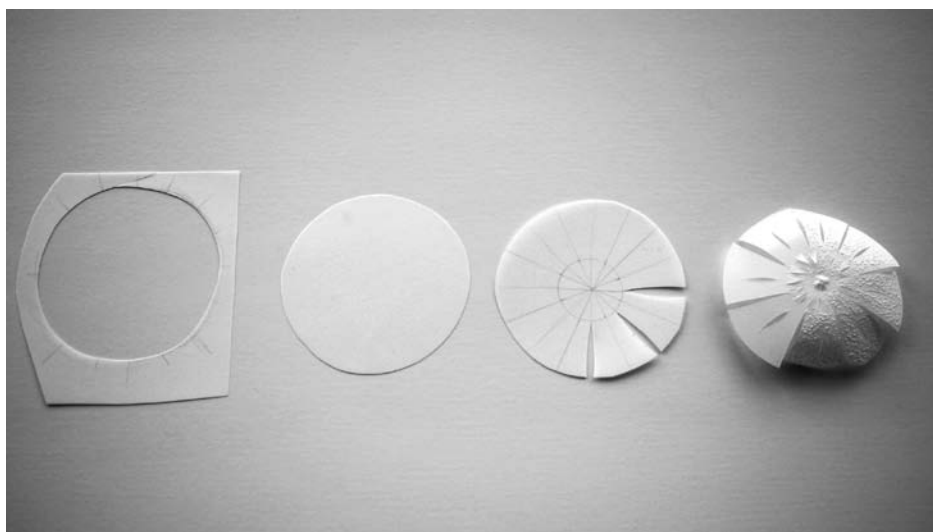
Paper can be a beautiful and delicate material. I chose paper as a medium because through the material I am able to generate ideas. I let the material speak to me through the sense of touch. Paper contains a specific grain, thickness and depth; it engages the maker with tangibility. As Bayles & Orland (1993) explain, "The materials of art ... seduce us with their potential . . . the texture of the paper . . . cast[s] hints and innuendoes, beckoning our fantasies" (p. 17). The creative potential of the paper takes over and inspires me to create with its form, in the same way water inspires me to create different forms. The properties of paper mean that a form can be transformed<sup>1</sup> in so many different ways.

While developing my experimental work I employ different paper sculpting techniques, especially when I am working on a more detailed visual. I sculpt by cutting out organic shapes or forms. Paper's innate properties allow me to bend, fold, cut and curl at will. Through multiple iterations of experiments, I find ways to make folded and unfolded paper behave differently (see Figure 1.1).

Sometimes we overlook paper as a medium for visual communication because, as a material, it is so much a part of our everyday lives. We have lost track of the importance of paper, even though it is the first thing that many of us reach for when we think of an idea or want to draw a sketch, or paint.

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<sup>1</sup> Newell (2007) "transformation – the manipulation of materials into new formats, using extremes of scale to create spectacular effects, or the redirection of traditional techniques to achieve unconventional outcomes" (p. 11).



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*Figure 1.1 Image by the author. (2011). Paper sculpting process.*

## 1.1 Communicating with paper

In my studio (see Figure 1.2) I am a practitioner, an explorer and an inventor. The material takes over or speaks to me when I begin with a system of folding and unfolding; the process becomes like an automatic action. Once I get started with a form or a shape, I am guided by my intuition in the direction of what to create next. From a form it then becomes a structure (see Figure 1.1) and finally I texture the paper by using different techniques of scoring, feathering and piercing the paper. Williams (2005) suggests “while cutting and folding are the most basic techniques available to the designer, it is amazing what can be achieved with a bit of ingenuity and imagination” (p.12).

Guided by the material, and attempting to work intuitively, paper creates in me a sense of wonder and curiosity, it gives me the impulse to create in the small interior domestic interior space; in this way I can sculpt the material and attempt to understand its properties. Hara (2007) argues:

Paper is a senseware; it serves, more than a material for writing and printing, as a perpetual medium of intelligence inspiring the human senses. Even if the invention of paper were to occur after that of electronic technology, still our imagination most likely would have been greatly inspired by an encounter with white sheets of paper that tickle the senses and foster our creativity. (p. 155)

When working on this research project, I often find myself at a standstill in the development of new work. It is hard because I am usually afraid to start a new piece. As Bayles and Orland (1993) observe, “Fear that your next work will fail is a normal, recurring and generally healthy part of the artmaking cycle” (p. 10). To maintain the creative process, I have to trust my intuition to work with the materials: “Imagination is in control when you begin making an object” (ibid., p. 15). I engage myself to work: it does not matter how and where I start; I trust my hands and mind to work together with the potential of the paper. As Schön (1983) states: “Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is in our action” (p. 56). Schön (1983) goes on to say:

There are actions, recognitions, and judgments which we know how to carry out spontaneously; we do not have to think about them prior to or during their performance. We are often unaware of having learned to do these things; we simply find ourselves doing them. In some cases, we were once aware of the understandings, which were subsequently internalized, in our feeling for the stuff of action. In other cases, we may never have been aware of them. In both cases, however, we are usually unable to describe the knowing which our action reveals. (p. 54)

## Chapter 1: Why paper?

The sense of touch with the paper gives me an impulse to create (see Figure 1.3), it enthuses me when I begin working on shaping and forming the material. By crafting with my hands I often make mistakes, the mistakes encourage me to sculpt and discover something new and this allows me to reflect on my previous artefact and create something better. This process of discovery is analogous to Schön's (1983) notion of the exploratory experiment: a "probing, playful activity by which we get a feel for things. It succeeds when it leads to the discovery of something there" (p. 3).

Chapter 1:  
Why paper?



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*Figure 1.2 Image by the author. (2011). My studio.*

Chapter 1:  
Why paper?



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*Figure 1.3 Image by the author. (2011). Working with paper*

## 1.2 Review of related knowledge

This section focuses on the topics of the miniature and paper. Paper sculpting has had a recent surge in popularity; this has encouraged many practitioners around the world to work with paper. I have chosen the following practitioners because they work in a similar area of interest as my research project.

There are several ways of manipulating paper as a material. Both paper and the miniature exist around us but sometimes they can be overlooked and unconsidered.

In our digital age, paper has become less important as a medium for the immediate transmission of information. As this shift occurred, designers and artists increasingly discovered the creative possibilities of paper's endurance. Today, creative practice with paper continues to be a trend.  
("Papercraft 2," 2011, para. 3)

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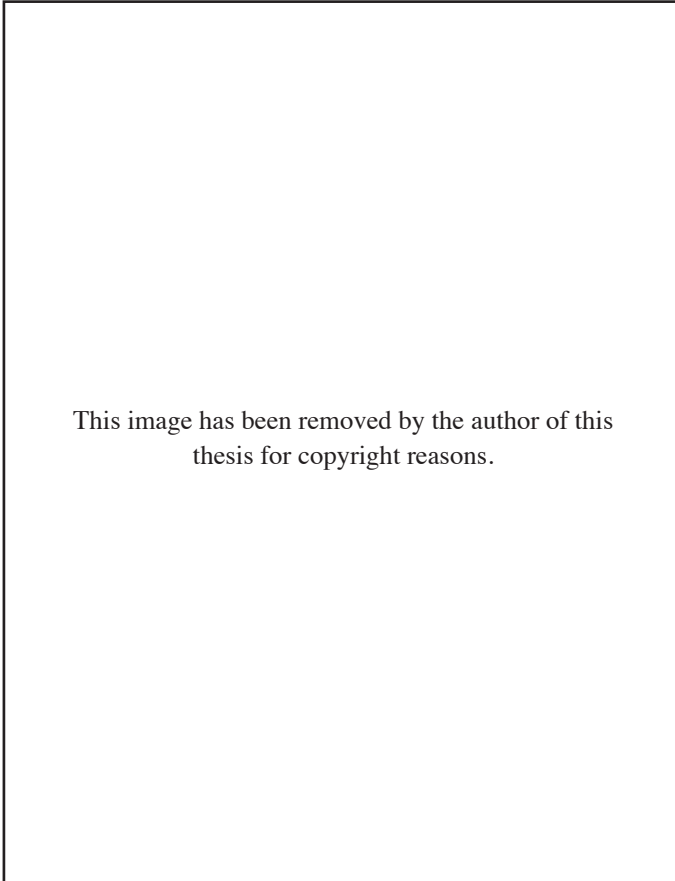
### *Paper*

Noriko Ambe is an artist "whose creative forms span the notions of micro to macro. They encompass past, present, and future, and probe the connection between nature and human existence" (Watanabe, 2009, para. 1). Ambe chose to individually hand cut each piece of paper and stacked hundreds of flat sheets on top of each other (see Figures 1.4 and 1.5). The layers of paper have been carefully arranged and stacked in a way that views the earth's surface in cube-like dimensions. She chose Japanese Yupo paper<sup>2</sup> as a medium, because "Yupo's transparency and organic touch gives it the quality of skin, there is also a reference to the human body" (Goodman, 2006, para. 1).

There are certain points of Ambe's works that are similar to mine in aspects of the practice; I allow the imperfections of handcraft to convey nature and the miniature. However, my work is different to Ambe's because Ambe's work is about large things made small, whereas my work is about the miniature, about exploring small sheets of paper within the grasp of my hands.

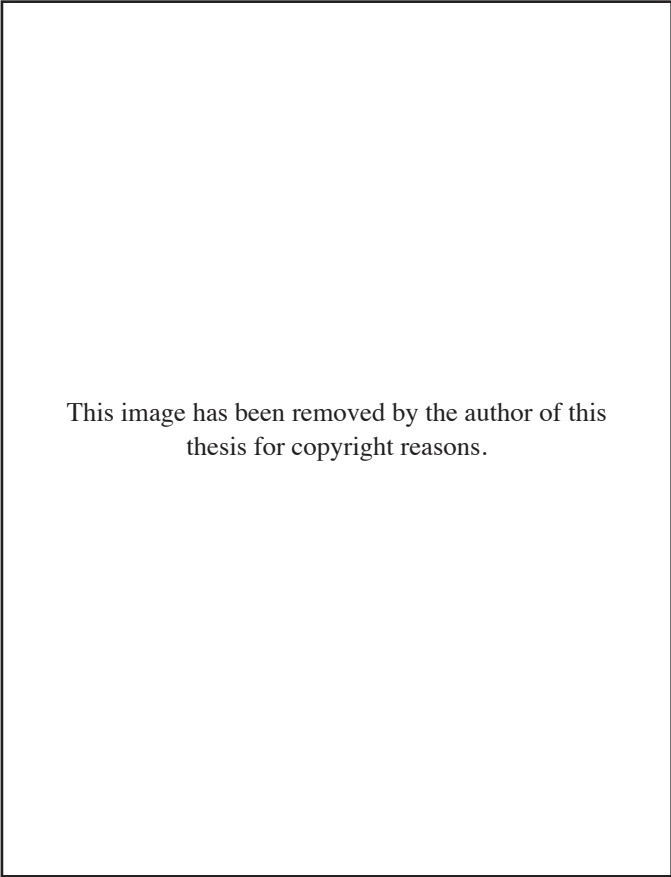
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<sup>2</sup> Yupo paper is fiber-free, it holds the smallest lines and cuts, without fraying, for sharp, clean edges. Yupo is resistant to water and humidity...will stand the test of time, can be easily maintained and will not warp or shift (Ozler, 2006, para. 3).



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*Figure 1.4 Ambe. (2008). A Piece of Flat Globe Vol.4.*



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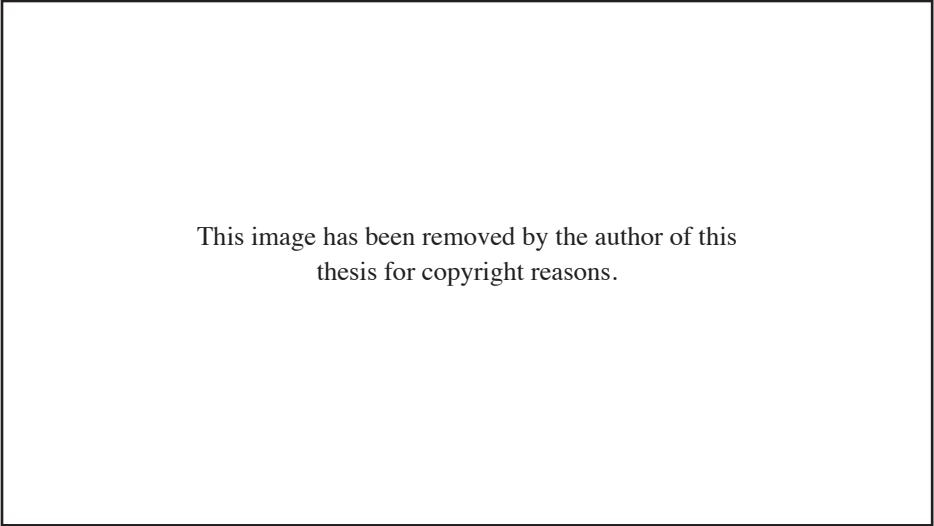
*Figure 1.5 Ambe. (2008). A Piece of Flat Globe Vol.4 (detail).*

## *Paper*

Yuken Teruya makes a forest on a wall; he transforms plain toilet tissue rolls into delicate tree branches spreading on different sides (see Figure 1.6 & 1.7). Klanten, Meyer, Commentz & Haeusler (2011) note:

Teruya snips the most delicate of microcosms... In his quest to “awaken the paper’s ability to come to life,” the artist meticulously teases the filigree ramifications from his material. Once finished, the source of his harvested work becomes an overhead clearing for the fresh new growth inside. Incidentally, each tree is modeled on a real-life specimen – a portrait of the flora encountered by the artist during his travels. (p.18)

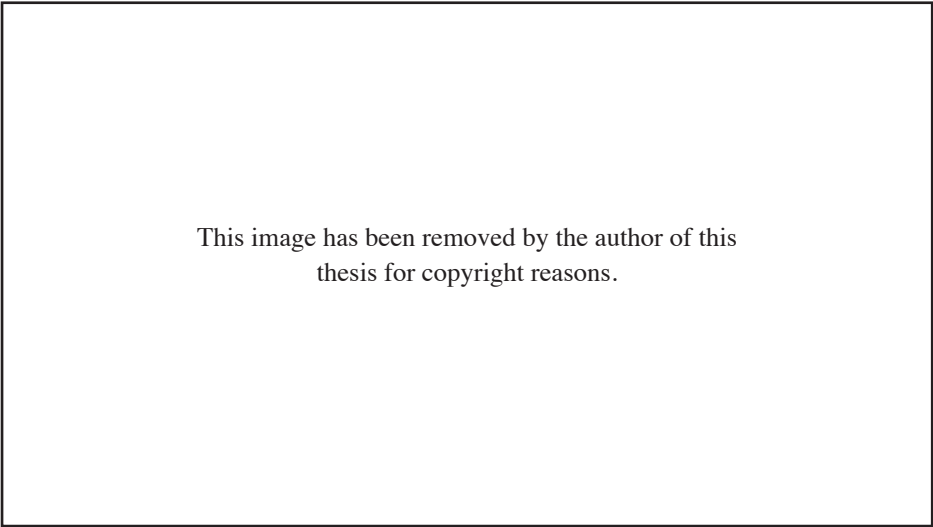
Teruya’s work has informed my work through the playfulness of the material and the way he sets up his sculptures. He also considers the depth of the toilet tissue rolls in relation to the way that it captures different light and shadows on the wall. My work also sets out to investigate shadows and the potential meanings of the shadow in relation to the paper forms.



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*Figure 1.6 Teruya. (n.d). Toilet paper roll series: Corner Forest.*



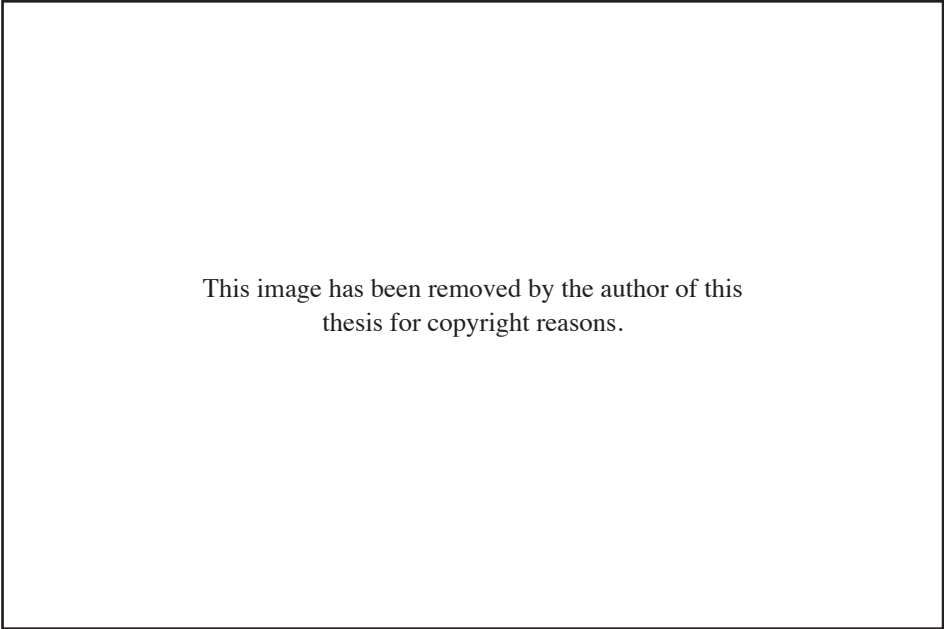
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*Figure 1.7 Teruya. (n.d). Toilet paper roll series: Corner Forest.*

## *Paper*

Annie Vought delicately hand cuts letters onto a new piece of paper by dissecting the negative spaces with an Exact-o knife. Vought (n.d) “focus on the text, structure, and emotion of the letter in an elaborate investigation into the properties of writing and expression. Penmanship, word choice, and spelling all contribute to possible narratives about who that person is and what they are like.” She goes on to say “recreating the letters is an extended concentration on peoples’ inner lives and the ways they express their thoughts through writing” (para. 1). Similarly, my work focuses on emotions by allowing the material of the paper to stimulate and guide my senses into creating forms which express my experience of living in a small interior domestic space.



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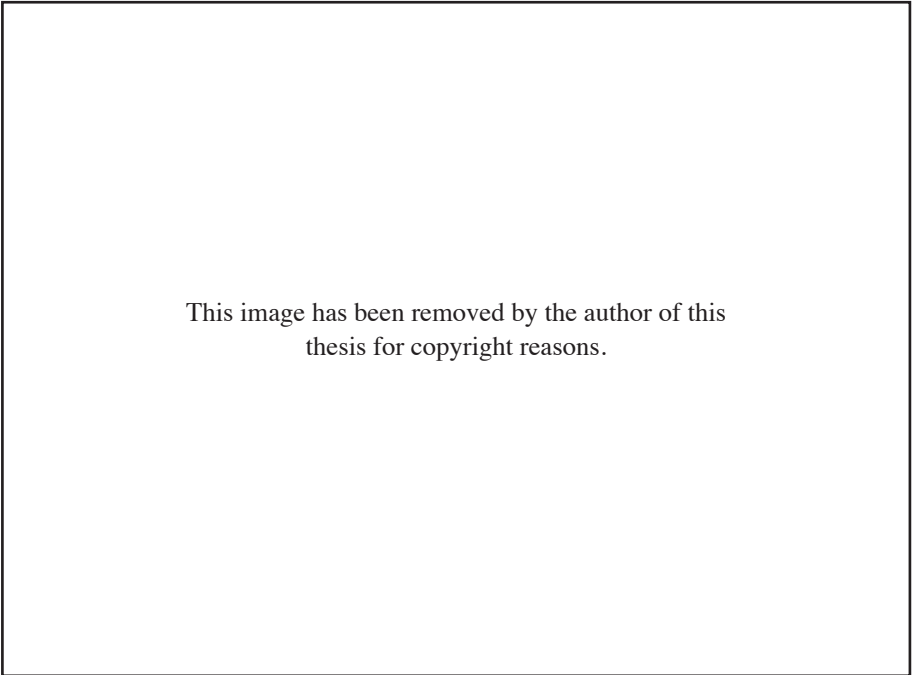
*Figure 1.8 Vought. (2012). In the making.*

## *Paper*

A large part of Peter Callesen's work are made from A4 sheets of paper (see figure 1.9). Callesen (n.d) argues that we hardly notice paper because paper is one of the most common and consumed media for carrying information today. Callesen (n.d) goes on to say:

By taking away all the information and starting from scratch using the blank white A4 paper sheet for my creations, I feel I have found a material that we are all able to relate to, and at the same time the A4 paper sheet is neutral and open to fill with different meaning. The thin white paper gives the paper sculptures a frailty that underlines the tragic and romantic theme of my works. (para. 1)

The flat sheet of paper inspired me to create a new form based on my memories of living in a small interior domestic space. Paper is a material that allows me to express or fill it with emotions of what I have experienced in the past.



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*Figure 1.9 Callesen. (2008). White diary.*

*Paper and the miniature*

Anja Markiewicz folds paper into miniature sized origami (see Figure 1.10). In her series Nano-origami (2011) she folds a collection of miniature snowflakes, animals, and flowers (see figure 1.8). She uses paper less than an inch wide, and manipulates it with her hands and a toothpick.

Markiewicz considers the miniature and the quotidian. As a practitioner she works directly with the material. She folds realistic objects that can be seen, then transforms them into miniature size. In my practice, water stimulates my imagination and inspires me to create the miniature paper sculptures. The physical connection with the material stimulates my mind to create. Markiewicz's miniature sized origami works demonstrate that the tactile quality of paper can provide an experience which helps to create work through an intuitive process.

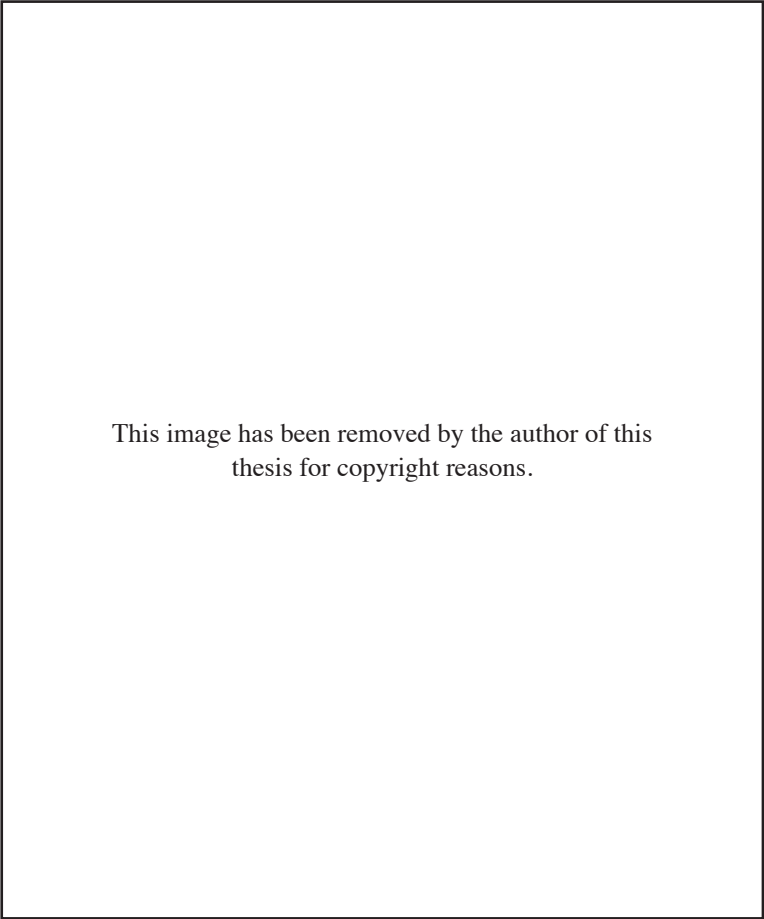
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*Figure 1.10 Markiewicz. (2011). Folds a 38mm paper strip into a snowflake.*

*Paper and the miniature*

Anastasia Elias makes miniature art in toilet paper rolls (see figure 1.11) “I cut the small paper shapes that I stick inside the toilet paper rolls. I use tweezers to manipulate the paper shapes. I select the paper of the same color as the roll” (Elias, 2010, para. 1). Elias plays with depth and she creates silhouettes that change with the use of light and the toilet rolls’ three dimensional tunnel creates an illusion. In my opinion the material that she chose to use and the silhouettes relate to the everyday. Similarly I use paper, and the miniatures seek to draw attention to those things in our everyday life that sometimes go unnoticed. Paper and the miniature can be manipulated into forms that help me express the emotions that I went through while working and staying in a small interior domestic space.



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*Figure 1.11 Elias. (2009). Zoo.*

*Paper and the miniature*

Elsa Mora's miniature artist book "The Journey" is about the journey that life is (see figure 1.12 & 1.13). Mora (2011) "The first element inside the book is a colorful pop-up bird that raises up when you open the first page. This bird represents freedom and our ability to reach goals" (para. 1). She goes on to say, "With this book I want to celebrate the amazing journey that life is. Both sides of life, the dark side and the bright one, are important because they make us wiser and stronger" (para. 3).

When working with the miniature, it allows me to take a step back and also it slows down my thinking process, this process enables me to express my emotions and intuition working in a small interior domestic space. I present my paper artefacts as miniatures because the miniature is a way for me to draw people's attention to the quotidian.

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*Figure 1.12 Mora. (2011). The journey.*

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*Figure 1.13 Mora. (2011). The journey.*

### *Miniature*

Yoshihiro Suda hand-carves realistic small wooden sculptures based on flowers and plants (see Figure 1.14), “the petals are paper-thin, and when you hold them up to the light they are almost translucent” (Newell, 2007, p. 103). Suda places the plants in unexpected places where we might not expect to find them. However, for my sculptures I chose to arrange them in grids and frame them. This is to show my personal experiences as a practitioner working in a small interior domestic space.

Although Suda’s works are made from wood, a material more frequently used for large-scale items, his works are based on the miniature. Suda’s work is detailed, small, and simple. Suda states, “...if you take interest in even the small things it can change the atmosphere and the feeling of your surroundings. It makes you feel different from before” (Newell, 2007, p.110). The intention of his work is to change people’s perspective in the way they think and to encourage us to see things that usually go unnoticed.

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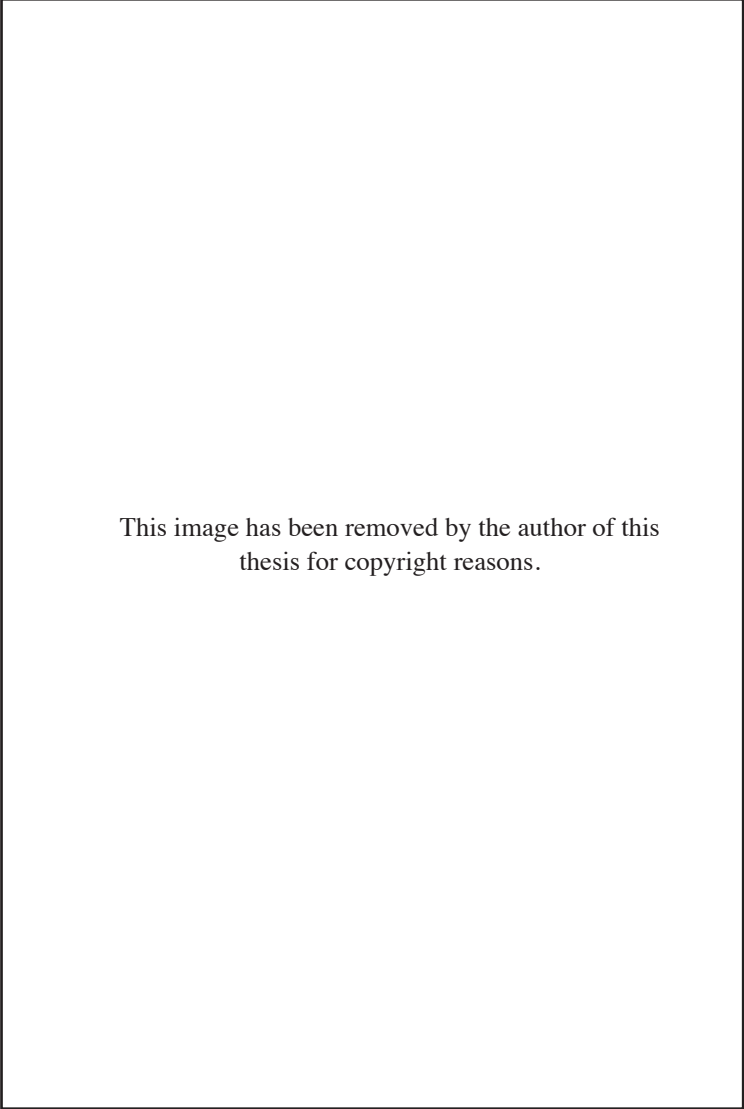
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*Figure 1.14 Suda. (2004). Weeds, paint on wood.*

*Paper and domestic space*

Mia Pearlman's paper sculptures (see figure 1.16) "glow with natural or artificial light, these imaginary weather systems appear frozen in an ambiguous moment, bursting through walls and windows, or hovering within a room" ("Mia Pearlman – Breathtaking Cut Paper Installations," para. 1).

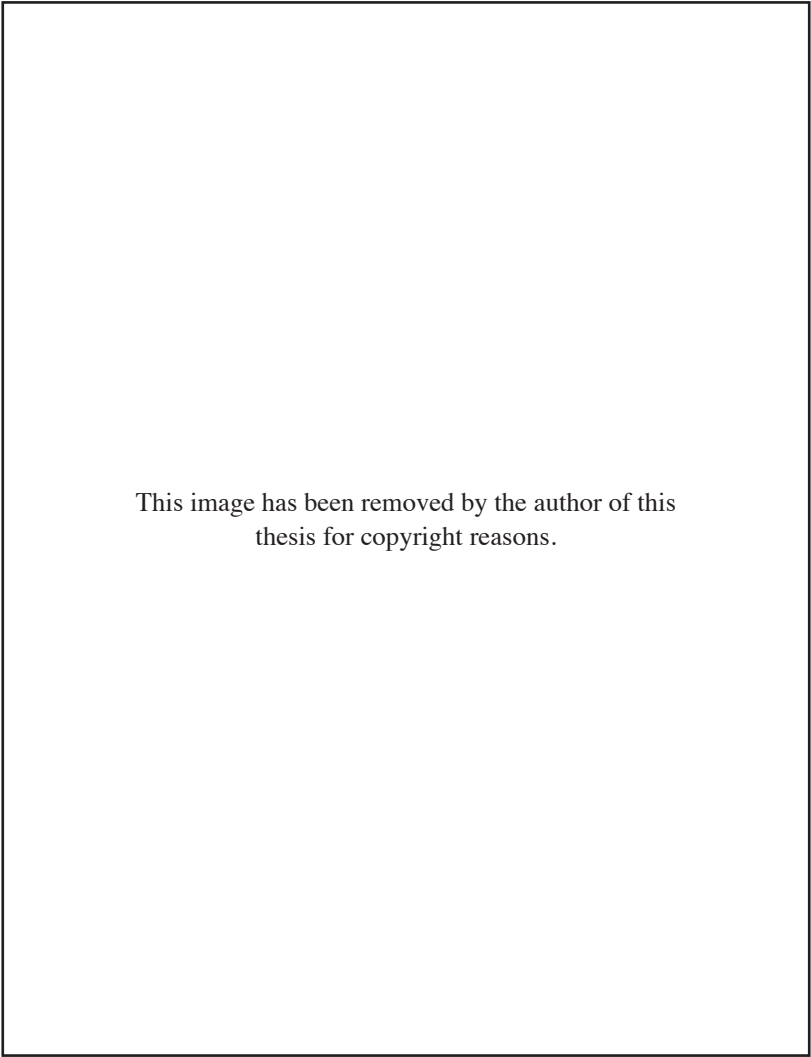
Pearlman cuts out negative spaces in her paper sculptures (see figure 1.15). During my progress I cut out negative spaces for more flexibility from the paper. To make the paper more flexible. The negative spaces allow shadow and light to express the memories of living in a small domestic space. I am able to relate to these paper artefacts with different meaning and different forms because all of us are different and all microscopic life also appears in different forms.



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*Figure 1.15 Genovese (n.d). Then I start cutting out the white parts between the lines. Each cut determines the next cut.*



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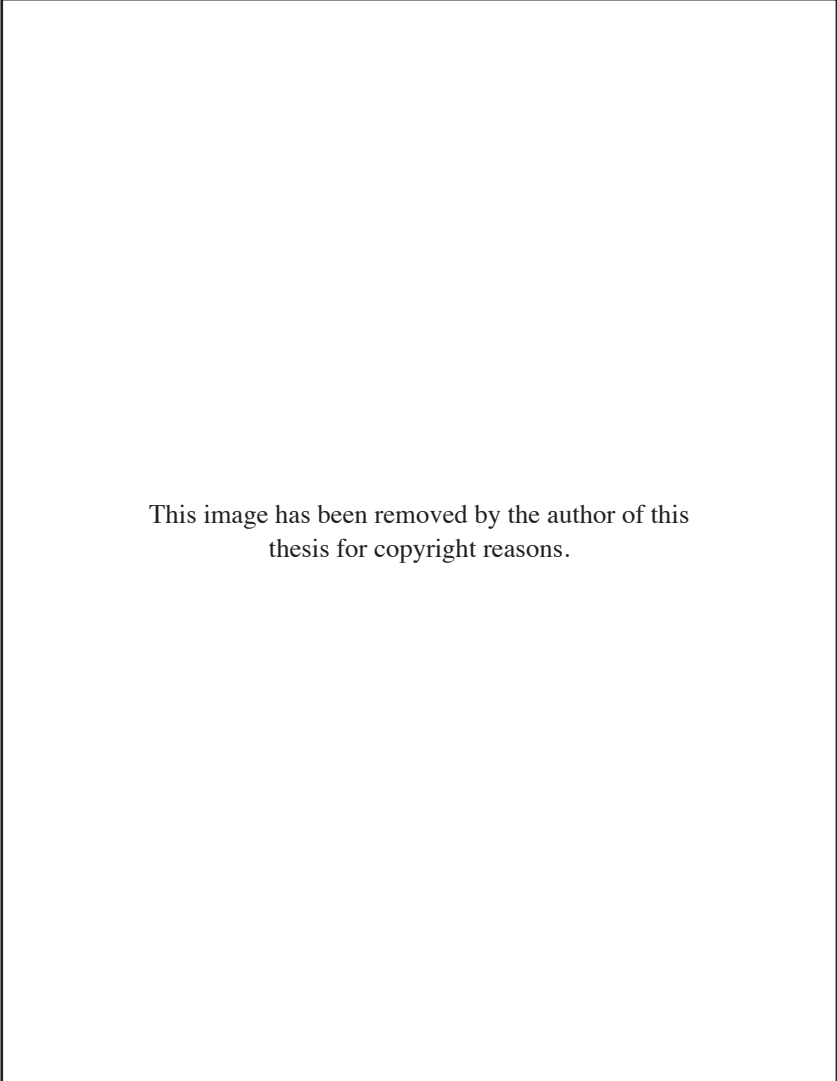
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*Figure 1.16 Pearlman. (2010). Installation at Plaatsmaken, Arnhem, the Netherlands.*

### *Paper and domestic space*

Peter Gentenaar uses bamboo as the framework to form his paper sculptures (see figure 1.17& 1.18). By allowing the pulp to dry, the paper naturally shrinks in unison and attaches itself to the bamboo framework creating its own natural form. Gentenaar had an installation where his paper sculptures were hung inside a church in France (“Peter Gentenaar,” 2012). In the space of the church the sculptures seem like they are floating in the air. The scale and colours of the paper sculptures make one imagine that we are just one of the microscopic microorganisms that live and exist in this universe.

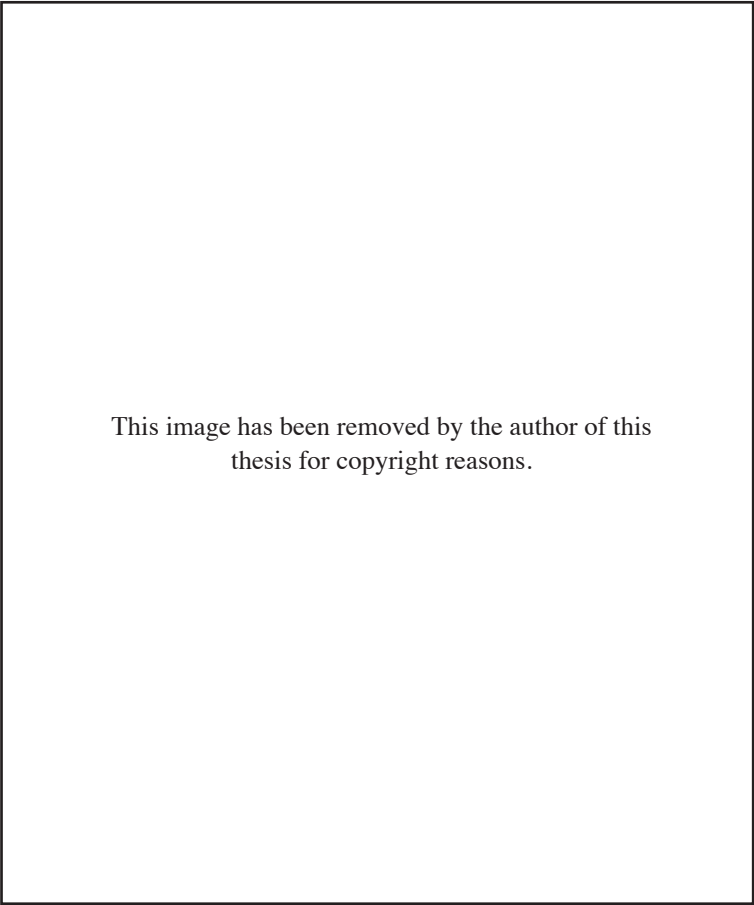
By comparison to Gentenaar’s work, the scale of my work is small. Using paper within the grasp of my hands gives me better control of the weight and the form that is in my imagination. In order to create more space in the small interior domestic space I used pins to hold the paper artefacts to prevent them from touching each other. The paper artefacts are arranged in grids and lines in an organised form so that it creates more space. Through this technique I have gained some knowledge of the possibilities of what paper can do; by creating in a smaller size the paper has a stronger structure because of the lack of flexibility and the limited space. So in order to create a form that looks organic, the paper must be folded, scored, cut and pierced.



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*Figure 1.17 Gentenaar. (2012). Untitled.*



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*Figure 1.18 Gentenaar. (2012). Untitled.*

Intuition in a small  
interior domestic space

# CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

## 2.0 Heuristics

My project is practice-based, and sits within an heuristic paradigm. Heuristic inquiry has a nature of discovery. Moustakas (1990) describes heuristics as a process which is “a way of being informed, a way of knowing” (p. 10). He suggests:

Heuristics inquiry is a process that begins with a question or a problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one’s self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social - and perhaps universal - significance. (p. 15)

I am therefore inherently positioned within the research project; it is a reflection of myself through handcraft and the application of intuition in decision-making. I use self-reflection and informal focus groups to check that the artefacts are communicating something to the viewer, rather than simply existing for their own sake. In this creative practice-based project I also seek to have a personal connection through self-reflection and dialogue with the research question.

Heuristics is an approach to research where informed guess work and questioning enables one to apply tacit knowing in creative practice refinement. Kleining and Witt (2000) suggest heuristics may optimise the chances of discovery in the research, and discoveries are found through the process of framing and making the work (para. 9). According to Douglass and Moustakas (1985) this “requires a process of reflecting, exploring, sifting, and elucidating the nature of the phenomenon under investigation” (p. 40). The process draws on implicit and subjective understandings of the emerging research question and its outcomes. It suits essentially subjective inquiries with high levels of questioning and experimentation where no known formula for realisation exists.

As a practitioner, it is important to make works as part of the research process. Exploring with different techniques in my process allows me to raise questions in the artefacts and drive the project forward into discovering something new.

## 2.1

### Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action

According to Schön (1992), *reflection* in the phrase “reflection-in-action” suggests that it “takes place in the midst of action” in what he calls “action-present” (p. 125). In ongoing experiments in my practice based project, reflection-in-action helps me find a solution. “Reflection-in-action is usually something that happens when a surprise appears – this causes us to question why and how it happened” (“Research for teachers,” 2007, p. 7).

At the beginning of the project it was hard to find out the ‘why’ part of the research project. I was too focused on the colour, structure and form of the artwork (see Figure 2.1). When I looked at the artwork, I was not sure why I was making it. Reflection-in-action helped me reframe my research question. Through this process I discovered the reason as to why I was making work by taking a step back and listening to what the work was saying and what it meant.

I am attracted to water but I was not sure why. In recent works it became clear that water provides a form of imaginative space that allows me to retreat from and respond to the small interior domestic space. Schön (1983) states “the practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion” (p. 68).

As my project moved forward I noticed the earlier stages of my project were not working for me. I realised colour was part of the creative blocks that I was experiencing. Unconsciously, I cleared my mind and started fresh by removing colour. I improved the paper artefacts by beginning with the simplest basic folding and unfolding on a white sheet of paper, and realised that I work better with white and translucency. The simplicity and absence of colour helped me to engage with the paper artefacts in a different way because it helped me to have a clearer understanding of my project; I had more focus on the form and texture that I was seeking to create by employing Schöns (1983) “reflection-on-action” process (p. 49). According to research for teachers:

Reflection-on-action offers the practitioner an opportunity to review an extended experience s/he has had and evaluate it. This is an intellectual process and requires selection of data, analysis and evaluation. It leads to new understandings that can provide the basis for new experiments that create the context for more reflection-in-action. (“Research for teachers,” 2007, p. 8)

## Chapter 2: Methodology

Reflection-on-action helped me improve the forms of the miniature paper artefacts. Through this process I would continually go back and relate it to the research questions, and then consider how each artefact might be considered in relation to that question. Scrivener (2000) suggests “when a practitioner reflects on knowing-in-practice they reflect on knowledge and ways of working automated over an extended period” (para. 27).

In this regard the methodology enables one to become conscious of the process of reflection and development in problem solving. In relation to this project I employed the process of reflection-in-action as a method of critique and change within the process of the practice. At this point of my practice reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action continues to improve my thinking in relation to my work.



Figure 2.1 Image by the author. (2011). Initial experiment.

## 2.2 Tacit knowledge

In my research I am attempting to articulate certain processes of knowledge access and application that we might traditionally associate with the intuitive or as ‘knowing’, surfacing from the process of ‘doing’. Polanyi (1969) offers a framework for our understanding of this intuitive world in his discussion of tacit knowledge. He suggests:

The way the body participates in the act of perception can be generalized further to include the bodily roots of all knowledge and thought. Our body is the only assembly of things known almost exclusively by relying on our awareness of them for attending to something else. Parts of our body serve as tools for observing objects outside and for manipulating them. Every time we make sense of the world we rely on our tacit knowledge of impacts made by the world on our body and complex responses of our body to these impacts. Such is the exceptional position of the body in the universe. (p. 147)

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## 2.3 The designer’s journal

I keep a designer’s journal to record my research process. Hughes (1996) suggests:

A research diary is a record of the researcher’s involvement in a project. While the contents of the diary are sometimes used as data, they are different from the information, observations, records or other data, which are collected because you think they may yield information about the phenomena under study. The diary contains information about the researcher, what the researcher does, and the process of research. It complements the data yielded by the research methodology. (para. 1)

The journal is used to record self-reflection, ideas and influences; it also connects to heuristic methodology, which suggests that one keeps reflexive personal data. Newbury (2001) suggests, “the reason for keeping a research diary is to facilitate the research process through recording observations, thoughts and questions as they happen, for later use by the researcher, and to stimulate reflective thinking about the research” (para. 8).

## Chapter 2: Methodology

In the development of the project, I often go out to take photos of puddles when it's raining, as part of my data collection. I then reflect on images in my journal that led me to think about water in a broader number of ways. Through research I studied microorganisms found in water. It was the free form of water and microorganisms that suggested alternative approaches to creating new forms. This process is part of Kleining and Witt's (2000) third rule, as they suggest "data should be collected under the paradigm of maximum structural variation of perspectives" (para. 10), and the process of journal-keeping allows me to record a lot of unrelated data, therefore helping me make new connections. This enables me to avoid the pitfall of striving towards a single, 'definitive' solution. Instead the method of employing a maximum variation of perspectives leads me to seek alternative, innovative solutions during the experimental stages of my creative practice.

I choose not to draw or sketch visuals in my journal. Instead, this unplanned practice gives me an immediate uncontrollable connection with the material to create, in response to the small interior domestic space.

Updating my journal regularly has the advantage of forcing an ongoing reflection on emerging ideas. It also forces me to record observations that otherwise may be forgotten and overlooked. According to Burgess (1981) "a journal is a methodological account that involves autobiographical details... the diary should contain an analytic account that raises questions that were posed in the course of conducting research" (p. 76).

By making regular entries, this process of analysis became deeper and more insightful than what might normally occur.

## 2.4 Experiments

One of the first experiments was about the exploration of plant life, and imagining what it might look like in a post-apocalyptic earth where dry soil and nitrogen may have taken over (see Figure 2.2). I had doubts as to what the outcomes would be like; I tried to focus on too many ideas in my work because the topic was too wide. Furthermore, I wasn't happy with my process and I struggled to find the research question: the overall topic was not clear to me. Kleining and Witt (2000) state:

The topic of research is preliminary and may change during the research process. It is only fully known after being successfully explored. The topic may be overlapped by another one or turn out as part of a different problem... changes of this sort should be regarded as a positive sign of accumulation of knowledge. (para. 9)

In the second stages of my experiment, I began to explore scale and cutting. At first I tried gluing it with layers of paper, one on top of another, but I wasn't satisfied with the end result because of the limited depth. The artefact was not creating the three dimensional shape that I wanted. Also the colours that I used restrained me. The colours seemed to confuse the focal points I was trying to create.

Because I was not getting the depth that I wanted, I experimented with pinning down the paper with dress pins. The pins rooted the structure and it captured the form (see Figure 2.3). On the other hand it also gave me a chance to play with depth. The pins helped to turn a flat sheet of paper into a three dimensional structure. The pins also enable the paper to fold and flow the way it wants to be formed naturally. For the more detailed elements I used tweezers to fold the paper and to glue them together so that I wouldn't get finger marks or dirt on the material.

During this research process, I kept moving back and forth with my experiments, but most of them did not produce the desired end result. However these experiments did allow me to develop the process and craft techniques that were to help with the realisation of the final designs. After trials and errors, I started to leave the colour palette and went straight for a plain white, translucent paper and started folding and curling the paper.

Throughout the research project, my project shifted and I took a step back to observe and reflect on my work. I narrowed down my field of interest and I focused my thoughts around 'water.' At that point of my practice, I was still not sure why I was interested in water. I became curious about how water might look under the microscope. Through research I found that there is more about water such as the unconsidered microscopic life which exists in water. This reminded me that I am also part of the unconsidered microscopic life that exists in this world.

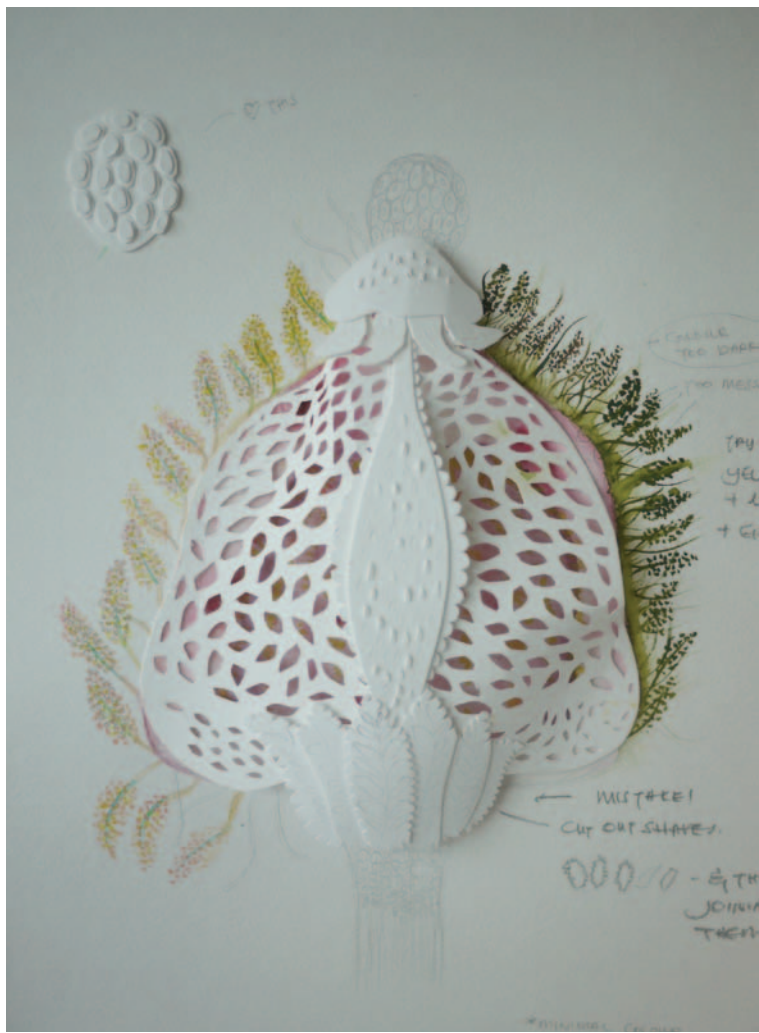
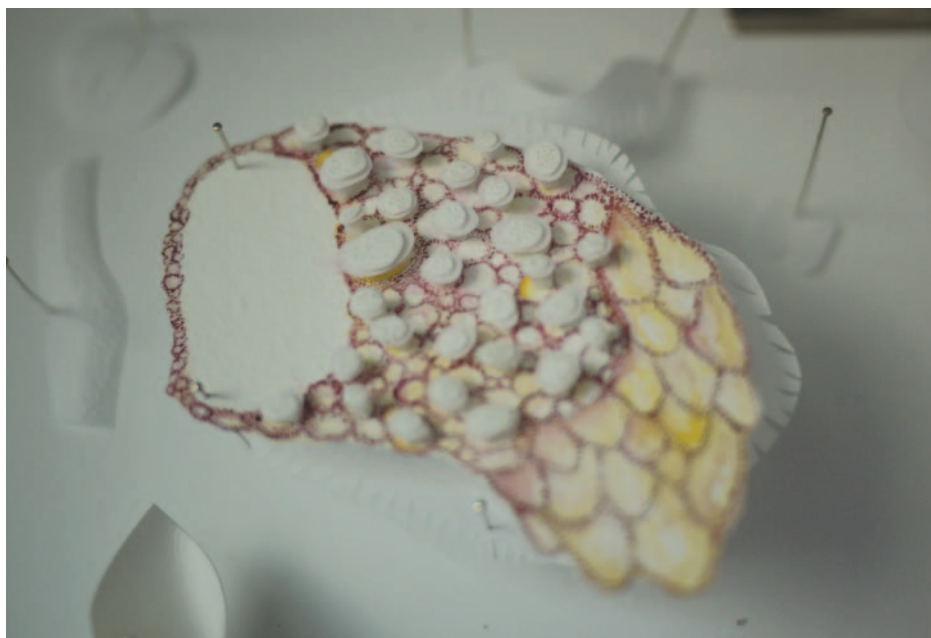


Figure 2.2 Image by the author. (2011). Botanical exploration.



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*Figure 2.3 Image by the author. (2011). Experimenting with organic form and pins.*

## 2.5 Overcoming fear and failure

The methodological process to overcome fear and failure was to start making the work. At the beginning of my process I always try to think of a visual before I start work, but that was not successful because I was afraid to start as I was never sure if the visual in my head would work (the fear of failure). As a practitioner I have learned that it is important to create a habit of being able to work every day, no matter how and when you start. Bayles & Orland (1993) suggest that:

We're all subject to a familiar and universal progression of human troubles – troubles we routinely survive but which are (oddly enough) routinely fatal to the artmaking process. To survive as an artist requires confronting these troubles. Basically, those who continue to make art are those who have learned how to continue - or more precisely have learned how to not quit. (p. 9)

To overcome fear I set a time each day to start work. I chose to start working during the night when there are no distractions. Once I turn on my working lamp I look for any piece of paper on my desk that I can find and hold it in my hand. The 'felt experience' allows me to start work by folding or scoring. Once there is a crease or a cut on my paper it automatically signals to my senses that I have already started the first step into creating a new pattern or a structure. During the process, whenever I make a mistake I leave it aside so that I can allow myself to go back and improve the artefacts. According to Petroski (2006):

No matter how well developed a thing or system becomes, however, it will never be without limitations. There are no mechanical utopias. Therefore, there will always be room for improvement. The most successful improvements ultimately are those that focus on the limitations - on the failures. (p. 3)

## 2.6 Methodology summary

Employing heuristics has been useful because through this research project I have managed to gain knowledge by engaging with my physical connection with the material, and through crafting, using Schön's (1983) reflection-in action and reflection-on action as a guiding methodology, and using the heuristic tacit and implicit process of experimentation and questioning. In addition, heuristics has allowed me to employ a number of methods, one of them is Kleining and Witt's third rule, which I have applied in my designer's journal. I have been personally connected to my research project by making photographic field trips as part of my data collection; thus avoiding researching images sourced from the internet which may thin my practice. I also choose not to sketch or draw so that the form that I want to create in my mind is developed through more of an intuitive process.

Heuristics engages the researcher in a process of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. It has enabled me to rigorously challenge my research topic by framing and reframing the problem. By adopting this approach I can attempt to create designs that communicate the subjective experience of water and the small interior domestic space.

# CHAPTER THREE: EMBODIED CRAFT KNOWLEDGE

### 3.0 Physical contact, tools and material

Surrounded by technology today, craft has become an overlooked practice; we sometimes forget to connect with our senses by thinking through craft. According to Adamson (2007) “craft is not a defined practice but a way of thinking through practices of all kinds, and there is no reason that any one medium or genre of production should be more conducive to this way of thinking than another” (p. 7). Crafting with my hands without using the computer helps me to slow down my process and it allows me to unpack deep concentration with the right brain. Our hands are connected to our gray matter by a crisscrossing network of nerve pathways that travel back and forth from the right brain to the left hand and from the left brain to the right hand (Vienne, 2000, as cited in Bierut, Drenttel, & Heller, 2002).

Craft, on the other hand, was once considered second rate because of its association with the everyday and with women. During the Feminist movement craft is described as part of homemaking itself. “...craft was, for Feminists, a way of recognizing the enforced conditions of their own practice... Feminists concerns were broader – grounded in the presumption that women’s creativity itself was domestic and non-professional” (Adamson, 2007, p. 150).

When an artefact or an artwork is created by hand it changes the way we view it compared to the reproduced artefact. Crafting the miniature by hand is labour intensive and requires considerable time and effort to achieve the necessary levels of resolution. Stewart (2005) suggests “Whereas industrial labor is marked by the prevalence of repetition skill and part over whole, the miniature object represents an antithetical mode of production: production by the hand, a production that is unique and authentic” (p. 68). Also, if I make a mistake there’s no going back but only going forward.

As a physical process, working in a small interior domestic space I am engaging with the belief that handcraft exists as a form of experience. McCullough (1998) says:

Hands show life most when at work. They don’t just hold: they grasp, they pinch, they press, they guide. To pick up a coin, to turn a key, to lift a handle: each uses a fundamentally different grip... And for working hands, taking may be as important as giving: hands get shaped. They may get callused or stained. They pick up experience. (p.2)

### Chapter 3: Embodied craft knowledge

Before I begin making works, my ritual is to turn on the light on my desk and dim down the lights so that I can focus. Then I notice the steady beating of my heart. The first step in the creation of these artefacts is to gain an appreciation for the material. Holding the paper in my hand, and crafting from it, I am attracted to various sensual aspects. The connection to the material is similar to that involved in the wabi-sabi aesthetic<sup>3</sup>; an appreciation for the simple and plain over the ornate and decorated (Koren, 1994). As Hara (2010) states, “senses which are focussed on a few simple qualities become a rich source of imagination” (p.57).

First, there’s the stimulus of sound when I cut and take a new sheet of paper from the paper bag, shelf or roll. The sound arouses my senses and it helps to concentrate my attention. Next, the direct stimulus on my skin; the slightly rough and grainy texture of the paper stimulates the skin on my palms. This exploration brings me closer to the tactile nature of a ‘felt’ inquiry and allows me to work intuitively.

Making an artefact with paper is a process of embodied experience. Touch plays a major role in my project as the feel and texture of paper tickles my senses and the translucency gives me a sense of calmness to produce works. By working with the haptic<sup>4</sup> I am able to put my thoughts and visions into creating multi dimensional effects. Cross (as cited in Mäkelä, 2007) explains:

In the activity of designing. [sic] It can be gained by engaging in and reflecting on that very activity. Knowledge also resides in artefacts themselves, in the forms and materials, some of this knowledge is also inherent in the process of manufacturing the artefacts, and it can be gained through making and reflecting upon the making of those artefacts. (para. 10)

Thus the material (paper) may be seen in its materiality as a form of knowledge that is in discourse with the ‘maker’. One brings designs into being, as a dialogue enacted through the hands. Paper will suggest and resist certain ideas. Although one might conceive of certain structures, the weight and grain of the paper will determine if these are able to be brought to realisation or need to be adjusted and rethought.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Koren (1994), “the closest English word to wabi-sabi is probably “rustic.” Webster’s defines “rustic” as “simple, artless, or unsophisticated... [with] surfaces rough or irregular” (p.21).

<sup>4</sup> A definition of haptic, from Oxford English Dictionary (2011) suggest haptic relates to “the sense of touch or tactile sensations” (para. 1).



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*Figure 3.1 Image by the author. (2011). Craft.*

# CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL FRAMEWORK

## 4.0

### The small interior domestic space and the miniature

Domestic spaces come in different forms, shapes, and sizes. A space defines a person's personality and it influences an individual's imagination. Cieraad (1999) suggests that:

We spend much of our lives in the home, our primary emotional connections are shaped in the domestic arena of the home, where we live and how we live are important determinants of our social position, physical health, and individual well-being. (p. ix)

Presently I am living in one of the apartments in the CBD of Auckland, New Zealand. According to Auckland City Council's annual population growth chart, in 2011 it is estimated that there are 460,200 people living in central Auckland (Auckland city business and economy report 2007, 2007). Bayleys Research and Consulting (2003) suggests:

As the apartment market has continued to grow the range of accommodation available has become more diversified. Developers are now required to provide differentiated products to meet the demands of various buyer/user types and as a result three distinct categories of apartment types now exist: residential apartments, serviced apartments and student accommodation. (p. 15)

Due to the growing population in the city, the space for apartment dwellers becomes smaller and smaller. Even finding a carpark in the city is hard, but in this case it encourages people to walk or take public transport. For four years, the living space of my apartment has measured just six hundred square feet, and there is no lawn, balcony, or clothes dryer. The living room is the space where I work, cook, eat, and watch television. In response to living and working in this small interior domestic space, I was interested in making works that interrogate the miniature notions of the small and the miniature.

Ernst Haeckel's *Kunstformen der Natur* (1904) influenced architecture and other design disciplines that absorbed motifs from nature and employed them artistically. Nature was no longer used only as ornament, but as a constituent element in the discovery of form (Bergdoll, Gamboni & Ursprung, 2007, p. 13). Haeckel's works are based on the curiosity of the microscopic life. Through his work Haeckel manages to draw our attention to the miniature (see Figure 3.2 & 3.3). The miniature holds a special fascination for us; as Adamson in Newell (2007) states: "...tiny so tiny that it incites wonder" (p. 18).

#### Chapter 4: Critical framework

My works are organised through symmetry and the notion of the grid; each element contained and holding itself within its own space, because this responds to the way I must work in a small interior domestic space where I can walk around the living space but this must be done with caution: it is constrained.

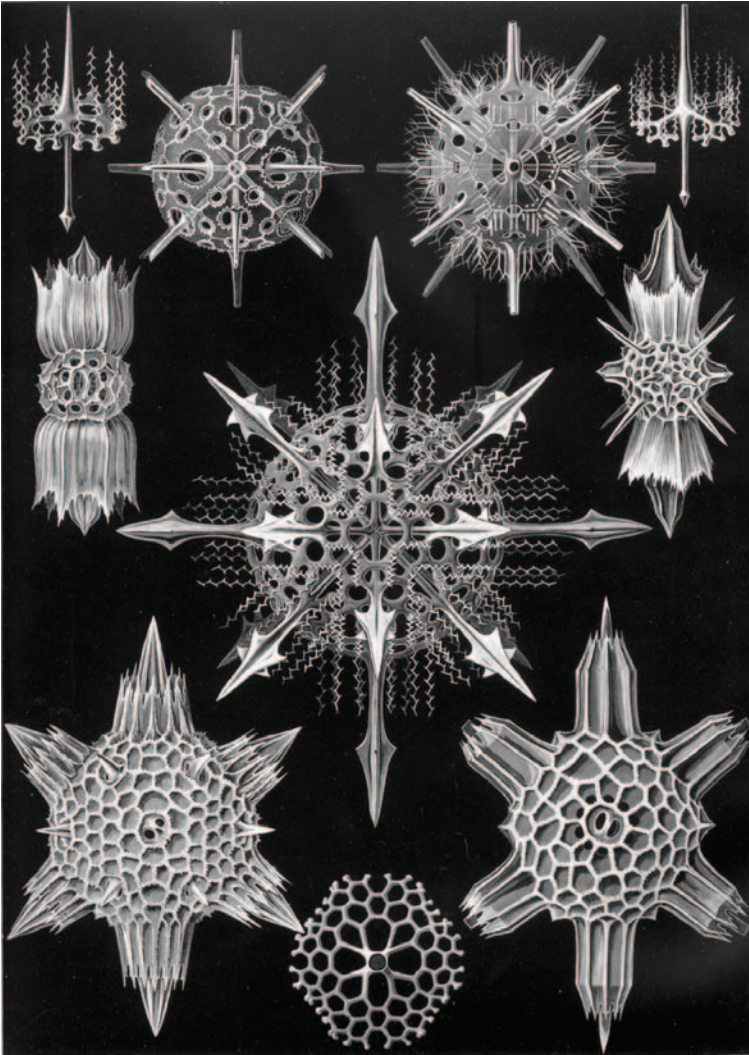
I choose to work with the miniature because it is a response to the small interior domestic space. In the enclosed domestic space there is a personal and private connection with the miniature and the work. Miniature works are within the grasps of my hands; I have a better control and a better understanding of the work. Stewart (2005) suggests:

The Heart at Penshurst, the Nuremburg kitchens, the dollhouse, even the interior sky of baroque architecture – all tend to present domesticated space as a model of order, proportion, and balance. Yet, of course, the major function of the enclosed space is always to create a tension or dialectic between inside and outside, between private and public property, between the space of the subject and the space of the social. (p.68)

I feel like I lose control when the work is made at a larger scale. Making works on a larger scale makes me feel that I am unable to control the balance found in the miniature. Stewart (2005) continues to say “the miniature represents a mental world of proportion, control, and balance, the gigantic presents a physical world of disorder and disproportion” (p. 74).

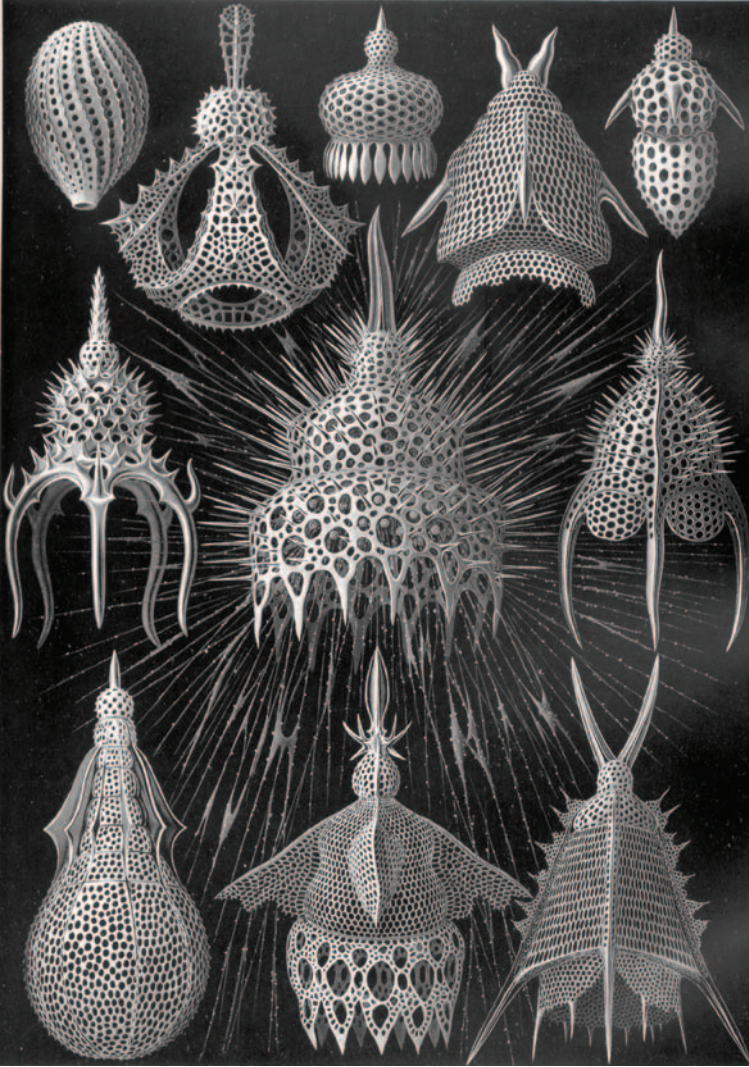
Through my creative practice I have learned to be more observant of the things around me and I hope that my work will inspire the viewer to appreciate the overlooked and the small. The miniature allows people to consider the work differently. It makes people curious, it draws them into the work, it asks them to step closer, to slow down and pause. Castellitto & Brown (2004) suggests “Just watch anyone who looks at a miniature. It’s an intimate experience” (p. 19).

I want people to be aware of the small things that exist around us. I hope to create an imaginative response in the viewers, metaphorically pointing out that we are part of the ordinary every day human existence, that maybe we are overlooked.



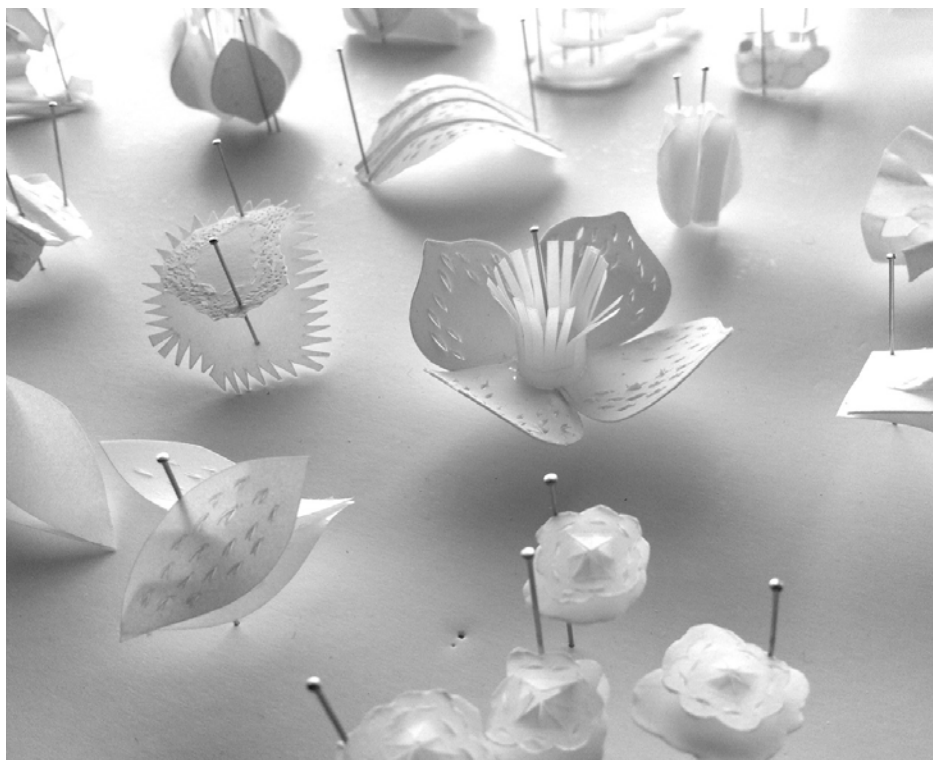
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Figure 4.1 Haeckel. (1974). *Various Species of Radiolaria.*



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Figure 4.2 Haeckel. (1974) *Various Species of Radiolaria (a type of marine Protozoa).*



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*Figure 4.3 Image by the author. (2011). Miniature paper sculpture.*

## 4.1 Water

Water is a tool that helps me to imagine and create. Water provides a form of retreat from the small interior domestic space, its translucency and reflective surface makes the world feel bigger.

There is a huge window in my apartment. During winter it is really cold and damp. The walls, the ceiling and the floor of the apartment are not insulated. When I wake up in the morning the inside of the window is covered with moisture, unable to make the passage from the interior of the apartment to the outside world.

This condensation has become a serious problem in New Zealand over the last 15 years. Once, New Zealand houses were known for high-stud height and drafts (Ryan, Burgess, & Easton, 2008, p.14), and a complete lack of insulation, right up to the late 1970s (*ibid.*, pp. 34-36). While making homes harder to keep warm, it did mean they were well-ventilated, and condensation and mould did not become a problem. Since 1996 houses have become much better insulated (*ibid.*, p.43).

However the rise of smaller, ill-ventilated apartments, to create a more clearly cultured space, led to an increase in dampness, condensation, and mould. Wilson, Chapman, Crane & Wickens (2007) point out that mould growing in damp, ill-ventilated dwellings can cause “upper respiratory tract infections, coughs, wheeze, asthma symptoms in sensitized asthmatic persons and hypersensitivity pneumonitis” (p.3).

It is exactly in this time period that the revitalization of Auckland’s CBD began, with its concurrent growth of small, poorly-ventilated, white apartments (Friesen, Zodgekar & Reid, 2009): exactly the kind in which I live. Indeed, Friesen, Zodgekar & Reid (2009) point out that inner-city apartments are most likely to be inhabited by young (aged 15-29) Asian students just like myself (p. 72): bringing another culture to the urban environment (Collins, 2011).

The idea of culture is inherently linked to inner-city apartment living. Potential residents are seduced by the promise of “a vibrant city lifestyle rich in culture” (“Revolucion Apartments,” n.d.) and the “cluster of cultural facilities” (“City Centre,” n.d.).

Closing the interior domestic space off from the exterior was done with the view of making a safer, warmer environment for the inhabitant. However the presence of water in the space led instead to the growth of the unseen; small and unconsidered organisms which can nevertheless affect our lives. The cultured environment of the central city apartment led to an unforeseen culture: those of microscopic mould spores. The windows of the small interior space are a meeting point for cultures: my personal culture, the culture of the city, the culture of the mould, the culture of objects used and

left behind by past tenants. Stewart (2005) notes “the miniature represents closure, interiority, the domestic, and the overly cultural,” (p.70). The small domestic space does indeed feel overly cultured.

The irony here is that water exists in all domestic architecture in ways used to decontaminate every living space. The plumbing and the sewage is carefully planned and placed in each small interior domestic space. Through the plumbing, we are able to use clean water to clean the domestic space, to decontaminate unseen microscopic life that affects our health and lives.

The translucency of water and the translucency of paper represent purity, and they are uncontaminated. This has a further link with ideas related to glass. Stewart (2005) suggests “The glass eliminates the possibility of contagion, indeed of lived experience, at the same time that it maximizes the possibilities of transcendent vision” (p. 68). In addition, water’s absence of colour stimulates my senses and helps me to delve into my imagination then return to reality. Reflected in the work, water is like a portal, it helps me escape from the small interior domestic space because water shows a reflection of a new space, by looking at the surface of the water, it feels like there is no end of space because of its form.

Water changes in different situations. I am fascinated with my findings about what water does to the environment. According to Consigli (2008), “water is easily transformed, yet it transforms everything it touches through corrosion and erosion” (p.31). The formlessness<sup>5</sup> of water is just like a flat sheet of paper. Just like the microscopic life in the water and being part of the unconsidered, paper also is sometimes overlooked in terms of how important it is in our in our everyday lives. The layer of translucency of water makes it white. For example, in the tide lines created by the waves, when the bubbles are smaller, the edges turn white. The purity and simplicity of water inspired me to choose translucency and white as the colour. Newell (2007) has suggested: “Using transparent materials... gives us a glimpse of what is usually unseen, capturing a moment in time or making visible what is normally felt, be it a passing cloud or a human breath” (p. 10). In addition, white and translucency makes it look delicate and helps to express something three dimensional such as the form, texture and the surface of the water. According to Busuttill (2001) “And more than any colored surface, white reveals the extent to which the human being is meant to be amazed by what he sees in the world, made to be fascinated by it’s surfaces and areas of light” (p. 8).

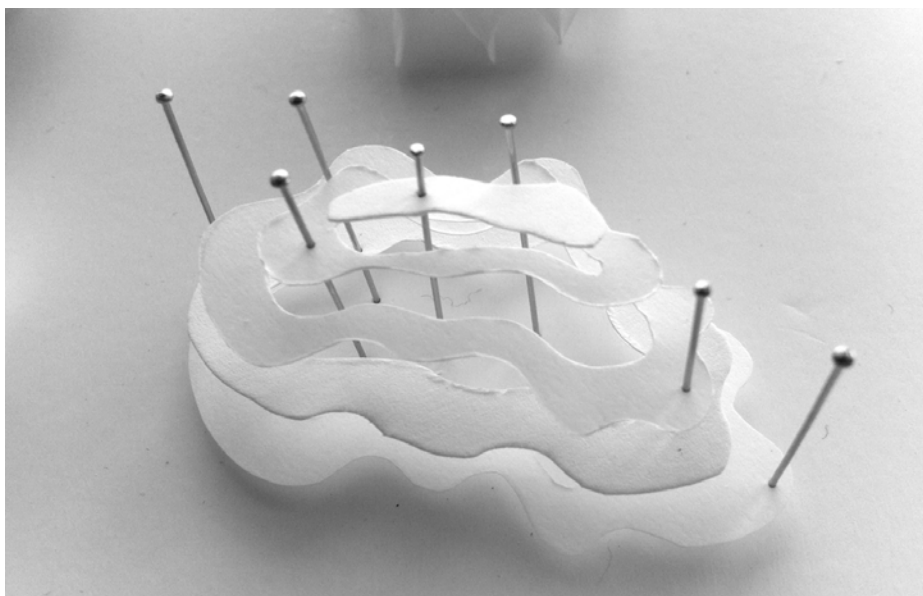
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*5 According to Bataille (1985) Formless – A dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus formless is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What [sic] designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal; it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is a spider or a spit. (p. 31)*



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*Figure 4.4 Image by the author. (2011) Pool of water at Takapuna Beach.*



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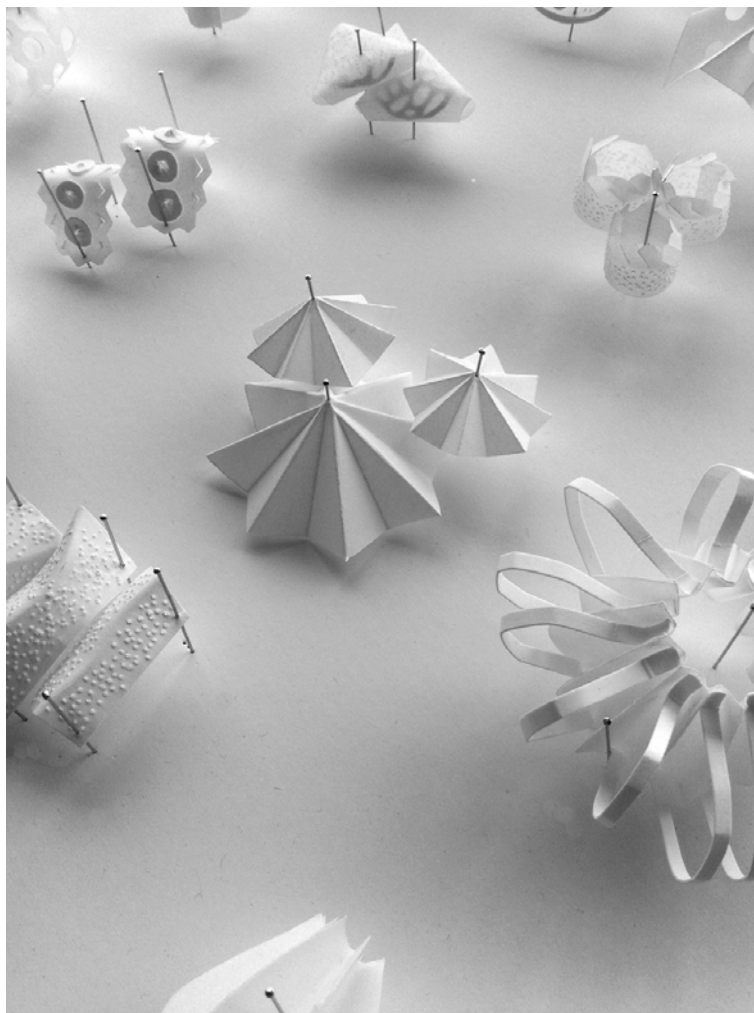
*Figure 4.5 Image by the author. (2011) Miniature paper sculpture inspired by water ripples.*

## 4.2 WHITE, TRANSLUCENCY AND OPACITY

When working in a small domestic interior space, white makes the room look bigger. White makes me think of concepts like clean, sanitised, uncontaminated, pure and organised. In this case I can use white in my work to draw attention to the smallness. The shadows in the white space may metaphorically represent the traces of people's lives living in their small interior domestic spaces (see Figure 4.3). Kandinsky (1977) suggests:

A great silence, like an impenetrable wall, shrouds its life from our understanding. White, therefore, has this harmony of silence... like many pauses in music that break temporarily the melody. It is not a dead silence, but one pregnant with possibilities. White has the appeal of the nothingness that is before birth, of the world in the ice age. (p.40)

In a small interior domestic space, when moisture is trapped on the window it is translucent, but when there is overlaying moisture the layer of translucency makes it look white. "Using transparent materials such as glass and resin gives us a glimpse of what is usually unseen, capturing a moment in time or making visible what is normally felt, be it a passing cloud or a human breath" (Newell 2007, p. 10). I chose translucent paper as the material for my artefacts because the absence of colour, like water, makes it look delicate and helps to express something three dimensional such as the form, texture and surface. According to Busuttil (2001) "And more than any colored surface, white reveals the extent to which the human being is meant to be amazed by what he sees in the world, made to be fascinated by it's surfaces and areas of light" (p. 8).



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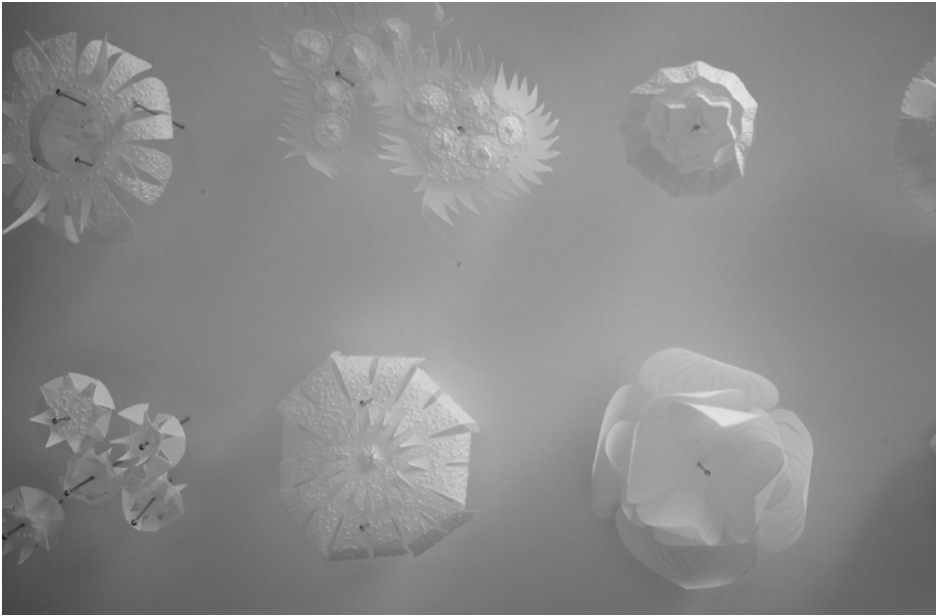
*Figure 4.6 Image by the author. (2011) Miniature paper sculpture.*

End

## Conclusion

There's an old saying, "just because you can't see something doesn't mean it's not there." In my personal experience when I was young I felt that I was a part of the overlooked and the unconsidered. This has inspired me to work with the miniature in response to the small interior domestic space, using water as a way to think outside this space. I hope my work will provide the viewers with a different perspective on the overlooked and the unconsidered. My methodological approach enabled me to employ self-reflection on the outcomes of the project work as it unfolded. This allowed me to have a new method of thinking and new insights into the potential of paper as a medium to communicate complex ideas and emotions.

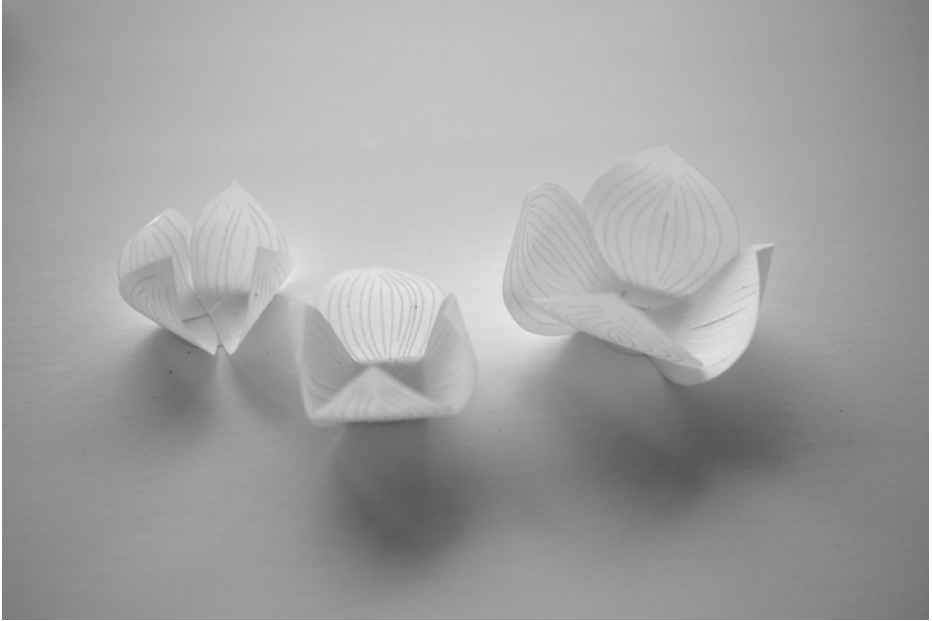
End



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*Figure 4.7 Image by the author. (2011). Series of miniature paper sculptures.*

End



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*Figure 4.8 Image by the author. (2011). layer on top of layer.*

Intuition in a small  
interior domestic space

# DOCUMENTATION OF FINAL EXHIBTION

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Raw Festival 9-12 Nov 2011  
St Paul Street Gallery

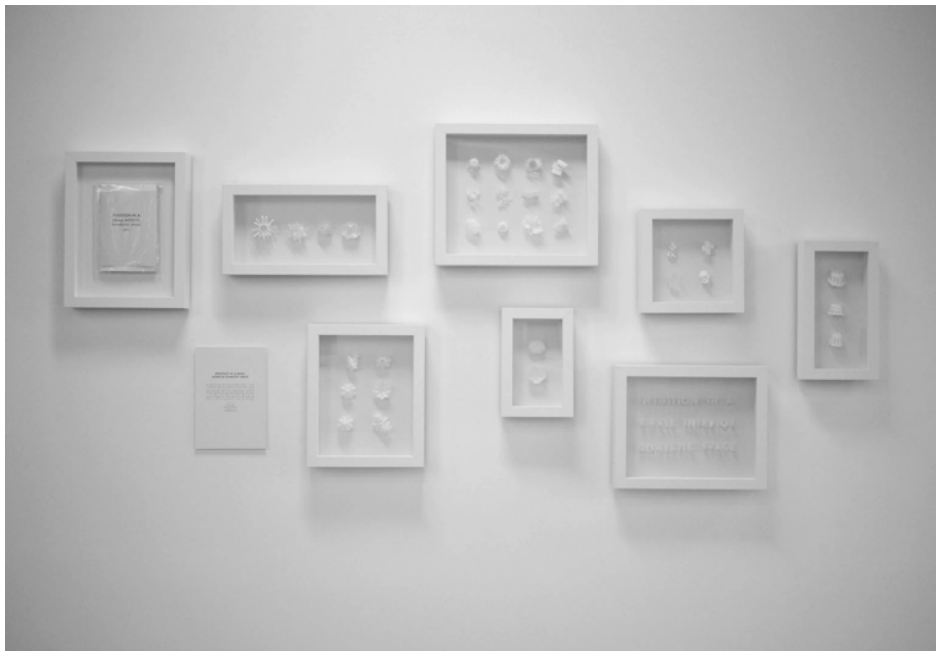
Intuition in a small  
interior domestic space



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*Figure 5.1 Image by the author. (2011). Intuition in a small interior domestic space exhibition.*

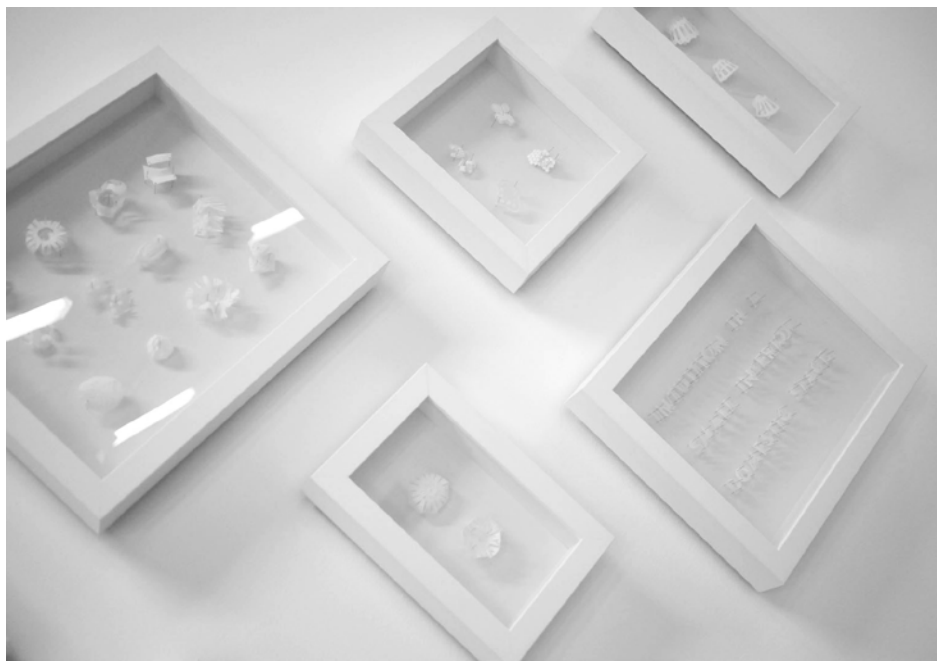
Intuition in a small  
interior domestic space



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Figure 5.2 Image by the author. (2011). Intuition in a small interior domestic space exhibition.

Intuition in a small  
interior domestic space



*Figure 5.3 Image by the author. (2011). Intuition in a small interior domestic space exhibition.*

## Concluding commentary

This research project is a journey of self discovery. The process of creating the paper artefacts has given me the chance to act intuitively and it has helped me to discover what kind of emotions I have while working in a small interior domestic space.

I chose to work at home because it is the site of my research and my work has a direct response to the small interior domestic environment. The frames used in this exhibition relate the undisturbed, quiet space that I work in. The layout of the frames in the exhibition space connects with ideas related to the urban plan of buildings or a colonisation, cultivated in the city.

During the development of the project, I came to realise the infinite possible ways I could create with a small piece of paper. I addressed the research question that set out to test if paper is able to be manipulated so that it could communicate a range of complex, subtle ideas. The process of making these paper artefacts helped raise my awareness of the tiny little details of ordinary objects that make up our everyday lives. When cutting out the forms and shapes of the paper with my hands I am able to connect better with my emotions and imagination. Also, working with my hands on the miniatures required concentration and patience, forcing me to step away from the computer; I have managed to slow down my thinking process and rediscover that I am connected directly with my senses.

This thesis has helped me to reflect on my process. It has given me the courage to start making work without being afraid and to keep moving forward when I make a mistake.

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