The Patchwork-Quilter as the Storyteller:

MY DEAD DOG!
Abstract

Objects can evoke our most vivid memories and sensory emotions, through the stories that have been engraved into them across their lifetime. Throughout history, patchwork-quilting has been used to tell stories, hide messages and hold histories. They are seen as objects of warmth, comfort and security, inanimate extensions of ourselves that store our most complex sentiments and memories- becoming heirlooms that are kept in the families and communities for generations, preserving our histories and material culture.

I intend to explore the inseparable relationship between craft and narrative within quilts, whilst re-imagining the quilts forms and functions in order to communicate stories more vividly. To do so I will use my memories of My Dead Dog, Henry, to illustrate narratives and embed them into quilted objects to stage as a tableau of artifacts. I intend to encourage the viewer to realise the imagined, through a haptic experience of my material world, whilst simultaneously creating my own heirlooms that can be passed down so my stories are not forgotten.
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The Quilter as the Story Teller

MY DEAD DOG.

Introduction

How did I get here?

I never thought I would end up going to Art School to do my Bachelors in Illustration, or that I would end up in Sweden doing my Masters in Textiles, making a *dog saddle, sausage carrier* and *poo rug*, as part of my exam work!

Looking back at my artistic education, I have intrinsically communicated narratives of both fact and fiction throughout my work. As a child I would submerge myself into narratives-making mud pies for tea parties, building blanket dens for forts, and dressing in grownups clothes for fictional characters, this was all I required to experience the most memorable adventures. Most children grow up playing in such environments, with access to simple props that enable them to imagine and create their own stories around them. This imaginative state of mind is an aspect of childhood that I never grew out of, the wonder and mystery of the inter-zone between reality and fantasy. In the same way, at museums I find myself lost in mysterious objects that contain stories of their makers and owners. Presented

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1 Image: Dog Shoes, 2016
with little information, my imagination conjures images of where, and to whom, they once belonged. By materialising my memories I hope to draw people into this place of wonder, through the use of textiles and narrative, creating objects based on my memories, in the hope that by the end you will understand what a dog saddle, a sausage carrier, and the poo rug really are!

**Question and Intention**

Throughout history, patchwork quilting has been used to tell stories, hide messages and hold secrets. For my master’s project, I intend to explore these cultural traditions of sharing personal histories, to uncover unique and dynamic ways of telling stories in the form of three-dimensional, quilted objects. I will do this in conjunction with my background in illustration.

**Question. How can I retain the traditions of storytelling in Patchwork-Quilting, whilst re-imagining its forms in order to communicate stories more vividly?**

I will use my memories of my dead dog, Henry, to illustrate narratives and embed them into quilted objects. Staged as a tableau\(^2\) of artifacts, I intend to encourage the viewer to realise the imagined through a haptic\(^3\) experience of my material world, whilst simultaneously creating my own heirlooms\(^4\) that can be passed down so my stories are not forgotten.

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\(^2\) Definition - Tableau: a picturesque grouping of persons or objects; a striking scene.

\(^3\) Definition - Haptic: relating to the sense of touch

\(^4\) Definition - Heirloom: a family possession handed down from generation to generation

\(^5\) Image: Henry, 1995
Background

Who’d a Thought - The Patchwork Quilter!

In 2010, the V&A in London, held an exhibition called *Quilts 1700 – 2010*. A novice to quilting, I decided to pay a visit. Laying before me gleamed sixty-five British quilts, covering 300 years of quilt making, telling stories from every corner of society. The scale of the quilts, against their tiny details of patches and stitches, created figurative narratives that I could read - I could imagine how they felt, weighed, smelted and moved. They told the stories of their makers, displaying the skills of their hands, knowledge and imagination through the intricate constructions and designs. They became more than just a quilt to me (which at the time I knew as a padded blanket to keep warm), they were pieces of information that shared histories, only to be read through understanding their materiality. I was intrigued, curious and eager to find out more about these patches from the past.

School Days – Past Projects

At an early stage of my Bachelor’s degree (in Illustration and Visual Communication) my teacher noticed textile inclinations developing in my work, and encouraged me to pursue this direction more consciously. Like many, my sewing skills came from my grandmother, and, eager to develop them, I arranged a number of internships in: knitting, felting, carding, costume, embroidery and patchwork quilting, with textile crafts people around London. I moved from flat mix media collages to three-dimensional objects to communicate briefs I received.

During my internship with a collective called Bricolage6, I met Katherine May7, quilter and modern patch-worker. May passed onto me her knowledge of patchwork-quilting, which she had inherited from her grandmother, and thrust me into a whole new world. The patches became my pieces of collage, and a needle and thread replaced the glue. Soon, patchwork-quilting became a very natural tool and addictive process for me to use.

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6 Definition - Bricolage: a construction made of whatever materials are at hand
7 Katherine Mays website: www.katherinemay.com/
Using patchwork-quilting as a tool to illustrate and communicate information has played a big part in my work ever since. I used it in its most traditional form as a quilt: rectangle, size of a bed, and flat, as you can see in *Map Quilt*. The black patches mark the layout of stalls at Deptford Market, London, just before the area was regenerated. The 2 by 3 meter quilt is patched together using found fabrics from the market. The quilt preserves the history of what used to be a thriving market community.
I enjoyed the sensory interaction that this method involved, allowing both me and the viewer to experience a story. I started to illustrate scientific facts, which took the shape of playful interactive learning apparatus. For example, my degree project consisted of a life size grizzly bear with removable organs to teach children about their body, with a hands-on, surgical approach. I used patchwork-quilting to build forms and textures. The textile processes allowed me to make an interactive teaching tool designed to be touched and manipulated.

This project demonstrated the educational aspects of my work that focus on personal engagement in the learning process, which lead me to a number of commissions from museums to make didactic apparatus, such as an Egyptian mummy whose brain you could remove from its nose, and a decomposing mouse! I was using patchwork-quilting to replace the text-book, outcomes of fictional objects that facilitated the same information.  

The next 3 years I carried on quilting, experimenting with shapes, colours and patterns. I sought out accomplished quilters to teach me their skills; from London to NYC, and as an end result I interned for Haptic Lab’s Emily Fischer11, and became Katherine May’s right hand woman. In 2014 I began my Masters in Craft, here at Konstfack. This was a chance for

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11 Emily Fischer website: www.hapticlab.com/
me to extensively explore patchwork-quilting, and in doing so, I decided to start from the very beginning…

**It Starts With a Frame**

During my time with Fischer, I noticed an old wooden frame on legs in the corner of her studio. When I asked what it was for, she informed me that it was an Amish design, made to stretch the layers of a quilt over for it to be stitched together, and that to become an Amish master quilter you must stitch, evenly spaced, 8 to 12 stitches per inch- At this moment I remembered looking down at my 3, possibly 4 stitches per inch! The memory of this neglected frame and process of quilted stitches stuck with me and lead me to design my own quilting frame.

The frame consisted of 3 metal rods to stretch over the top, middle and bottom layers of a quilt. They are then turned to achieve the perfect tension, creating a smooth, even surface to stitch through. The frame and cogs I made from wood, with metal fastenings. Made to measure, the surface to stitch is the length of my forearm and I can set the height according to if I’m sitting or standing. The frame allows me to work on larger quilts, up to 1.5 meters wide, and experiment with my quilting line. The frame allowed me to fully understand the

12 Images: Illustration of Quilt Frame, and the frame in action, 2015
process of quilting start to finish, and as a tool to demonstrate to others the process of quilting. The first quilt I made on the frame I named, 'When I Grow Up, I Want to Be a Parrot', based on my childhood dream of becoming a parrot! Although it is essentially the traditional shape of a quilt, rectangular and flat, once wrapped around your shoulders the quilt transforms into the colourful wings of a parrot. This was a way for me to try and embed my story whilst giving the quilt another purpose or intervention, in the form of a costume.

Having a background in illustration, I am used to visualising stories, and it makes sense for me to go a step further and work with materialising them, using patchwork-quilting. I intend to use quilting techniques as the default medium for all the objects I produce, whilst also exploring how the concept of a quilt can be re-appropriated as an item with a unique, alternative function, allowing for the patchwork-quilt to be seen as something other than, simply, a blanket for a bed.

13 Image: When I Grow Up, I Want to Be a Parrot, 2015
Theory

From Stuffed Sacks to Storytelling

Elaine Showalter, in her essay, ‘Piecing and Writing’, begins with articulately explaining the processes of patchwork-quilting: “Piecing means the sewing together of small fragments of fabric cut into geometric shapes, so that they form a pattern. The design unit is called the block or patch; patch-work is the joining of these design units into an overall design. The assembled patches are then attached to a heavy backing with either simple or elaborate stitches in the process called quilting”\(^{14}\). These 3 simple steps are the basis for all patchwork-quilts around the world. Cultures adapt the designs, materials and the quilting stitch, according to their own traditions and uses for the quilt. Emily Fischer recently stated, in an interview for the Architectural Digest, that this process of quilting is, “one of the oldest forms of storytelling”\(^{15}\). But how does the act of piecing and stitching together of fabrics enable us to preserve our personal histories for centuries? I will try to answer this question using three subcategories: Process, Material and Design, which I will apply to quilting cultures and traditions around the world, in order to describe how stories are told in every stage of a quilts life. Although these are just a few of the countless ways in which stories are, and have been, communicated, I feel they are perhaps the most prominent, and enable me to analyse the subject in a concise, specific manner.


\(^{15}\) H. Martin, Look Inside Haptic Lab’s Brooklyn Design Studio, Architectural Digest, 14th March 2016 http://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/haptic-lab-brooklyn-studio-visit

\(^{16}\) Image: My illustrations explaining the process of quilting, 2015
Process – Learning, Making, Giving

Like many crafts, you learn to quilt primarily with your hands. This functional knowledge, founded on experience and practical attainments, was termed by Michael Polanyi as ‘tacit knowledge’, stating that ‘We can know more than we can tell’.\(^\text{17}\) I learned how to patchwork-quilt through first-hand experience, by handling the materials directly, keenly observing the handwork of my teachers, and by experimenting with my knowledge each time I learned something new. I see the process of teaching and passing of skill as storytelling, the craftsperson communicating their skills by processing and reconstructing first-hand experiences of a material memory. This is a notion that correlates to the work of Walter Benjamin, who states that, “the storyteller takes what he tells from experience- his own or that reported by others. And in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale”.\(^\text{18}\) Through the process of craft, secrets, skills, and concealed expertise are able to be revealed through time from teacher to student.

Traditionally once you had mastered the skills, the making was a communal process. Small groups of quilters called quilting bees\(^\text{19}\) come together to quilt around large frames. In such social environments, whilst stitching and chatting away, the conversations become part of the quilts, similarities of narratives begin to permeate within the group, exhibiting the ability of the quilt to illustrate the histories of communities and cultures. Benjamin describes craftsmen during this making stage as good listeners, for they “have forgotten themselves, and while their half-conscious minds are engaged in pot-throwing, spinning, weaving, and their bodies are seized by the gentle rhythm of work, the stories they forego an existence on paper imprinting themselves into the listeners fantasy, awaiting transmissions, after-lives”.\(^\text{20}\)

\(^{17}\) M. Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, University of Chicago Press, 2009, p.4
\(^{19}\) Definition - Quilting Bee: a social gathering at which the participants make quilts.
\(^{21}\) Image: My illustration of a quilting bee, around a table frame, 2015
Commonly made to mark a special occasion, patchwork quilts have become, tokens, mementos, souvenirs; consequently becoming treasured heirlooms inherited by families and communities. Because of this, “Many quilts are passed down through the generations undocumented, although some are accompanied by oral histories and personal narratives; over the year’s names and dates become confused and stories are embellished”\textsuperscript{22}. The instalment of stories does not finish at the making stage, this is only the beginning- over time they are warped and redefined by new owners like a game of Chinese whispers.

**Materials- Patches from the Past**

In addition to the stories that are ingrained into the quilt during the making process, there are also stories in fabrics. Patchwork comes from recycling scraps of fabric, and piecing them into patterns. Gee’s Bend, a small quilting community in Alabama exhibit this up-cycling process perfectly.

These vivid designs were improvised from what this poor community had at hand. They were quite resourceful with the fabrics they were using- some were farmers working with seed sack cloth, worn out overalls and old denim jeans, along with other tired household textiles, which were made into quilts for comfort and warmth in their homes. Very little is written about where the fabrics came from, but these scraps contain a wealth of information about our past and material culture. Sue Prichard, in *Quilts 1700-2010*, manages to source a letter documenting patches of a quilt. Written by Governess Ellen Weeton, to her daughter, it

dates 9th September 1824 and was accompanied with a parcel containing ribbons and pieces of fabric- it reads, “…something of the history of your mother’s family… the piece of patchwork is out of an old Quilt I made above 20 years ago… The hexagon in the middle was a shred of our best bed hangings; they were Chintz, from the East Indies, which my father brought home with him from one of his voyages.”

Patchwork-quilts have an otherworldly ability to connect and consolidate human emotions, giving people a comforting, tangible object to represent them. A modern use of recycling fabrics is ‘passage quilting’, a process of quilting using repurposed clothing from deceased loved ones, as a way for the bereaved to preserve the memory of those lost. During their creation, stories are attached to the fabrics, conserving information about the person who has passed away. Patchwork-quilts are somehow able to join all these stories and remnants together to make something else to hold on to- in the same way I am creating mementos, preserving the life of Henry.

**Design**

In a previous project I call *Quilt Block, Block Kit* (inspired by Friedrich Fröbels gifts and occupations), I design a tool that contained an assortment of right-angled triangles, which you arranged to create quilt block patterns. From this you then make, record and share designs, creating an ongoing quilt block catalogue- I also shared my designs on Instagram. Quilt blocks designs were originally made for patch-workers to follow, creating fabric patched blocks, which then would get stitched into a communal quilt with others. Postcards displaying hand-sketched blocks would also be sent out to friends and family to try out, and as a result of this process, names for the designs would change and stories were added. This is why many quilt blocks today have different names around the world for the same pattern. In the US during the 19th-century, slaves mapped *The Underground Railroad*, a network of secret routes and safe-houses used to escape to free states. It is thought that quilts were hung on the clothes-lines containing secret messages in the patterns, to signal if the house was safe.

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25 See Instagram designs at: www.instagram.com/__s_i_c__/
Image: The underground railroad quilt block codes: https://www.pinterest.com/pin/139259813450906404/

Image: Quilt Block, Block Kit - exhibited with Block Quilt, Konstfack 2015

Image: Photographs of quilt block card catalogue, courtesy of Jenna Valoe (See more in appendix A)
The occasion for which a quilt is made determines the design of the patchwork and quilting, as well as the colours and materials. In most cases the story of an event is told very figuratively, like a painting. Ann West’s coverlet *Remember Me* from 1820, illustrates biblical scenes with her appliqued patches and embroidered detailing. Similar literal depictions are also found on the oldest surviving quilt, dating back to 1360-1400, which illustrates the love story of Tristan and Isolde. I see a resemblance in the piecing and patching of my mix media illustration work, shown below.

29 Image: Ann West coverlet: http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O134051/coverlet-west-ann/
30 Image: Tristan Quilt: http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O98183/the-tristan-quilt-bed-cover-unknown/
31 Image: 2 illustrations of mine
I recently came across a particular ceremony held by contemporary Native Americans, in Montana, US, wherein communal quilts are made displaying traditional star pattern designs, fused with a modern motif of a basketball. They are presented to high school basketball players at the annual Star Quilt Giveaway Ceremony. These quilts, which use both a traditional pattern with a modern motif, represent and preserve an incident that happened in 1947 at a game. Veronica Medicine, one of the quilters believes the communal quilt making strengthens native communities and shares knowledge “You learn a great deal because there are three generations of women there...You listen to what the older ladies have to say and then the second generation. Often the third generation says very little because we're listening and learning. To me it was a very valuable way of disseminating information from one generation to the other. In the Odawa culture it was the responsibility of the woman to teach the children the history of the people. So, in this respect, the gathering to make quilts was very important. We did a lot of gossiping and a lot of small talk, too. But in the process we did learn.” This dialogue between the young and the old is vital to the progression and sustenance of quilting. By observing the historic elements of storytelling that, over time, have become inherent in the medium, contemporary quilters are able to pursue these aspects more consciously and directly than previous generations.

32 See appendices B for story of incident that happened in 1947
Method

In this section of the essay I aim to illustrate how I have applied and expanded upon the ideas and knowledge discussed in the previous section to my own project, unearthing new dynamics to the notion of the quilt being a tool for storytelling.

Finding Stories to Work With

In order to put my theory research into practice, first I needed to find an appropriate story to communicate through patchwork-quilting. I began by looking at sentimental family items that I consider to be personal heirlooms. However, this approach didn’t feel right, as these objects already existed, with mine and others stories attached to them, whereas I needed stories that didn’t exist physically, in order for me to explore how to tell them. I chose my memories, more specifically the memories about my dog Henry, who passed away in 2011. These memories result from first-hand experiences that hold sensory aspects - I can remember how textures felt and spaces smelt, but how could I convey these characteristics through patchwork-quilting? I started to sketch and write my memories down and ended with 16 short stories, one for every year I shared with Henry. Through transcribing my memories, I started to see them as fables, each with its own moral that I will try and use as a way to centralise the narrative of every story. Here is an example of a memory that lead me to creating the Poo Rug:

Dog Dance

The first time I saw it, I wasn’t sure what Henry was doing... a little dance? A bum wiggle? No! He just had a scratch on his bottom that he was itching by dragging his bum across Mum’s rug, leaving a snail trail behind!

MORAL: Not everything you see is what it appears to be!

Giving my memories (now transcribed into stories) a hidden message or use, is a trait Walter Benjamin believed all good storytellers had, writing that every good story contains, “openly or covertly, something useful…the usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice, in a third, in a proverb or maxim,” as well as the urge to share information, “In every case the storyteller is a man who has council for his reader”36. This need to share and pass on information has been a fundamental element in my work as an illustrator, alongside my ideas for an interactive and haptic approach of learning. It is my aim

35 Definition - Fable: a short tale to teach a moral lesson, often with animals or inanimate objects as characters
to communicate my stories into objects in order for the viewer to experience or read the stories more vividly. This is why I have chosen to work with patchwork-quilting as my solitary medium, isolating it in an attempt to emphasize its extraordinary communitive powers.

**Form and Function**

In 2014 I saw an exhibition by Sirous Namazi, called Twelve Thirty\(^{37}\). Namazi and his family members sketched objects from memory, based on his childhood home. He then went onto making the objects; reconstructions of their memories, using materials to mimic the original, and applying processes of the original pieces. With a handful of objects, from the doorstep to the bathroom sink, he manages to rebuild his childhood home, leaving space for the viewer to walk around and imagine the rest of its interior. Like Namazi I strive to capture my stories in the pieces I make, whilst leaving clues for the viewer to imagine the stories they belong to.

I drew out elements that caught the characteristics of the story from my text and sketches, thinking about the setting; what was there? What was needed? The action, the outcomes, and why this memory has stuck with me. I summarised these aspects and then attempted to design an appropriate item to best portray each situation, gradually compiling a list of objects.

\(^{37}\) Publication of Twelve-thirty exhibition: https://issuu.com/researchanddevelopment/docs/r_d-sirousnamazi

I would make: dog saddle, pads, poo rug, bandana, fur, sausage carrier, stretcher, kite, claw, belly, cone, stick carrier, legs, stair sledge, hat and urn. None of these items existed in my memories, or as a functional objects in real life, but by inventing and making them they will seem real and believable in the context of my imaginative world. This experience I am trying to evoke reminds me of when I have seen people taking their photographs outside 221B, Baker Street, London, to say they have visited Sherlock Holmes’ apartment!

The object, *Dog Saddle*, comes from my memory of riding Henry’s best friend, Max (a big German Shepard). My dad would hold me hovering over his back but close enough to make me think I was riding him like a pony. Of course you would never have the need for a dog saddle, but the title and the object makes you imagine the saddle in action. I have used a traditional shape of a horse saddle, mimicking leather and fringes, scaled down to ‘dog size’ - with a black quilted patch to sit on that imitates Max’s, black, furry back, and the sides of the saddle have golden applique hairs, the colour of his underbelly. 39

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39 See appendices C to read the final 16 stories
40 Image: Photograph of Max and I - The Dog Saddle, 2016
Materials and Techniques

I will apply piecing and quilting techniques to every object, using fabrics and materials soft enough to hand stitch through. When beginning to make a patchwork-quilt I generally start by collaging with coloured papers and fabrics to experiment with the pattern and placement.

For each of my stories I will take into consideration the look, feel, and function I want to give to the quilted objects I will make. For example the Poo Rug started with sketches of traditional rug layouts, from this I played with coloured fabrics and shapes, piecing and patching them together. For quilting I used a ‘quilt tie’, which consists of tying a square knot. I chose this technique for the Poo Rug, in order to give it a tufted effect, mimicking a rug.

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41 Image: Primary School Patch-Work Club, where the children collaged their paper designs then made into fabric blocks to create a wall hanging for their schools entrance.
42 Image: The Poo Rug: sketch, to piecing, to quilted knots. (Work in progress)
The poo trail I have used a quilted running stitch. As mentioned previously, the needle becomes my drawing tool, bringing my drawings to life, translating from paper to 3D quilted object.

In recent months, Brooklyn based artist Chi Nguyen has been holding 'stitch-ins' to create 10 by 10" patches with embroidered tally lines stitched onto them. Each tally line (卌) represents the 5.4 Million women whose right to safe and legal abortion is currently at risk in Texas, USA. The project will only be finished when all 5.4 million lines are embroidered and patches stitched together to create a huge quilt, suspected to be 86 by 86 feet. On the 2nd of March 2016 the quilt of 300,000 embroidered lines, was held outside New York’s Supreme Court representing all of the makers behind the 5.4 million women of reproductive age in Texas, which will continue to grow. When Nguyen was asked why show a quilt at a rally? She answered, “…because it represents comfort, safety, and security, and the lack of access to abortion care and reproductive health care in general is anything but that. The quilt represents those things for me and also creates a sense of unity from supporters across the US who can send in swatches, which we will sew together. If we don't finish, we will hold stitch-ins at the rally, but if we do, we will use it as a banner. However, it won't just be a banner. It will also provide warmth”.  

The essence of quilting is the combination of varying, displaced materials, combining to create something beautiful, practical and whole. This ethos of togetherness and restoration transcends from the materials into the quilters, who are able to use their craft as an activist tool to promote, impede or direct change, whilst creating a visual, physical memorial to commemorate progress. With this in mind, it seems to be no coincidence that quilting resonates so significantly with those who exist in fragmented environments, which in many ways reflect the materials they bind together.

43 www.5point4million.tumblr.com/
44 Image: Photographs of rally from www.5point4million.tumblr.com/
Presentation - Bringing My Dead Dog to Life

For the Spring Exhibition my intention is to stage 16 objects as a tableau of artifacts representing Henry’s life span. Once I have completed all 16 objects, I imagine the display to resemble: museum cases, cabinets of curiosities, wonder-rooms filled with menageries that are described as collections of objects, microcosms or theatre sets of the world.

In the past I have built traditional frames and quilt hangers to present quilts, yet for these new forms of quilts I would like to build display fixtures designed especially for them. I want people to feel invited to explore my work with all of their senses. I have thought about text and how much to display, at the moment I am looking at the museum label: title, material, origin and date, leaving clues for the viewer. I also aim to have a printed publication, whether it is in the form of a map to guide you around the objects, or a book including the fable-like stories.

Discussion

How is the Patchwork-Quilter the Storyteller?

Walter Benjamin, considers storytelling as “the oldest form of craftsmanship”46, and it is this notion that has driven and inspired me throughout my time as a quilter- the way we tell, read and listen to narratives. The culture of storytelling through the history of patchwork quilting is wonderfully diverse, and what has intrigued me most about the medium is the rich, mystical narrativity that I have found difficult to articulate theoretically. Perhaps this struggle can be explained by the writing of Michael Polanyi, who writes “we can know more than we can

45 A workshop of paying Homage. I chose to pay homage to Henri Rousseau’s painting The Dream. I created a mask for each character in the painting, and with my class made a Tableau vivant (living picture)
tell”\textsuperscript{47}, and with this in mind, I wonder if it is possible to transcribe and essentialise this indirect, emotional information into theoretical knowledge, which might allow contemporary quilters to draw attention to these inherent storytelling qualities, whilst also exploring new dynamics in storytelling themselves.

In contrast to the practical functions of traditional quilt designs, the unique forms and fictionalised functions of my objects serve as storytelling tools themselves. Whilst these historic practical functions of quilts are an inherent part of the storytelling culture, my intention is to draw attention to the narrative roles that the function can play, whilst also allowing the objects to perform as a more direct and dynamic implement for communicating my own narratives. I am also focussing on the way quilts allow narratives to transcend through different senses, multiple stories being told through haptic experiences, which is what makes storytelling in quilting so complex and fascinating.

**Conclusion**

Throughout my project, I have been researching into the ways that information is passed through craft, not only in terms of stories and messages, but also the propagation of material knowledge and craft skills. In light of this, I aim to examine the ways in which I can embed the narrative of my own craft exploration into each of my final objects. If you were to look at a traditional quilt, you might notice a distinct difference between its narrative and practical functions. For example, the pattern of the quilt generally depicts the narrative, whilst the form is designed for functional use. However, in looking at the material history of quilting culture, it seems to me that on a deeper level, the form and function is just as significant in the communication of stories as the pattern. In my project I am attempting to blur these lines between narrative and practical functions, by way of creating fictionalised new functions for my quilts, intended to illustrate my narratives just as consciously as the pattern design. I hope that in doing so, I am able to tell stories more vividly, whilst also drawing attention to the role functionality has historically played in storytelling throughout the history of quilting, and the significance this element plays in disseminating material culture to new generations.

At this unfinished stage of my project, my concern is how I evaluate my objects in their ability to communicate a story, my own, or new imagined ones from the viewer- only time will tell. The way I display the objects for the viewer to experience them will be a crucial part of

\textsuperscript{47} M. Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, University of Chicago Press, 2009, p.4
the exhibition presentation, and I hope that through my work the audience will be able to see quilts in a new light, whilst also enjoying and engaging with my stories. I intend to convey the traditions and techniques of quilting, whilst also observing how quilters are able to progress the medium beyond the normative assumptions of what a quilt is. From a personal perspective, I am pleased with the objects I have produced for my personal heirlooms. These artefacts are tools for preserving and sharing my memories of Henry- swapping these stories and remembering wonderful moments with my family has been a cathartic experience, but most importantly, a whole lot of fun.
Post Examination

For the exam I displayed 8 objects, half of what I intended to show at the spring exhibition. After playing and moving the objects around this was the final placing in the photograph above. Although all the objects had been around when making each one, it was the first time I had seen them together, displayed formally. On this first viewing, I felt that they didn’t work how I wanted them to together, and I wasn’t happy with the colours/fabrics I used as a collection. I felt that, aesthetically, they didn’t work next to one another (even though this was not the real intention- each object was one of its own, telling an individual story), but I felt something was missing that tied them all together. With this in mind, I decided that in some objects I needed to make the patchwork quilting more obvious- and create a frame work to bring them together as a collection; the display stands, floor and wall wasn’t working! But I realised it was hard to solve this problem without having finished all 16 objects.

On the other hand I had made postcards for the examination committee and audience, with an illustration of one of the 8 objects on one side and the story on the other, to help viewers understand where these objects came from. Originally I was planning on not using any text for the exhibition but from this little experiment I realised it was necessary, and added a lot to the audiences understanding and viewing of the pieces, allowing them to empathise and

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contextualise the objects in their own imaginations- I noticed that, after the exam, the audience went back out to my work with the postcards they had just received, matching them up and reading about where they came from!

The stories/text element of my project was discussed a lot in the exam, and afterwards, I decided I would use my stories (without the fable morals) in the installation, including them on a souvenir or memento that could be taken away, and also be used as a guide around the installation. In the exam, it became clear to me that I am a story-teller and that quilting is my tool to communicate my stories, the aim now was to execute this!

49 Image: Riso printed postcards with stories and morals printed on the back for the exam.
During the instalment of the Spring Exhibition I finished the further 8 objects for my project (cone, urn, belly, stick carrier, stair sledge, stretcher, claw and legs). Stepping away from the cabinet of curiosities idea I thought about other ways I could display and bring them together. One thing I knew had to change from the exam was the whiteness of the walls and greyness of the floor. I choose to work with the chip board material, and keeping it untouched, so screws and joins were visible. With the perspective of the floor, I feel I have created a room or a frame that all the objects fit into, with their own display stands, shelves, hooks etc. also from the chip board. It also creates another texture, fuzzy and almost like cardboard, that for me brings up playful memories. I think that the unpolished background and stands make the objects pop, leading your eyes towards them. (Below, images from paper to chipboard-2016)
I managed to find paper the same colour and texture of the chip board to print on, like the postcards I illustrated each object, linked together with the text beside it, as a hand out and guided tour around the installation. (Below riso-printed handouts for the spring exhibition – May 2016)…

At the last minute the adjacent wall became available, so I decided to hang my print-out there, on the white wall, linked to the installation by the kites line and handle. I feel if the white wall had become available sooner I could have utilised the space in a more dynamic way, although I am happy with the overall look and positioning.

During the exhibition I have been spying on the public, watching their reactions when viewing the objects and reading the stories- it is very pleasing to see a smile on a face or a little chuckle to themselves. When I have been approached about my work the public have shared with me their dog stories that have become very nostalgic and emotional. A mother and daughter told me they had just adopted a dog from the rescue centre a few months ago, and could relate to my stories as they sounded very familiar to them, I showed them a picture of Henry and they showed me their dog, both a black Labrador cross, apart from their dog had long legs unlike henry. I have also had a couple of people telling me about quilts they have in their family that have been passed down or memories about the materials used, who made them and who designed the motifs. To me it feels like a few people still see patchwork quilting as an old fashioned craft. Often people say 'my grandmother made quilts', or, 'I have an antique quilt', and, 'I've seen quilts in museums’… Personally I feel like quilts were made for different reasons, even just 50 years ago- by still trying to hold onto the traditions of storytelling start to finish in patchwork quilting, I want to offer to people a modern representation, of shape, size, material and function, to give new ways that quilts could be perceived and used. With this said, I feel I am on the right track to answering my research question- How can I retain the traditions of storytelling in Patchwork-Quilting, whilst re-imagining its forms in order to communicate stories more vividly?
Through my use of illustration and patchwork quilting I feel that I have been able to become both the storyteller and patchwork-quilter, creating recognizable objects that occupy a space in between fact and fiction, which allows the viewer to step inside my stories both physically and mentally. I hope that my quilted objects are reminders of how imported physical encounters deepen our knowledge, and preserve our history and our stories. I feel this project is just the beginning of how I can use and research into how patchwork quilts and used to tell stories, which makes me very excited to carry on.

Image: Konstfack Spring Exhibition May 2016 – The audience look and read!
References

-Books:
  - Polanyi, M., *The Tacit Dimension*, University of Chicago Press, 2009
  - Prain, L., Strange Material, Vancouver, arsenal Pulp Press, 2014

Websites

Appendix:

A-

Handmade quilt block card catalog from the 1940’s. Card number 103 on the left reads: The Compass aka The Mariners Star "Made by Mrs. Nora D. Matheney, Bear, Delaware. This quilt has a very interesting beginning. This block my grandfather drew and pieced in the Civil War. He had one leg shot off while in battle on the Manasses, Virginia, battle field. He crawled about 80 miles to get home. Grandmother had to keep him in a cave. He pieced over 100 quilts like block and sold them to help support his family of 14 children. He pieced different blocks, but the like block is all I have of his work. It was his favorite quilt.

B-

Basketball quilts: http://museum.msu.edu/museum/tes/thc/exhibit%205.htm (accessed 14 March 2016). The incident that lead to the tradition of Star Quilt Giveaway Ceremony…

The game was between the Brockton Warriors and their rival, the Poplar Indians. During one of the 'time-outs,' as the Warriors sat in a circle on the floor, Dennis Blount's grandmother, Mrs. Tessie Four Times, ran onto the gym floor and stood behind Dennis. She quickly wiped the sweat from his back with a shawl. Grandmother Four Times then threw the shawl on the floor. Dennis fondly recalls that one of his non-Indian teammates picked up the shawl, folded it and handed it back to his grandmother. He did so not knowing the intent of her actions. Grandmother Four Times immediately tossed it back onto the gymnasium floor. Mrs. Phoebe Jones rushed onto the floor and picked up the shawl. Mrs. Jones then went and shook hands with Dennis. Mrs. Jones kept the shawl...Grandmother Four Times wiped her grandson's back to honor him. The shawl was then cast aside for anyone to pick up. She expressed her pride for her grandson in this manner. The actions were remnants of a custom honoring their husbands, sons, grandsons, nephews, and brothers who were going into battle or returning from one.

--Sybil Lambert, on the 1947 Brockton High School game which prompted the development of the Star Quilt Ceremony (as quoted in History of the Brockton High School Star Quilt Ceremony, an unpublished paper).

C-

Dog Saddle- Henrys best friend Max was a big German Shepard. He had a black, furry back that resembled a saddle, with golden sides and belly. When I was little my dad would sit me on his back, but hold me just enough not to put pressure on him, and we would trot around like he was a horse. One day Henry and I were told that max had gone to live on a farm...
Pads- Henry loved to chase just about anything that moved. The local squirrels, birds, dogs, postmen, and cats, had to keep themselves in great shape if they wanted to outrun him! One day we took Henry to the grounds of a stately home in the countryside to have a run around. Straight away, off he went, chasing after the ducks in the lake. He emerged looking very sorry for himself, walking with a slight limp. He had cut his pad on one of the slippery rocks… We had to take him to the vet, who gave him a big cone collar to wear home.

Sausage Sack- On his daily walks we always passed The Cob Shop. One day the owner of the café brought out a sausage for Henry. From that day on he would stop outside the shop and not move until she brought him his sausage. He would carry it all the way home to in a paper bag, to then eat. He would even sit and wait outside the shop on Sundays when they were closed. The sausage sack allows your sausage never to get cold!

Poo Rug- The first time I saw it, I wasn’t sure what Henry was doing, a little dance? A bum wiggle? No! He just had a scratch on his bottom that he was itching by dragging his bum across mum’s rug! The ‘Poo Rug’ disguising those unwanted stains!

Hat- Henry loved to do anything human, including dressing up. He had a number of hats and collars for different occasions, and would happily wear dad’s prescription spectacles, we thought he could see better through them in his old age. His favourite was a cap that had holes for his silky soft ears to go through, he would sunbathe in the garden with the cap keeping the sun out of his eyes.

Claw- Tizzy was my Aunties cat, and the first cat Henry ever met. Tizzy greeted Henry with its tortoise shell fur and a claw swipe across his face, which made Henry jump! This made him very weary of future sightings of cats. Hopefully Tizzy’s claw, now chopped off and stuffed might bring some good luck!

Bandana- Henry would always have his morning and evening walk around the block. On the odd occasion he even took himself for a walk! He had a collar with his name and number on, in case he got lost, but he somehow always managed to find his way home.

Fur- Henry was a black Labrador cross with a Staffordshire Bull Terrier. His coat was so furry, shiny, soft and smooth, but the only problem was that he would moult everywhere. I would generate a mountain of hairs just from stroking and cuddling him, which dad would later have to hoover up!

Stair Sledge- With Henry’s little legs he kind of slid down the stairs on his belly, especially in a race to catch the postman’s fingers. In his old age we had to help him up and down stairs. If only he had a stair sledge! Paws in pockets and a tight tug on the rope, it’s the perfect way to get down stairs!
**Cone** - On a certain return from the vets Henry had required a cone around his neck. It looked very uncomfortable, and caught the floor when he walked. Unable to rest his head, he sulked the duration of his cut healing. With the padded cone you are able to lay your head and snooze away whilst maybe looking slightly cooler!

**Stick Carrier** - When we first met Henry we got to take him for a test run, his tail wagged constantly and pulled on the lead the whole time, we had no control over him. He somehow managed to collect a dozen or so sticks in his mouth that he carried all the way back to the kennels. This is something he never grew out of and would carry sticks home and guard them like treasure, there was never one too big for him to carry!

**Stretcher** - Henry would love to run free, accept when we did he was gone, chasing everything he could there was no way we could call him back. We would have to wait for him to tire himself out, which usually ended up with a phone call for somebody to pick us up in a car because he would not budge. He would lie down and want to be carried home!

**Legs** - The rescue centre named Henry, Henry because of his little Queen Anne legs, the kind of legs you see on antique furniture, but because he was a male the closest thing to a Queen Anne was a king Henry. His short legs turned out and propped him up, if he was to wear trousers I guess they would look like this!

**Belly** - Henrys belly grew and grew, he would find all the scraps, and everybody always had a clean plate. Almost touching the ground when he walked his belly was the softest squidy thing ever, the perfect pillow to take a nap on. Over time his belly grew lumps and bumps, patchy fur and grey hairs, he loved nothing more than a good scratch.

**Kite** - Henry would bark at anything in the sky, balloons, birds, aeroplanes, and a full moon, which would send him in circles, chasing his tail. Sometimes I couldn’t even see what he was looking at – I do know all dogs go to heaven though!

**Urn** - I'll never forget the day Henry died, I received a phone call from my parents. Everybody that new him were deeply saddened. There was nothing the vet could do, but it was sudden and painless. He was a local celebrity, missed by all. He now sits upon the mantelpiece next to an oil painting of himself. He was the best dog ever, and will never be forgotten.
In Loving Memory Of

Henry

William Woof-Woof Towndrow

1995-2011

Died aged 77

(Dog Years)
#sharingiscaring

Team Craft Textile on June 2nd 2016 – Our last day at school!

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