

LACE ASSEMBLAGES: EXTENDING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH PRACTICE-LED EXPLORATION OF THE MATERIALITY OF ANCESTRAL LACE TEXTILES

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Abstract

This paper draws on a Master of Research project that considers ancestral lace textiles as metaphors that assemble links between the past, present and future. This paper summarises the significance of in-depth practice-led research mobilised by the materiality of three ancestral lace textiles. Here, materiality considers both the visible qualities of used lace: an open work structure with visible and invisible signs of wear accounting for translating narratives into cloth through touch and experience. Theory and practice have oscillated throughout the project, the findings taking the form of wearable garments, a large-scale patchwork, and a Creative Process Journal. The data produced is the outcome of a studio practice grounded by a deep yearning to creatively explore the lived experience of ancestral lace textiles—cloth artefacts that hold information about the past. The vulnerabilities of the textiles and textile processes used parallel with scholarly arguments from diverse fields, including textiles, sociology, material culture studies, and practice-led knowledge, to reorientate lace in the present. Finally, drawing on the data collected, this paper attempts to synthesise the multiple modalities of lace's past and present to explore its future. This interdisciplinary engagement with lace attempts to define and characterise worn, historic cloth objects as sites for intense speculation on personal histories, tools to extend social and cultural knowledge.

Introduction

I am intrigued by three lace textiles that have been passed down through my maternal and paternal lineages for one hundred and ten years (Figures 1, 2 and 3). These laces have crossed oceans and moved through five generations of my family to arrive at their current artefactual status. The laces speak to me: listening and deciphering their rich history mobilised this research project. Over the past two years, I have interrogated if my intrigue for these textiles was my pre-existing affinity for lace¹ or that the laces have acted as containers, collecting

¹ Lace has been central to my practice since developing my final graduate collection. I am an avid lace collector and researcher, constantly looking to familiarise myself with as many styles of lace as possible.

details of their lives as personal objects (DNA, memories, knowledge, and experiences). I conclude that it is both, and I now understand these two modes of intrigue to be the overall materiality of the laces. Here, materiality considers the visible and invisible qualities of used lace: an open work fabric with visible and invisible signs of wear—the invisible wear accounting for translating narratives into cloth across generations of use and handling.

To borrow from Harold G. Nelson and Erik Stolterman, the materiality's different aspects culminate into an object's "compositional assembly" (Nelson and Stolterman, 2012, p. 196). This assembly gives rise to the factors that contribute to evoking an object's soul, such as "details and relations, connections and systemics, wholeness and integrity" (Nelson and Stolterman, 2012, p. 196).



Figure 1. Great-great-grandmother's embroidered lace tablecloth (circa 1912) (detail), Walyalup/Fremantle.



Figure 2. Great-grandfather's lace tablecloth (circa 1940) (detail), Walyalup/Fremantle.



Figure 3. Grandmother's lace wedding dress (circa 1960) (detail), Walyalup/Fremantle.

Intergenerational objects surround me; however, the three ancestral lace textiles are suitable for this project for two primary reasons:

- We decorate every space we inhabit with fragments of our DNA. Cloth is absorptive and diligently captures and archives these cellular biographies of self. Over decades of use, fabric becomes a catalogue of every interaction it has survived. I am fascinated that in 2022, I can handle a cloth once touched by my great-great-grandmother on her coastal farm in Croatia in 1912; the experience is tactile time travelling. This understanding draws closely to “relational materiality” (Law and Mol, 1995, p. 276), the theory that people become entangled within objects. Thus, the project builds on the understanding that details of my ancestors' and relatives' lives have become embedded into the laces through continued, reciprocal engagement.
- When assessing lace, I work from lace historian Rosemary Shepherd's definition of lace as “a decorative open work fabric in which the pattern of space is as important as the solid areas” (Shepherd, 2003, p. 2). In its most basic form, lace is a pattern of holes; a corresponding thread supports each gap. While inherently delicate, the network of holes and twisted threads create a strong and supportive structure. As this project progressed, the structure of lace as a framework for ancestral, practical, and theoretical research manifested. Across each of these areas, the known, the solid area, supports exploration into the unknown, the gaps.

This research aims to advance textiles and textile processes as a dialogue to explore the materiality of ancestral lace textiles and assess the significance of these findings in extending social and cultural knowledge. The research objectives are to:

1. Examine theories from relevant fields that support the investigation of worn material culture.
2. Assess the value of practice-led research in contextualising theories from relevant fields by disseminating textiles and textile processes.
3. Evaluate the significance of lace as a metaphor for practical, theoretical, and ancestral exploration.

Objects from the past provide sustenance, renewing themselves to become imperative signs of the future (Calefato, 2004, p. 124). Working from this understanding, my role in this project is to draw on the soulful materiality of the laces, reactivating these historical objects through practice. Retelling their stories endeavours to assemble links between the past, present, and future.

Literature Review

Listening to lace

Minor signs of wear and repair characterise the laces as well-loved pieces, evidence of their lives as personal objects. More heavily used in their early years when they were not yet precious heirlooms, the custodianship of the objects has strengthened over time. The further the laces survive into the future, their value increases. Material culture researcher and artist Ellen Sampson articulates the affinity I have for heirloom cloth:

There is, I think, a particular resonance to worn things, a particular sense of awe of their survival, of artefacts and of experiences. We do not feel the same awe for immaculate surfaces, the smooth surface has retained nothing; it has not experienced, learned or survived. (Sampson, 2022, p. 141)

Engaging with the materiality of the laces requires a literal observation and “narrative imagination”, the coherent integration of the real with the possible and the factual with the fabricated (Brockmeier, 2009, p. 227). This method of narrative inquiry generates new possibilities and outcomes by creating a space for new meanings to emerge. Supporting this are fashion historians Alexandra Kim and Ingrid Mida, who understand dress and textile artefacts to have multifaceted stories embedded in their surface, narratives that can be real and interpreted (Kim and Mida, 2018, p. 27). Bringing together theories from different disciplines aims to situate heirloom textiles as rich cartographies of narrative that engage us in the present and offer clues about the future rather than existing as redundant things of the past.

Jules Prown brings forth the complexities surrounding the process of “extracting information about culture, about mind, from mute objects” (Prown, 1982, p. 7). From a material culture perspective, Prown suggests that adopting empathetic connections between object and observer can navigate the widespread illiteracies involved in interpreting information in objects (Prown, 1982, p. 8). Objects directly tied to family members offer a deeper connection to be gained through observation. Information surrounding the artefacts strengthens data extraction through an emotional affinity with the object. Susan Stewart theorises that heirlooms function to “weave a significance of blood relation” (Stewart, 1993, p. 137). Furthermore, in the absence of a relative or ancestor, the remaining objects can be “intimately mapped against the life experience of an individual” (Stewart, 1993, p. 139). The material remains of relatives and ancestors resurface past users in the present to become imperative signs of the future.

The inhabited world is animated by wear (Gill and Mellick Lopes, 2011, p. 310). Contextualising this alongside clothing and textiles, evidence of wear visually depicts

anecdotes about the cloth's engagement with the world and the wearer. I work with, wear, and cherish textiles, and I acknowledge my unwavering bias in believing that ancestral laces hold valuable information. However, the potential for ancestral laces to contain an intimate dialect of materiality, pattern, and meaning emerged through studio engagement and exhibition of findings. Information about the past can be unlocked by assessing material culture; however, worn material culture presents more detailed insights into the materials and the people who wore/used them, offering clues about society and culture. The practice-led methodological framework established in this research hopes to demystify the process of observing, listening, and interpreting the narratives embedded in familial fabrics.

Methodology

Practice as research

Textiles and textile processes became a form of dialogue to interpret the materiality of the ancestral laces. I resonated with Cecilia Heffer's (Heffer, 2015, p. 5) centralisation of this question from Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt in her practice-led research: "what did the studio process reveal that could not have been revealed through any other mode of inquiry?" (Barrett and Bolt, 2010, p. 162). Explaining the nature of my making is essential to contextualise the significance of this question in relation to my practice. My studio sessions are instinctive, guided by textiles and their response to various forms of intervention and manipulation.

The hand methods I use are also intuitive and spontaneous, their results varying daily, determined by my energy and involvement in the process. I set myself loose parameters to avoid being overwhelmed by the possibilities presented at the start of this project.

The materiality of lace at the forefront of my exploration, I aimed to create a visually cohesive and achievable scope of inquiry by working with a limited number of methods and forms. Working within this framework allowed theory and practice to oscillate. Post-studio reflection exploited the full potential of the methods and materials used. This aligned with Paul Carter's "process of material thinking", which assesses how creative practice becomes critically engaged when the initial intentions of studio engagement are reflected upon (Carter, 2004, p. 13). I give myself space to explore when in the studio; this allows me to create textiles, not guided by any pre-existing pattern, a process that offers a deep understanding to be gained (Goett, 2018, p. 128). The spontaneous nature of my practice considered; I documented the different stages of studio engagement through photography (this research is archived in my

2022 Creative Process Journal²). Drastic changes occur in one studio session, and preserving stages of the making process is essential to ensure nothing goes unnoticed.



Figure 4. Pages in my 2022 Creative Process Journal, Western Australia.

Stepping away from the studio, layers of knowledge emerged through archiving and collating information in the form of images and textile samplers—synergies between theory and practice unfolding. Returning to Shepherd’s definition of lace as “a decorative open work fabric in which the pattern of space is as important as the solid areas” (Shepherd, 2003, p. 2), I draw similarities between the structural qualities of lace and practice-led research. In lace, the areas of integrity are essential in supporting the gaps. Similarly, in practice-led research, the integrities, the known, support the gaps, the unknown. Throughout the project, I worked from the laces into theory and practice and from theory and practice back into the laces. This research is not linear and relied on establishing a holistic research framework to allow for the intermingling of disparate topics and the eventual bridging of concepts. The assemblage of materials, process and time into forms enticed fresh interpretations, opening new meanings about the laces. Beyond humans’ fundamental, quotidian need for cloth, textiles are a locus where “cultural, social, personal, historical, and aesthetic concerns intersect” (Jefferies, 2018, p. 3). Both theoretically and literally, memories are preserved, and new ideas proposed in the structure and through the manipulation of cloth, leading to information retention and knowledge production.

The following section unpacks the nuances of the findings generated to contextualise this research framework and the storytelling capacity of the laces.

² I produce a hard-cover Creative Process Journal each year to collate all visual imagery I accumulate whilst in the studio.

Findings and Analysis

The findings from this project were displayed in a solo exhibition, *Lace Assemblages*, at the Old Customs House in Walyalup/Fremantle, Western Australia, from December 11 – 18, 2022 (Figure 5). The installation comprised heavily stitched wearable garments, a large-scale patchwork, and a Creative Process Journal, created over nine months of the in-depth studio process. The forms that the findings take in this project are significant. The wearable garments respond to my grandmother's wedding dress and the previously discussed animating properties of wear, the body's connection to cloth through touch and adornment. Furthermore, the garments are made to my dimensions to integrate me into the narrative. The patchwork presented as a two-dimensional rectangular form pays homage to the shapes of the lace tablecloths. Cloth is paraphernalia of the quotidian, and the textile's forms represent the multiple ways we experience fabric through daily wear and use. The narratives embedded in the laces speak about my ancestors and their stories. The landscape of their life was dramatically different to mine. Bringing their anecdotes into the present through cloth, a medium that has reserved its prosaic presence across generations, attempted to create work that demarcated generational distance through tacit knowledge. The garments, large-scale patchwork and Creative Process Journal, co-exist in the gallery, engaging in an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas.



Figure 5. *Lace Assemblages* (2022) installation shot, Old Customs House, Walyalup/Fremantle.

Discussion

My intention for this project was never to recreate the laces exactly. Instead, draw on snippets of information about their lived experience to explore their telling of the present and future. Sustainability is inherent to my practice.³ Initially used through habit and stubbornness, the theoretical and ancestral significance of second-hand cloth emerged as the project progressed. While I start with a ‘blank’ canvas, the worn material I use has a history already embedded in its structure. I prefer to work with cloth that has been broken in and softened through previous use. This favouring of old over new aligns with Jun’ichirō Tanizaki’s preference of a “pensive luster to a shallow brilliance” (Tanizaki, 1977, p. 20). The pensive allure and corresponding compel to preserve cloth are in my DNA. Exploring my domestic heritage through process, as catalysed by the laces, shed light on many defining aspects of my personality. The stewardship of textiles I feel responsible to sustain was also an integral part of my ancestors’ lives. While the value systems they placed around textiles were born out of necessity, I try to mirror the same level of appreciation through the careful conservation of historic cloth and considered manipulation of post-consumer fabric.

Humble beginnings

Each piece in the collection starts with a base cloth, which, once obtained, is subject to many states and treatments. Like a palimpsest,⁴ cloth in this project is an active document, the information on the surface constantly being updated. While the lived experience of the ancestral laces is discretely documented on their surface, I begin to visualise the layering of touch, time, and knowledge through various forms of intervention—the building of narrative through process. The ocean is a constant theme in many layers of my ancestry. I account for this by commencing the process of working the cloth through mordanting⁵ it in the Indian Ocean. Details of my ancestral narrative are separated and united by the ocean, a place that has defined and stained my ancestry in the most tragic and serendipitous ways⁶.

Once mordanted, the cloth is dyed with tannins from local flora and kitchen waste, adding layers of colour to the fabric’s surface.

³ Sustainability is inherent to my practice. I am passionate about advocating the importance of creating value systems around textiles. I contextualise this through my role as a creative practitioner and co-founding director of Fibre Economy, a social enterprise working to manage uniform waste in Western Australia’s mining and petroleum sector.

⁴ In this paper, a palimpsest is understood as a piece of cloth that has layers upon layers built on its surface.

⁵ Mordanting is the process of preparing the fibres in cloth to absorb dye from plants.

⁶ Months after arriving in Walyalup/Fremantle from Croatia in 1913, my great-great-grandmother’s husband tragically drowned at sea.



Figure 6. Mordanting cloth in the Indian Ocean, Gnarabup.

In this project, the natural dyeing⁷ process seeks to depict the visible stains on the lace's surface and the rich invisible materiality of the cloth. The stain is a visual recount of a specific engagement within the world; it connects us to a time and place (Baert, 2017, p. 273). I primarily worked with Ceylon tea, and eucalyptus leaves for their colour potentialities in this research. Upon reflection, the dyestuffs became significant in depicting stories of everyday life (tea) and contemplating the synergies between my lived experience and that of my ancestors by using native Australian flora (wind-fallen eucalyptus leaves). Returning to Tanizaki, there are links between the application of colour on cloth in this project and the reverence of patina in Japanese culture. Similarly to Sampson's (2022) description of worn material that I brought forth earlier, Tanizaki relishes the patina accumulated on worn surfaces over time, the "colours and sheen that call to mind the past that made them" (Tanizaki, 1977, p. 20). Like a fingerprint or experience, each droplet of dye affixed to the surface accumulates to create a complex map, illustrating the life of the worn cloth and giving the silent stories embedded in the fabric agency: a voice and a platform to be heard.

⁷ Natural dyeing is the process of altering the hue of cloth through the application of dye made from plant material.



Figure 7. Overdyeing screen-printed cloth in a eucalyptus tannin vat, Walyalup/Fremantle.

Building a narrative

I interpret resolved works as a bricolage of process, time, exploration, and materials. This assemblage of elements aligns with the collation of historical information in the ancestral laces. In this research, piecing and patching smaller components to construct a larger image guided the use of contemporary applique and more traditional patchwork construction methods. The textiles comprising the garments (Figure 8), ‘Embodied Lacescape’, ‘Memories: Assemblage of Scraps’, and ‘Ancestral Palimpsest’ (Figure 9) contain small scraps of cloth collected since 2016 (exhausted garments, previous projects, and offcuts). Following a trip to the dye pot, I affixed each piece of either silk, cotton, linen, wool or lace into place on the base cloth. The resulting textile is gestural in appearance and heavy to handle. This process is timely and intuitive; the placement of each scrap is decided seconds prior. As I mechanically bound cloth into place with kilometres of cotton thread, I observed each piece creasing into one another. The scraps co-inhabiting a space began visually representing how I imagine the stories in the laces—each supporting one another, constantly engaged in a zestful exchange of ideas and allegories. The thousands of pieces fixed into place seek to visualise the laces talking and the story they might tell.



Figure 8. ‘Memories: Assemblage of Scraps’ (detail), Walyalup/Fremantle.



Figure 9. (left-right) *Lace Assemblages* (2022), ‘Embodied Lacescape’, ‘Memories: Assemblage of Scraps’ and ‘Ancestral Palimpsest’, Old Customs House, Walyalup/Fremantle.

Similarly, ‘Patched Narrative’ (Figure 10) also visualises the bringing together of elements into one unit. Noticeably more organised in construction and appearance than the textiles comprising the garments, this patchwork surfaced thoughts about pattern and assemblage. Kirsty Robertson argues that patching smaller artefacts into a larger whole suggests an investigation through the collection of information (Robertson, 2018, p. 197). Linking this to the stories embedded in the laces, I considered the analysis of my ancestral narrative and how the use of screen-printed motifs could embark on a journey of visually depicting the artefacts in a series of authentic and contemporary recreations. I created the screen-prints using images of the laces and digitally constructed collages by reworking small sections of the photos into a new motif. This process sought to contextualise the theory of “narrative imagination” (Brockmeier, 2009, p. 227) that I brought forth earlier, bringing together fact with fiction. The ancestral laces present through images were a factual depiction of the objects. At the same time, the digital collages blend the real with the imagined through the fabrication of a ‘new’ lace. Reinterpreting the laces in a manner that visualised the stories embedded within the network of twisted and knotted threads aimed to present them in a way that is appropriate for the present. Here, fact engages with fiction to create a narrative on the surface of cloth, bringing the stories the laces represent into the contemporary context of the gallery. The transformation of material through print equipped the surface of cloth with a new language, the process embedding

additional ideas into the fabric (Martinetti et al., 2018, p. 39). Although my ancestral narrative is riddled with gaps in knowledge,⁸ this process involves taking the information at hand and reworking it into new relations, making sense of a muddled recount of events to produce an integrated ancestral map, as catalysed by the laces.



Figure 10. *Lace Assemblages* (2022), 'Patched Narrative' (510cm x 430cm), Old Customs House, Walyalup/Fremantle.



Figure 11. *Lace Assemblages* (2022), 'Patched Narrative' (detail), Old Customs House, Walyalup/Fremantle.

⁸ Many important details about my ancestors have been lost in time.

The exhibition as a site for research

The generation of knowledge through process has been a journey of ancestral, theoretical, and practical discovery. The presentation of these works in a gallery instigated conversations that echoed the value of the findings in exploring a collective cultural narrative through the lens of lace. Both lace and cloth are familiar mediums; people respond to them favourably. Our relationship with and reliance on textiles make them a powerful medium to communicate shared allegories. We cannot obtain textile knowledge through a textbook or computer screen but rather hone our understanding through tacit knowledge learned throughout life. I found that viewers responded to the works through their understanding of and experience with heirlooms, particularly laces. While some cherish their keepsakes, others haven't given the laces much consideration. Once they understood that three lace artefacts mobilised the large-scale works in the gallery, they reflected on the significance of the material remains of their ancestors. Something they had not previously deemed to have much narratable value could, on inspection, unlock an array of stories about the past, the present and the future.

When installed in a gallery, I reflected on the work through a curatorial lens. The experience surfaced previously overlooked tensions and new meanings. On observation, 'Patched Narrative' (Figures 10 and 11) became a map that explored the many integral elements of my ancestral narrative. Returning to lace as a network of spaces of integrity and corresponding holes, evidence emerged between the linkage of people across generations through the metaphor of lace.

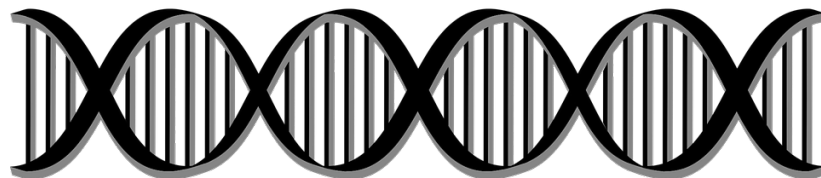


Figure 12. 'Biology Cells Cellular Code'. Reproduced from: Pixabay.

Past, present and future generations are bound together through the sharing of DNA. On inspection, the DNA double helix is also a pattern of holes and is inherently lace-like (Figures 12, 13 and 14). Regarding the patchwork, the 18 variations of lace motifs printed on the panels originate from images of laces specific to my ancestry. Each panel is personalised through ink and dye application but intrinsically linked through the lace motif on the surface. Each of the 448 panels are as unique but familiar as the people that form my ancestral narrative. The work collectively represents being linked through DNA and linked through lace. Lace again becomes a metaphor for assembling links between the past, present, and future through recreating the ancestral laces on cloth.



Figure 13. Great-great-grandmother's embroidered lace tablecloth (circa 1910) (detail), Walyalup/Fremantle.

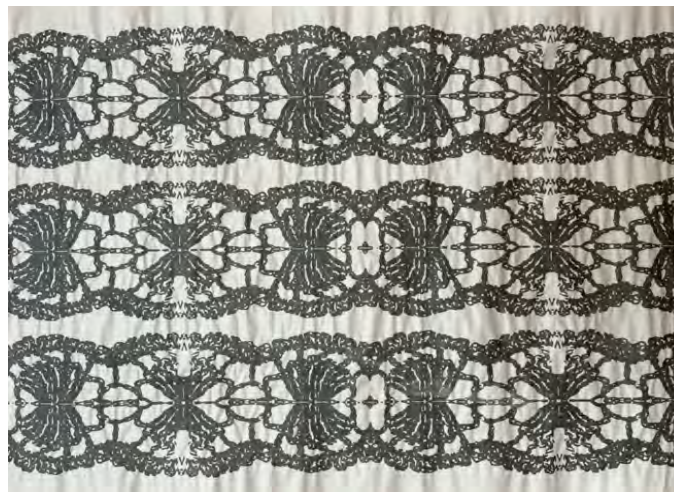


Figure 14. Lace collage screen-print proof, Old Customs House, Walyalup/Fremantle.

Visualising possibilities for the future

Cloth in this project has been a medium to convey narrative. Through different processes and techniques, I have manipulated cloth to depict information I have ascertained and fabricated; however, it is a fluid medium and largely dictated how it wanted to be worked, draped, and interpreted. Similar to how I have worked on decoding the messages in lace, the drapes and folds that the textiles in this project take also have a unique language and suggest their own recount of anecdotes (Figure 15). Alongside my depiction of “narrative imagination” (Brockmeier, 2009, p. 227) through the creation of textiles, I embarked on another journey of deciphering information in cloth objects by exhibiting the works in a gallery. During this process, additional strands of significance in the findings emerged. In the gallery, I observed the way that cloth draped and folded and how the actions enticed the manifestation of new, abstract concepts (Pajaczkowska, 2018, p. 89). The dissemination of works through a curatorial lens brought me closer to a resolved conclusion about the project, the significance of the laces and the practice-led research that investigated their materiality.



Figure 15. (right-left) *Lace Assemblages* (2022), ‘Embodied Lacescape’, ‘Memories: Assemblage of Scraps’ and ‘Ancestral Palimpsest’, Old Customs House, Walyalup/Fremantle.

In thinking through process, I observed my studio engagement and the findings that have emerged as visual narratives representing the cloth's rich lived experience. However, exhibiting the work for public dissemination reorientated the results within broader social and cultural issues. In creating a value system around heirloom cloth and speaking about the stories embedded within its surface, conversations ensued about the value of textiles, both historical and every day. For example, Dana Thomas presented an interesting view on “soulful fashion” (Thomas, 2021, p. 246) in the recent publication *Emotion: Fashion in Transition* (2021). Thomas reflects on a story told to her about gemstones worn against the skin absorbing our energy and eloquently links this to fast fashion and the rampant and unsustainable consumption of clothing. Thomas suggests that if gems can absorb energy, cloth also has the material capacity to collect agency from the human hands that it passes through during the construction of a garment (Thomas, 2021, p. 256). Through this, the garments become ensouled. This resonated with me profoundly and supported my argument that the laces possess an unignorable murmur, a soul. While I have explored ancestral laces, the research echoes the importance of placing value systems around textiles, as demonstrated through conversations with gallery visitors.

If consumers were compelled to understand cloth as a rich cartography of experience, consumption would hopefully hinder—considerations around the life history of fabric, shrinking the growing pile of textile detritus.⁹

This research project has created an opportunity to articulate the unmistakable voice I sense from the lace objects by drawing links between different disciplines and contextualising these through practice. To extend the significance of the textiles and textile processes beyond my initial assumptions, theory and practice have become intrinsically interlaced; I cannot observe them in isolation. Barbara Milech and Ann Schilo support this, suggesting that theory and practice are interconnected and should not be viewed in isolation but rather understood as practice in theory and theory in practice (Milech and Schilo, 2004, p. 12). On reflection, yet another aspect of the project is linked to lace: theory and practice, which, like the gaps and areas of integrity that characterise lace, cannot exist without each other. Theory and practice must operate harmoniously to unlock the knowledge hidden within the textiles and textile processes I have used in this project.

Conclusion

In this project, understandings between disciplines have been bridged to disinter the significance of textiles and textile processes used to investigate the materiality of ancestral lace textiles. Theory and practice have undulated to situate heirloom laces as metaphors that extend social and cultural knowledge by assembling links between the past, present and future. I perceive the past, present and future as all operating as a cohesive collective; however, I have isolated each to disseminate the significance of the different parts of the research. The lace links me to the past by creating a space to ponder the lives of my ancestors who once held the cloth, their DNA embedded in its surface. Drawing on the small pieces of information I know about the people who animated the laces has allowed for deep inquiry into the stories embedded in the material. I consider the present through practice-led research. Being in the studio, engaging with the materiality of the laces through different textiles and textile processes, allowed me to be completely present with the flux between the techniques used and the narratives emerging from the cloth. Integrating these stories into the resulting works allows the laces to speak in a language that reorientates them in the present.

Finally, I consider the future by situating these works in a gallery. Presenting the work to a diverse audience allowed for critical reflection on the findings and musings on the future of lace. The laces contain old and new narratives, represented by displaying historical artefacts with a reimagined visual language. Kees Dorst argues “that lace is beginning to speak to us again” (Dorst, 2015, p. 23). In speaking to people across different stages of the project, the voice of lace is still relevant in 2022 through its ties to personal connection, distant heritages, and ancestry. Through practice, I was able to unlock key similarities between my experience with lace textiles and that of strangers. Listening to and observing historical textiles has created

⁹ The textile waste crisis is a contemporary global issue that sees astronomical amounts of unwanted clothing and textiles irresponsibly disposed of, creating dire and widespread social and environmental problems.

an opportunity to advocate the importance of preserving worn material culture, maintaining ancestral information through practice, and valuing textiles. Whilst listening to the various stories that resulted from viewers engaging with the work, it became clear that the findings created a space for people to reflect on their relationships with intergenerational laces. The level of vulnerability that the exhibition created allowed me to reflect on my future endeavours with lace and textiles. Shepherd argues that “understanding the past is an essential part of moving any endeavour forward” (Shepherd, 2011, p. 9). From this project, lace has become a medium that amplifies the power of worn material culture to understand the past, explore the present and visualise possibilities for the future.

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