Stillness: A meditation in new media art

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Signed Statement of Originality

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

Signature:

Vaughn Pinxit

1st March 2016

Date: ______________________________
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Abstract

Technology is often seen as a noisy, impatient and pervasive aspect of our lives, which deprives us of opportunities for quiet contemplation. By extension, new media art often tends to be activated by some form of audience interaction, which triggers a disruption-responsive (re)action. This practice-led research project is underpinned by a counter proposition—the premise that we might be able to evoke stillness through technology-mediated artworks that encourage people to consider the nature and possibilities of stillness.

In this investigation, insights into stillness have been derived from theoretical and philosophical positions drawn from Engaged Buddhism and phenomenology, and a contextual review of new media art and other relevant art practices. They also draw upon the embodied experiences of stillness I have achieved through meditation and the practice of archery.

The understandings gained through this project have been synthesised through a practice-led research process and methods that oscillate between art (visual art, performance and installation) and (interaction) design practices. Throughout the research process, Bourdieu’s theory of reflexivity has guided insights into the synthesis of interdisciplinary processes, which I have come to call a practice of conscious bridging.

New media artworks produced and exhibited as outcomes of this project are experimental approaches to producing experiences through which audiences might consider the form and nature of stillness. Encompassing a variety of artistic modes and mediums, they include sculptural installations, performances and video documentation, which serve, in different ways, to evoke a sense of stillness within a state of motion and sense of motion within the calm of stillness.

Keywords: Stillness, Interactive installations, New Media Art, Performance, Digital media, Design methods, Conscious bridging, Meditation, Engaged Buddhism, Reflexivity, Practice-led Research.
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List of Supplementary Material

A supplementary DVD of selected works is included at the rear of the printed version of the exegesis. The ePrints version of this thesis includes the exegetical component only. The works can also be viewed at:

http://vpinxit.wix.com/vaughnpinxit and https://www.youtube.com/user/VPinxit

Works discussed in this exegesis as part of the PhD examination exhibition:

Pinxit, V. *One Arrow*, 2014, interactive and networked performance, with Butoh performer Jordan Gilmour and sound *OM* by Rex Hardjadibrata.

Development day version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFzHdwu2nqU

PhD examination exhibition version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldsAlUju6x3A


Ignite postgraduate seminar version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUmDqHcZhQM

Other support works:


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQB99dCm1vI


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http://youtu.be/iWCmdLJdvLc

http://youtu.be/BUTFKYrDvfo

http://youtu.be/MNSCkmdeClc

https://www.dropbox.com/s/5l8kahup4bt53nd/singing%20bowl-4.mp3?dl=0

https://www.dropbox.com/s/ell0uchiya37lrl/Om_Vp_v1.wav?dl=0
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Back-story: Stillness in Motion

The last arrow clips onto the string; my heart beats a little quicker. Eyes closed, I relax and focus my thoughts into the still space that I have come to know; and silence expands within. Pulling hard on the string to push past the forty-pound force of the cam action, I summon effort from my weary arms and back. Settling into the aim, the scope of the sight is aligned with the gold of the target face, forty metres away down the field. My heart is steady, there is stillness... my thumb slowly reaches instinctively for the trigger and squeezes gently, engaging the action of release with surprising force. I see the tail of the arrow accelerating to one hundred metres per second on a direct path. It flies fast—parallel to the grass as it defies gravity—an extended line of my focused concentration. My attention is pulled by the arrow into a moment of elasticity, stretching my presence in reality until a gentle, familiar thud resounds and the arrow sinks deep into the target's worn-out centre; quivering gently from deceleration and the resistance of its mark.

Fig. 1. Pinxit, One Arrow, 2014. Photo by Leon Frainey.
Motion in Stillness

Day three: ‘Take your focus of attention from the nostrils, feel the air moving in and out of the entry at the nostrils, and slowly move that attention up to the top of the head, the crown of the head, the soft area of the skull found on new born babies.’ With that verbal direction from Goenka, I reached within the depth of my stillness and slowly moved my focus—like a tiny ball of light in a tangible and real physical motion; lifting it to an area at the crown of the head. In an instant, an incredible bolt of energy surged up my spine—shuddering my entire body—my spine spasmodically flexed like a cracking whip; the energy seemingly lifting me up off the meditation cushion ... something had happened!

Fig. 2. Pinxit, One Arrow, 2014. Photo by Leon Frainey.
Introduction

Ubiquitous technologies, such as smartphones and other portable devices, along with social networking applications, mean that we have greater access to information and ideas and are more connected than ever before. However, along with the communication benefits they provide, new technologies also present challenges. Technology is commonly perceived to be a noisy, impatient and all-pervasive part of our lives. In *The Question Concerning Technology* (1977), Martin Heidegger—somewhat prophetically—argues that technology conditions the user to constantly anticipate the triggering of its functional demands. More recently, in *What is an Apparatus?* (2009), Giorgio Agamben makes a similar argument, pointing to the mobile phone as an example. He suggests that the user ‘cannot acquire a new subjectivity, but only a number through which he can, eventually, be controlled’ (2009, p. 21). Lev Manovich, who maps the complex historical landscape of technology in *The Language of New Media* (2001), discusses the all-encompassing effects of technology, arguing that it moulds the subconscious of its consumers. That is, alongside technological utopias described in relation to connectivity, communication and access, new technologies are also associated with a form of determinism, which is characterised by sensory, emotional and intellectual demands. Regardless of which position we take, we may well despair that ubiquitous technologies deprive us of the chance to experience quiet contemplation. They disrupt opportunities for stillness—of mind, of thought, of presence, and of spirit.

This research project is situated in the field of interactive new media art, which is alternatively referred to as electronic art, (new) technology art and multimedia art. Like other fine arts mediums, it reflects many an ideology and artistic ethos, and it is deployed for multifarious forms of expression. However, perhaps unsurprisingly given the broad perceptions of the benefits as well as the critiques of digital technologies, it tends to be presented as a cold, mechanical and largely reactive medium. That is, new media art typically harnesses technology for the purpose of activation. It requires some form of audience interaction with the work to trigger a disruptive-responsive (re)action and complete it. This practice-led research project is underpinned by a counter proposition—that we might potentially evoke stillness through technology-mediated artworks and that such works might encourage people to consider the nature and possibilities of stillness.
Being foremost a kinetic sculptor who works with a readymade aesthetic and digital technologies, I began this project with a palette of fine art skills, including drawing, painting, bronze casting, Arduino code programming, networking, video, sound, sculpture and installation. Further mediums were added as the project progressed: processing code, Apple script code, system networking, performance and collaboration. The installations that have been produced through this project are kinetic. That is, they are matched with technology to perform mechanical, networking, sound, sensing, interactivity and video processing. Given that kinetic art is largely defined as art that embraces movement and energy, and given that technology is often seen as a cold, mechanical, soulless and inert medium (as further explained in the Technology and Aesthetics section), one of the key questions of this research is how such attributes can be reconciled to represent stillness as a life-affirming practice. This is the second paradox that has been investigated in this PhD project.

The definition of stillness that is provided by the Miriam Webster and Oxford online dictionaries (2013) relates to ‘being still’, a state that is ‘calm, tranquil’. But here the term means more than this. Drawing on connections between philosophical thought (phenomenology) and theology (Zen and Engaged Buddhism), it can be described as an embodied, intimate moment of reflexivity and mental poise. It is a state of equilibrium that is achieved through simultaneous concentration and awareness. It is poiēsis: a reconciling of thought and being with matter, space and time.

In my experience, such a state can be realised in seemingly dichotomous situations—during the quietened pose of meditation as well as during intense activity such as dance, sport or archery, when we reach such pure concentration and poise that action seemingly becomes suspended in time. In these kinds of experiences, as described in the prelude to this thesis, it is possible for stillness to be achieved in motion, and for motion to be achieved in stillness. That is stillness and motion might not be so diametrically opposed after all, and deploying technology and kinetic art in the service of stillness might begin to appear less of a paradox.

Objectives of the Research

The practice-led creative PhD research project, Stillness: A meditation in new media art, set out to investigate, through a practice-led research methodology, the research question: How might we represent and evoke the sensation of stillness through technology-mediated artworks and so encourage people to consider the nature and possibilities of stillness?
This research question opens the investigation to a series of sub-questions that query, namely, how we might represent stillness in four different ways: as an embodied, spatial and phenomenological experience, as a reflexive experience, as a representational record and as a conscious experience. Each of these sub-questions has been investigated through specific, experimental artworks.

To investigate this broad research question and sub-questions a number of objectives have been pursued. First, the research process has involved a theoretical and contextual review to establish a conceptual and philosophical framework for the concept of stillness, and to situate the research and resulting art practice in relation to technology-mediated art, technology and Zen Buddhist understandings of stillness. The purpose of these reviews was to establish a foundation for understanding how common perceptions and experiences of technology might be reconciled with embodied experiences of stillness to produce poiēsis.

Second, the heart of the research process involved experimentation with technology, harnessed—with all of its inherently disruptive attributes—to create kinetic art and immersive environments that evoke momentary experiences of stillness. This objective involved exploring how the presentation of technology-mediated art, including its interfaces, interaction and phenomenological experiences might facilitate a sense of presence, mindfulness and meditation—and so, in combination, contribute to the realisation of a state of stillness.

Third, the outcomes of the research and its presentation have involved reflecting on the processes of investigation, experimentation, production and presentation of new media art practice in relation to the disciplines of art and design and the need to continually transition between research methods to realise technology-mediated artworks.

The research question, sub-questions and objectives have contributed to a deeper understanding of stillness, which, in turn, has assisted in imagining, designing and creating a suite of artworks to present as outcomes of the project in exhibitions, as well as in this exegesis. This exegesis outlines, in detail, the research project and the measures taken to effectively address the research question and sub-questions. It is expected that theoretical and technical significance, and outcomes outlined in this research, will support new media interdisciplinary artists and designers in considering alternate approaches to using technology for technology-mediated art. Further significance based on the outcomes (for the viewer/participant) will contribute self-awareness found in the experience of stillness.

The proportional weighting of creative work to exegesis is 70:30.
Approach to the Research (Methodology)

The approach that has been taken to resolving the research question, sub-questions and objectives presented above has been practice-led, which can be defined as the pursuit of new knowledge through studio investigation and the production of art works in conjunction with theoretical and contextual research. Practice-led research synthesises theoretical layers and meaning with material embodiment and visual language. A cyclical process of theoretical and practical work determines the direction of the inquiry while a reflexive process produces a synthesis of theory and practice into new knowledge with unanticipated findings and outcomes.

More specifically, I have pursued what Jillian Hamilton and Luke Jaaniste refer to as ‘evocative’ (art) practice in which ‘the research intent, and the role of the artefact, is to produce affect and resonance through evocation’ (2009, p. 4, my italics). Such research is qualitative in nature as they go on to explain: ‘Because it is poetically and purposefully ambiguous and irreducible in meaning, the knowledge, insight and embodied experience that is evoked by an artwork is not consistent or measurable’ (2009, p. 11). Hamilton and Jaaniste distinguish between art and design research, which they describe as evocative and effective, respectively, but go on to argue that this is not a dichotomous distinction, rather, a spectrum of practices that can be synthesised by practitioners into a hybrid approach to achieve particular ends. Indeed, in new media art practice, methodologies from both art and design are employed. An arc of research pursues the evocative, but is punctuated by predetermined, goal-oriented design processes. In practice, activities must be considered and planned not in a sequential or hierarchical way, but in a complementary manner that ensures support for and transition between the preceding and following stages.

During the studio investigations for this project, a dual approach to process (art and design methods) pursued effective and evocation intentions and appeared to produce parallel findings. Bourdieu’s notion of reflexivity assisted me to understand the relationship between dichotomous practices of art and design, which are both necessary in the pursuit of new media art. Through reflexive observation and an analysis of procedure, I began to articulate my negotiation between these methods and understand how to navigate between their different knowledge and effects. This is a process that I have come to call conscious bridging.
Project Outcomes

The outcomes of this research project are twofold. First is a series of creative works that have been presented in an exhibition and an exegesis and which includes project documentation (primarily in the form of videos in the List of Supplementary Material). Together, they comprise a thesis, for they are interrelated and integral to each other.

The creative practice includes a suite of five artworks and new media installations that explore, in various ways, the theme of stillness. These were presented at a final exhibition at The Block, QUT Creative Industries Precinct, in late 2014. These technology-mediated art works are presented here as a series of experiments that include components of kinetic sculpture, interactivity, networking, video, sound and real-time performance.

The exegesis situates the creative work in the context of the theoretical fields of phenomenology and Engaged Buddhism and the contextual fields of new media art as well as precedents in art that explore the theme of stillness. It details the project’s methodology, documents the unfolding of the research (through reference to reflexive drawing journals and video documentation), presents the studio research findings and outcomes and reflects upon the findings and the contribution they make to the field of new media art.

Structure of the Exegesis

Within this exegesis, theoretical and contextual reviews first establish a philosophical and conceptual framework for the research. Both have contributed to addressing the research question, sub-questions and objectives as well as the theoretical, aesthetic and metaphorical layers of the artworks that form the outcomes of this investigation. Here, they help to situate the project outcomes. The theoretical review includes a discussion on pertinent literature drawn from the fields of philosophy, theology, meditation practices, art theory and art history. This serves to establish a conceptual framework for the project, situate key topics, and ground the investigation within contemporary art practice. Key topics include stillness and its relationships to theology, art theory, aesthetics and poiēsis, and the relationships of new media art to phenomenology, spatiality, kinetics and technology.

The contextual review presents a selection of relevant artists’ practices, which serve to situate the project within the broader field of new media art as part of an ongoing trajectory of artistic experimentation. It also points to the provocation for this research. That is, in a section entitled Artwork Number One: Metronome, I discuss the 2007 Biennale of Electronic Arts Perth exhibition entitled Stillness: Art + Science + Technology. While the exhibition title
referred explicitly to the theme of stillness, none of the artworks or essays in it addressed my research question, sub-questions and/or objectives. This gap triggered my interest in experimenting with different digital mediums and methods to create interactive art and kinetic installations that consider the nature of stillness.

Following this grounding of the research project is an overview of a number of artists’ works, which cover a broad range of materials and modes of production, as well as a range of interpretations of stillness (literal, theoretical, conceptual and technological), as well as works that produce aesthetics and atmospheres that are conducive to evoking stillness. This section provides a foundation for my experimentation with alternate methods of interactive engagement.

The project’s overarching methodology and specific methods are then explained. Studio investigation drove the research in tandem with the theoretical approach, which, in-turn, folded back into the studio investigation. As a practice-led research project, much of the research was undertaken in the studio environment. Experimenting through the production of art enabled the consideration of ways in which stillness might be achieved in motion, and motion might be achieved in stillness. Theoretical and metaphorical layers of meaning were incorporated into the creative works while I experimented with various ways to harness interactive technology and kinetics. At the same time, embodied experiences were explored, with intense programs of meditation and archery training being crucial to gaining understandings and insights that were applied in the creative works. Prototyping and testing perceptions of the works supported the refinement of the outcomes, as did exploring how aspects of presentation (interfaces, materiality, spatial installation etcetera) of technologically mediated art can contribute to considering the nature of stillness.

The section entitled Unfolding of the Practice as Experiments in Stillness (part 2) provides an intimate understanding of the moments of inspiration for each of the artworks. An explanation of the process of making each artwork is also provided, including the integrative methods of new media art, which necessarily involve combining multimodal art and design research approaches. Specifically, this research project involved an interdisciplinary studio practice that included skills and practices from across disciplines. In addition, the project embodied experience as a process of research. I, as the artist–researcher, became the subject of research through the pursuit of stillness within meditation and archery training. An explanation of the process of integrating these methodologies through the oscillation between them, is provided. This process, which I have called conscious bridging, was identified
through unexpected insights derived from reflexive activity and is discussed in detail in the section *Unfolding of the Practice as a Conscious Bridging (part 1).*

Reflection upon the processes of investigation, experimentation, production and presentation of new media art practice also provides other insights into the research outcomes and their contributions to the field and, finally, this is discussed. I take time here to discuss the artworks in the section *The Exhibition,* which involved the presentation of the creative practice in The Block at QUT in late 2014. In the section *Reception and Reflection on the Outcomes,* the creative works that form the tangible outcomes of the research are discussed in relation to the comments derived from the audience who attended the exhibition. During the exhibition, a journal was available for audience comments. These comments contributed to insights into how the artworks engaged the audience, and provided evidence relating to the research proposition, sub-questions and objectives.

The final section, *Conclusion and Findings,* involves reflection on the project and its outcomes. In moments of personal meditation, quiet repose and stillness, questions have been answered, approaches to the creative works have become clearer and the cohesiveness of the practice has been strengthened. Affording time to reflect has supported a quality in the work that I could not initially imagine, as early inspirations matured into final, presented artworks. Reflection upon the presented works as outcomes of the research has deepened this understanding. Together, the insights gained through the experience of the research, the realisation of the outcomes, and audience’s responses to the work conclude the exegesis.
Theoretical Framework

To establish a conceptual framework, and to situate this research project amongst the philosophical and theoretical ideas that drove it and surround it, this theoretical review first includes a discussion on pertinent philosophy, meditation practices, art theory and art history. Key topics include stillness and its relationships to technology, theology, poïësis, phenomenology and embodied experience, and aesthetics.

A contextual review then frames the investigation within contemporary art practice and provides an overview of examples of art that has influenced the direction of the research. This serves to situate the project within the broader field of new media art as part of an ongoing trajectory of experimentation and discovery. Artists and their works cited in the contextual review cover a broad range of interpretations of the topic of stillness including literal, theoretical, conceptual and technological interpretations of qualities of the sublime, aesthetics and atmospheres that are conducive to evoking stillness.

Like the studio practice, conscious bridging was applied in the theoretical and contextual research. This will be explained later in the section Unfolding of the Practice as a Conscious Bridging (part 1).

Together, this theoretical and contextual research has both grounded and driven the research question, sub-questions and objectives in this project. Here, it provides the reader with a framework for understanding key concerns and the location of the project at the intersection of theory and practice.

Stillness and Technology

In September 2007, the 3rd Biennale of Electronic Arts in Perth Western Australia focused on the theme of Stillness. According to curator Paul Thomas, it set out to highlight the need to address social concerns created by new technology, such as the information overload that it produces. In the exhibition catalogue, Thomas argues that, ‘informational excess is collapsing and dissolving our lived experience’ (Thomas, 2007, p. 3). In this, Thomas can be aligned with a number of philosophers and theorists who have critiqued technology in terms of the risks it poses to individuals and society. For example, in The Question Concerning Technology (1977), Martin Heidegger anticipated that technology would come to condition the user to constantly anticipate technological demands. In The Medium is The Massage (1967), Marshall McLuhan took a similar stance, lampooning
technology’s growing impact on popular culture and its attendant sociological control. Paul Virilio’s essays in *Art and Fear* (2006) critiqued technology’s effect as a form of ‘desensitisation’. And, in *What is an Apparatus?* Giorgio Agamben aligns technology with frustrations in its use, arguing that “it is impossible for the subject of an apparatus to use it “in the right way”” (2009, p. 21). Such discussions, which can be broadly described as technological determinism, relay an increasingly common perception that contemporary technology disrupts opportunities for self-actualised mindfulness and stillness. It is this theme that Thomas takes up in his exhibition catalogue. He then goes on to propose that:

One of the concepts for *Stillness* is to create this space and time for reflection and contemplation where the metaphorical interlacing cyberspace freeways criss-cross each other. The interstitial spaces that are left by the intersections of the superhighways could hold the key for reflection to take place (Ibid. p. 3).

That is, his curatorial interpretation of the potential for stillness in his collection of electronic art is associated with the internal/virtual/physical/structural contexts of technology. He suggests that we might attempt to grasp at gaps and spaces within the determined structures they create to be momentarily still.

The approach that I have taken to stillness in this research is fundamentally different to this. Here, technology, interactivity, kinetic and networking environments are, instead, brought into the service of the new media art I have produced to evoke stillness as an inherent (rather than extrinsic or excess) quality. They are harnessed in the production of works that encourage people to consider its nature and possibilities through evocation.

**Stillness and Theology**

To support an understanding of the nature of stillness as I have described it in the objectives of this research, it is important to explain what I mean by stillness from a theological position. As established in the *Introduction*, beyond the common definition of stillness as calm or tranquillity is an extended meaning of stillness as a state of mental rest, focus and repose. An embodied experience of mental poise, it involves the reconciliation of concentration of the mind’s processes of thought and awareness with matter, space and time. This is the goal of meditation along with more sublime experiences espoused by a number of Eastern philosophies and religions, such as Kundalini awakening, e.g. Kashmir Shaivism and

At this deeper theological level, stillness is ‘the discipline of individual liberation’, which is associated with ‘mindfulness of the body, feelings, mind and phenomena’ (H.H. The Dalai Lama, 2012, pp. 17–18). In Zen and Tibetan Buddhism, stillness is associated with mindfulness and must be entered into through various methods and techniques of focus, as is required to begin and experience meditation. But stillness is also the objective of meditation. As D.T. Suzuki writes, such mental poise can lead to

[a] new point of view on things, a new way of appreciating the truth and beauty of life and the world, by discovering a new source of energy in the inmost recesses of the consciousness, and by bestowing on one a feeling of completeness and sufficiency (1996, p. 132).

Engaged Buddhism provides a bridge between this theological concept and art-making as action in the world. Sallie B. King defines Engaged Buddhism as ‘a contemporary form of Buddhism that engages actively yet non-violently with the social, economic, political, social and ecological problems of society’ (2009, p. 1). The term Engaged Buddhism does not imply that there are Buddhists who are dis-engaged. As Suzanne Lacy explains, all Buddhists subscribe to a ‘universal responsibility that compels action in the world to alleviate… suffering’ (2004, p. 99). Rather, it involves a pragmatic approach to the realms of education, economics, politics and so on. Engaged Buddhism was conceived by Thích Nhất Hạnh, a Zen Buddhist monk who was practicing in Vietnam at a time of social upheaval during the Vietnam War. King explains that Engaged Buddhism refers to the kind of Buddhism that Thích Nhất Hạnh wanted to see develop and as one ‘that would translate the wisdom and compassion that Buddhists strive to develop into concrete action on behalf of all sentient beings’ (King, 2009, p. 4, my italics).

This concept of concrete action espoused by Engaged Buddhism provides a pertinent paradigm for this investigation in that it sets out to produce experience as an outcome of expressive and material form and encourages one to consider the nature and possibilities of stillness. However, there is a subtle but important distinction to be made in relation to what I mean by concrete action, which can be explained in relation to the concepts of praxis and poiēsis. Giorgio Agamben invokes Greek philosophy to explain how these are distinguished.
He describes praxis as the work of the artist, craftsman, workman and politician, as a ‘manifestation of a will that produces a concrete effect’ (1999, p. 68). It is a function of the ego or will. Poiēsis, on the other hand, is a function of intuition. He writes:

Central to poiēsis [in ancient Greece] was the experience of production into presence, the fact that something passed from non-being to being, from concealment into the full light of the work (Ibid. pp. 68–69).

Defining poiēsis from a technological perspective, Martin Heidegger provides a more nuanced explanation of the Greek concept. He writes, ‘the poiēsis of the fine arts also was called technē, [which] brought the dialogue of the divine’ (1977, p. 34). He goes on to explain that, ‘the arts were not derived from the artistic. Art works were not enjoyed aesthetically. Art was not a sector of cultural activity’ (Ibid. p. 34)—art was poiēsis of a higher order. Poiēsis, which is derived from the ancient term ποιέω ‘to make’, is the root of the modern word poetry (Poiēsis, 2014). Both verb and noun, it traverses the meaning to create (through or from) and to produce an effect.

Poiētic work, like Engaged Buddhism, expresses, transforms and reverberates in the world. It can be aligned with the Zen concept of oneness. As Suzuki explains:

When the ego-shell is broken and the “other” is taken into its own body, we can say that the ego has denied itself or that the ego has taken its first steps towards the infinite. Religiously, here ensues an intense struggle between the finite and the infinite, between the intellect and a higher power, or, more plainly, between the flesh and the spirit (Ibid. p. 8).

Zen’s purpose of removing the ‘obtrusive hindrance’ of the intellect strives to break down the ego-centred self, which interferes with spiritual progress (Suzuki, 1996. p. 180). In this regard, this practice-led research project can be understood as the pursuit of stillness as poiēsis.
Stillness and Phenomenology

Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology also provides a bridge between physical and intellectual engagement, between the material and experiential, and between art and the encounters by the audience with it. Merleau-Ponty suggests that, ‘phenomenology is a philosophy that puts essences back into existence’ (1992, p. vii) and adds, ‘phenomenology, as the return to the things themselves, is precisely the making explicit of our own experience’ (2012, p. xxxviii). As Donald A. Landes states, ‘Merleau-Ponty had long believed that the study of perception would eventually dissolve the Cartesian problem of the union of the soul and the body’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2012 p. xiv). In this, phenomenology and Zen share something of a similar aim. The notion that essences of perception or consciousness, which are primarily beyond the intellect, can be made to exist is key to understanding the limits of the intellect.

Robert Hobbs provides a particularly pertinent perspective on phenomenology in relation to Zen Kyudo archery. He writes:

The limitations of the ego are surmounted and an indefinable “it” that superintends the archer, the bow, the arrow, and the target takes over when the bull’s eye is hit time after time. Such transcendence of the self is akin to Merleau-Ponty’s desire to move beyond personal subjectivity and find a pre-personal—and even anonymous—being (2001, p. 21).

This is an expression of a state of being in which materiality, time and space are collapsed in a momentary experience of transcendence, as stillness.

Stillness and Embodied Experience

Embodied experience was a key aspect of the methodology of this research. That is, this research project has set out to draw upon embodied experience and to produce it. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (2010) argue that the researcher is directly aligned with, and is indeed part of, the object of practice-led research enquiry and that, in effect; the artist–researcher also becomes a subject of the research. They draw upon Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of reflexivity to explain the evolving, intuitive process that drives the relationship between theoretical enquiry and embodied skill and knowledge. Barrett writes:
This notion of intuitive knowledge is closely related to what Bourdieu has theorised as the logic of practice or of being *in-the-game* where strategies are not pre-determined, but emerge and operate according to specific demands of action and movement and time (Ibid. p. 4).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty also provides an explanation of this concept, writing that:

The core of philosophy is no longer an autonomous transcendental subjectivity, to be found everywhere and nowhere: it lies in the perpetual beginning of reflection, at the point where an individual life begins to reflect on itself (1992, p. 62).

As an artist, reflection on the research process (both theoretical enquiry and studio practice) has been transformational at both the academic and personal levels. However, this symbiosis should also be considered from another perspective. My pursuit of personal experiences of stillness through meditation and archery practices provided intimate personal insight into the nature of stillness, which, in turn, transformed the practice as I comprehended the topic at an embodied level. This dual flow of embodied knowledge and embodied insight was an integral part of ‘being *in-the-game*’ of the research (Barrett & Bolt, 2010).

In a practical sense, stillness is a state that is entered into to begin and experience meditation. As part of the research process, in February 2013 I attended a Vipassana meditation course at Dhamma Rasmii in Pomona (near Noosa, QLD) for a ten-day intensive retreat. Due to its intended isolation, the Vipassana course limited physical interferences from the outside world and the obligations of daily life—all communication equipment such as mobile phones, laptops, writing material, musical instruments and books had to be left at home or with the office staff. The participants—around 20 men and 30 women—were not allowed to speak at any time during the ten-day retreat. This set the opportunity to focus on the self in the natural surroundings of the retreat.

I participated in 11 hours of meditation per day from 4:30 am to 9 pm, with breaks for rest, and meals. It took a couple of days before my legs became accustomed to sitting for extended hours. Attuning the body and mind supported the ease of focus over extended durations to maintain meditation attention. However, it was a test of discipline to say the least. And, as with any form of focused mental activity, such as mathematics, science,
philosophy, music or creative thought, it was hard work. To enter a state of stillness in meditation, the intellect, which responds to thought and the cinema of the mind, is reduced in attentive focus to a durational focus in the moment of immediate reality. The chatter of the mind begins to quieten; vision flows by, without attention focused on them, and the limits of logic and rational thought are surpassed. The benefit was several transcendental experiences (one of which is described in *Motion in Stillness*, p. 2).

I also attended a one-day Rigpa Tibetan Meditation course in Red Hill, Brisbane during May 2014. Tibetan meditation belongs to the Vajrayana Buddhism school and its technique is different to Vipassana. Less work was required, as I came to the practice with a disciplined control of mind already in place by then. The Rigpa technique situates the meditator within reality and immediate awareness, whereas Vipassana encourages the participant to reach within for metaphysical development. The aim of Rigpa technique, also known as *Samatha without support*, is to bring oneself to a state of meditation and calm awareness during every day activities. I found the technique to be mentally relaxing, and it quickly stilled the mind.

The aim of integrating meditation into my research was to explore the mental realm of stillness through the Vipassana and Rigpa courses. During meditation the aim is to quieten the mind, slow the flow of mind visions, and free the conscious mind from internal chatter for an extended duration. Focusing attention on a single point without effort, feeling the breath and becoming aware of all external stimuli without them distracting your focus, is conducive to stillness. It enables an intimate encounter with the nature of stillness.

Interestingly, the benefits of meditation have recently been adopted by mental health organisations Beyond Blue (2012) and Black Dog (2012), which recommend mindfulness to assist with stress and depression:

> learning how to focus your concentration, with expanding the awareness to include other things such as sounds, sights, body sensations—even thoughts …you learn to see more clearly the patterns of the mind, and then to disentangle yourself from them (Beyond Blue, 2002).  

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1 The relationship between meditation and psychotherapy is beyond the scope of this study; readers interested in the research in this area can read more in *Zen Meditation in Psychotherapy* (Simpkins & Simpkins, 2012).
It is anticipated that my research may benefit those in need of mental health support; however this project is not primarily intended as a therapeutic tool.

I have also undertaken training in archery as part of the research process to embody notions of stillness. The focus of concentration required to action and affect an elegant shot first drew me to the sport as a junior archer (Fig. 3). Returning to it during this research process, I began an archery beginners and induction course at Samford Valley Target Archers in March 2013. Participating in archery since this time has been an important part of my intellectual inquiry into the requisite attributes of stillness (Fig. 4).

During shooting practice, I raise the bow and go through a multi-step shooting process technique—all dependent on tuning the equipment and the body through physical strength and shooting technique development. In moments when I bring Zen into the process, I nock the arrow on the string and raise the bow, breathing in. Through poise, I quieten the mind and there is a small expansion of muscle tension just before release. A silence of the mind focuses awareness on the immediate moment of release. When distracting factors are diminished, such as equipment anomalies and physical interferences, the physical process blends away, leaving the focus of attention and the moment of immediate action to merge and all becomes one—Zen.

What occurs is a form of knowing; thus, the arrow in flight is an extension of Zen balance, which enters the target in a most comfortable way, with no harsh slap or aggressive twist. It is a beautiful result of the multiple synergies actioned without forced intent.
For me, the archery training process is akin to an artist mastering tools to carve sculpture. Repetition, familiarity and mastery are a form of embodied knowing, or what Martin Heidegger calls handlability and Barbara Bolt calls praxical knowledge. Bolt writes of practice-led research that:

“research” commences in practice—in our dealings with tools and materials of production, rather than a self-conscious attempt at theorisation. By focusing on enunciative practices; that is, the systems of fabrication rather than systems of signification…there is a possibility of opening up the field of an “art of practice” from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. According to such thinking, such logic of practice follows on from practice rather than prescribing it (2004, p.1).

This approach comes full circle in this research—praxical knowledge is at once a foundation and an impetus for it—working in alignment with Zen and poiēsis. In the case of my performative art practice, praxical knowledge is drawn from the combined perspectives of being a competitive archer, sculptor and performer.

Zen in the Art of Archery

Three key texts that discuss Zen in archery through Japanese Kyudo (archery) practice have influenced my understanding of archery and its incorporation into my performance work. Each contributes in its own way to understanding the research question: How might we evoke the sensation of stillness through contemporary artworks and so encourage people to consider the nature and possibilities of stillness or, more specifically, how we might represent stillness as a spatial, embodied and phenomenological experience? Eugen Herrigel’s *Zen in the Art of Archery* (1981) is a biographic account of training in Zen archery in Japan under Awa Kenzo. *Zen Bow Zen Arrow*, by John Stevens (2007), is an account of Herrigel’s teacher, Awa Kenzo. In *One Arrow, One Life*, Kenneth Kushner (2000) gives a deeper insight into Zen archery by an author who was inspired by Herrigel’s text. The three texts are a collective trilogy of Kyudo from the perspective of Western students.

In this research, techniques of Zen Kyudo archery were a particular focus, and were adopted as a mindset during training sessions. The Zen Kyudo form is a refined practice, with artistic sensibilities and meditation qualities. Quite provocatively, Herrigel claims that it is
'the way of the “artless art”’ (1981, p. 17). Through my own practice of archery I come to experience the ‘artless’-ness required; to remain silent of mind and process, and so to enact a perfect unthought-of draw, aim and release of the arrow.

Silent Koan

The creative practice of this research project was oriented towards creating a visual representation of the principle of a Zen Koan. In Zen Buddhist practice, a Koan is used to address a problem through spiritual understanding. T. Griffith Foulk explains a principle of the Koan as a ‘unique method of religious practice, which has as its aim the bringing of the student to direct, intuitive realization of reality’ (2000 p. 5). However, as Suzuki somewhat contradictorily states, ‘the Koan is…the great baffler to reasoning’ (1996, p. 180). To reconcile these seemingly contradictory interpretations, further explanation from Rinzai Zen Master Asahina Sogen is useful. He writes:

Koans are expressions in words or actions of the enlightened state of mind of people who have gained awakening through intimate practice of Zen…they are things that inspire the minds of unenlightened people, draw them into the abyss of doubt and intellectual investigation, and lead them to practices that help reach across to the realm of enlightenment (Foulk, 2000, p. 38).

Victor Hori explains the Koan’s specific approach as follows:

The cleverness of the Koan consists in the fact that rather than attacking reason and logic from outside, the Koan uses reason to drive itself into a self-contradiction and cause its own destruction (2000, p. 280).

That is, the aim of the Koan is to proclaim the non-duality of reality and self through inherent contradiction.

There are many forms of Koan composed by Zen masters, which are taken up by the many sects of Zen to enact an ultimate spiritual achievement. Suzuki goes on to suggest that, ‘When we reproduce the same psychic conditions out of which the Zen masters have uttered these Koans, we shall know them’ (1996, p. 179, my italics).
In the case of this research project, evoking stillness is at the heart of the problem. I do not announce that I can compose a Koan, or even understand their cryptic content at times. However, I have set out to appropriate one aspect of a Koan: *that which challenges reason through juxtaposition*. That is, I have set out to dislodge intellectual reasoning about stillness and technology (as a juxtaposition to stillness), in favour of an embodied experience of stillness through (archery) activity, (kinetic) art and the technological production of affect. In the artworks I have produced, these elements are harnessed to create the psychic and physical attributes of stillness.

**Butoh**

The decision to include Japanese Butoh dance in the performative artwork stemmed from seeing a Butoh (Budo) performance at the Sydney Opera House in the late 1980s. During this performance, I recall feeling transported to another realm of consciousness, an otherworldly place, evoked by an energy and atmosphere that the performers generated. As Sondra Fraleigh notes, Butoh performers (butoh-ka) can ‘awaken self-reflexive moments in themselves and their audience…[Butoh] effect [sic] a metamorphic signature through inward dances of spiritual transformation’ (2010, pp. 6–16). Fraleigh suggests that Butoh, with its roots in German Expressionism, has a theoretical relationship with existentialism. She writes, ‘the non-dualistic morphology of Butoh draws upon the void of Continental existentialism, an aspect of theater of the absurd’ (Fraleigh, 2010, p. 46). Here, we might draw a relationship with the Koan’s purpose of challenging reason (Hori, 2000, p. 280).

In setting out to create a psychic atmosphere and evoke stillness through Butoh principles, while engaging in archery performance, I recognised the limitations of mediums, materials, lighting and space. This necessitated collaborating with a performer to assist in evoking a psychic atmosphere.

**Aesthetics**

A parallel might be drawn between the Koan and Dadaism and Surrealism in the world of art. They—Dadaism and Surrealism—also inherently baffle reason (the convention of artistic practice of the time) as a ‘tactic’ that enables new ways of thinking and being (Dickerman, 2005, p. 8). This can similarly align with the Koan, through employing ‘reason to drive itself into a self-contradiction and cause its own destruction’ (Hori, 2000, p. 280). Indeed, it is when reason is transcended that stillness is experienced. Marcel Duchamp’s
legacy is a strong influence on my art practice because of its association with challenging orthodoxy and reason.

In particular, I am interested in readymades and in the inherent contradiction that occurs through art making, as opposed to object making. An archetypal example is Duchamp’s readymade *Fountain*, 1917 (Fig. 5) in which an everyday object (a porcelain urinal) is re-contextualised as an object of art, thereby challenging our perceptions of the *object* as well as its presentation and reception. As Giorgio Agamben explains, Duchamp took a common and reproducible object and, by installing it in an art gallery, re-contextualised it as art. Agamben refers to a reciprocal action in the transition from technical object to art, and from art object to a technicality (1999, p. 63). In this regard, the works are concrete forms, whereas Duchamp’s artistic claims are intellectual. Herein lies an inherent and baffling contradiction between the banal and the higher-order realm of the gallery, between the concrete and the poetic, between praxis and poiēsis.

Alternatively, simulacra engenders what Dana Liljegren calls ‘[a copy] ‘that may bear the appearance, but not the essence, of the model’ (Liljegren, 2013, para. 1). Arthur C. Danto further explains simulacra within his critique on Andy Warhol’s *Brillo Box* (see page 24). We might compare this approach with Jasper Johns’ bronze sculpture of Ballantine beer cans. This work is not a readymade or altered readymade, it is a hand-made replica of original beer cans (Fig. 6).
Roni Feinstein suggests that Johns’ intent varied significantly from Duchamp’s, writing:

Duchamp claimed that the painting of the cans was “absolutely mechanical”. This negation of the painstaking, sensuous execution of the sculpture is an expression of Duchamp’s own artistic concerns, not those of Jasper Johns. Johns sought to make the handcrafted origins of the sculpture apparent so that it would not be mistaken for a Readymade (1980, para. 31).

In summary, Johns was concerned with ensuring that the sculpture (simulacra) was appreciated for its handcrafted-ness—that is, praxis. This aligns with my approach for making the No Bow and No Bow: Record bronze sculptures, applying simulacra to experience/record poiēsis.

Gilbert and George’s work (Fig. 7) can be more closely aligned with Duchamp. They treat everyday situations as performance art through their medium of *living sculpture*. It has been observed that, ‘in everyday life one was able to experience Gilbert & George as walking, eating, drinking and philosophizing sculptures’ (Haus-der Kunst, 2006, para. 2). With an artistic finesse and poetic performance, they apply criticality to art and baffle intellectual distinctions between banal and higher-order framing, concrete and poetic enactment, praxis and poiēsis.

![Fig. 7. Gilbert and George, 2014. ©Gilbert & George. Photo by Richard Saker. Licensed by Headpress, 2015.](image-url)
Gilles Deleuze’s notion of difference and repetition is also pertinent here. It is illustrated by the artwork *One and Three Chairs* by Joseph Kosuth (Fig. 8). The fact that the physical chair is observed as a *chair* is due to its difference to the photographic reproduction and the textual description on the wall (semiotics would define the former as the signified and the latter two as signifiers). As Deleuze writes:

The power of simulacra is such that they essentially implicate at once the object = x in the unconscious [photo], the word = x in language [text], and the action = x in history [physical] (1994, p. 299).

That is, all three versions are valid representations of a *chair*; however, each of the signifiers negates these representations because the printed photograph chair is not a *chair* due to its difference to the physical chair displayed; the physical chair is not descriptive of a *chair* due to the printed textual description of a chair on the wall; and the printed textual description chair is not a *chair* due to the printed and physical images of the chair.

In this practice-led research project, the decision to use readymades was derived from the standpoint of Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* (1994). Deleuze writes: ‘the role of the imagination…is to draw something new from repetition, to draw difference from it’ (Ibid. p. 76). It is from this position of establishing difference through imperfect repetition of an
‘image’ that everyday (recognisable) objects are altered to become vehicles for the poetic resonance of ‘baffling’ concepts in ‘readymade’ art practice, as poïësis

Arthur C. Danto’s critique of Andy Warhol’s Brillo Box (Fig. 9), draws a relationship with Zen. Danto considers that Pop’s objective, like Duchamp’s readymades, was to show that there is no difference between art and everyday life/objects. However, he goes on to draw attention to an observation by Gerard Malanga, Andy Warhol’s studio assistant, who wrote,

By becoming machines, we made the most imperfect works. Andy embraced his mistakes. We never rejected anything. Andy would say, “It’s part of the art.” He possessed an almost Zen-like sensibility (Wrenn, 1991, p. 19).

Danto, who attended D. T. Suzuki’s lectures at Columbia University in the 1950s explains that Suzuki’s teachings assisted him to understand the new wave of Pop Art. He uses Warhol’s Brillo Boxes as a case in point:

The philosophical task was to explain why and in what way they were different [from the original]. It was here that my study of Buddhism, such that it was, and of Dr Suzuki’s writing in particular, came to my aid (2004, p. 57).

Danto relays the ideas of Chinese Zen master Ch’ing Yuan, who explains a realisation of reality from initially observing mountains and landscape, to understanding further intimate knowledge of his perception of the mountains and landscape (Ibid. p. 58). He draws on Buddhism to explain that, ‘there need be no outward difference between art and life’ (Ibid. p. 57). Danto relates this experience by Ch’ing Yuan to an understanding of the Brillo Box aesthetic. He writes:

Nothing distinguishes illusion and reality. Nothing need distinguish artworks from mere real things. It is not that they are not distinct. It is that the difference between them need not be visible. That had not come up in the literature on aesthetics as a problem. It was always taken for granted that works of art had a strong antecedent identity as such. The contribution of Pop was that, by

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2 An example illustrating this discussion is represented in my Honours research project, The Final Note, 2012, which includes the One Key Piano, archived on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/user/VPinxit [Accessed 11-1-13], see reference list.
making art that looked like the most commonplace of objects, it showed us that one could be in the presence of art and not really know it… I think that is where the observation of Ch’ing Yuan becomes so relevant… Once one recognized that there was no particular way a work of art should look, one would see that one could not define art in perceptual terms at all. It is a way of seeing the world (Ibid. p. 58).

Danto’s insight is important to this project, in that consideration has been given here to not only applying an aesthetic that is responsive to Zen, but also to creating artworks that tread the thin line between art and ‘mere real things’ (Ibid. p. 58). My concept for artmaking thus expanded beyond the convention of wall and plinth, particularly with the One Arrow performance becoming embodied Zen and stillness as and with ‘mere real things’ (Ibid).

Conclusion

In this theoretical review, connections have been established between stillness and theology, philosophy (phenomenology), ontology and art theory. Ideas developed through these connections have been applied conceptually throughout my investigation and are manifest in the artworks that are the outcomes of the research.

A major consideration of this project has been to reconcile the inherent connotations of technology as a consumer product, disruptive force and gimmickry, with seemingly contradictory attributes of stillness. Engaged Buddhism, Zen and meditation purport an integral relationship with stillness, and here I have situated Zen in practical ways as Embodied Experience, including through the practices of meditation and archery, which are employed to engage in and analyse a state of stillness. Silent Koans were useful for considering stillness through juxtaposition and, here, a relationship is drawn with Butoh as well as with the aesthetics and poiēsis of Duchamp’s readymades, Deleuze’s difference and repetition, and Danto’s simulacra. In these ways, a conceptual framework has been established to assist in understanding the elements, conditions and attributes that might be considered in producing art that sets out to represent and evoke stillness as an embodied, spatial, phenomenological and reflexive experience; a representational record; and a conscious experience.

From here, a contextual review will consider how contemporary artworks approach the concept of representing stillness and encourage people to consider the nature and possibilities of stillness.
Contextual Review: Precedents in Practice

An extensive review of artists and their practices has influenced the direction of this research project in terms of representational forms, the presentation of artworks and the design of audience engagement with the artworks that have been produced. The work of artists discussed here covers topics as diverse as technology, aesthetics and sport, and they vary in terms of the subjects of their investigations, their ideas, materials and media. Their interpretations of stillness also vary between literal, theoretical, conceptual, technological and aesthetic approaches. In combination, however, these artworks have been drawn upon to further the research objectives of representing, realising and documenting stillness through technologically mediated artworks. These concepts, which are inherent to this research project, are reflected in the referenced artworks and are discussed here in different ways and to differing extents. However, all of the artworks discussed here have contributed to the conceptual development of the research.

This review is organised into a number of key themes. Section one draws together representative artworks that are aligned with the research question and sub questions, namely, exemplar artworks that represent and evoke the sensation of stillness and so encourage people to consider the nature and possibilities of stillness through an embodied, spatial, phenomenological and reflexive experience; a representational record; and a conscious experience.

Section two considers artistic aesthetics and experimentation with technology (technology-mediated art), which creates kinetic art and immersive environments and considers ways in which they evoke experiences of stillness. It considers how interfaces, interaction and phenomenological experiences might distract from or contribute to the realisation of a state of stillness.

Section three discusses sport and situates its relationship with art and its interpretation as an art medium. This is in support of the use of archery, as a Kyudo style, in the practice.

Then, in conclusion, I explain how the exhibition and display of artwork can influence the atmosphere for experiential purposes.
Section 1: Artworks that Represent and Evoke the Sensation of Stillness

Many artists have referenced stillness as a framing concept for their artwork. Some have created artworks that represent stillness while others have set out to evoke it, and others have created experiences that provoke stillness. Here, I will describe key precedents that have inspired and supported the investigative direction in my studio research.

Stillness as an Embodied, Spatial and Phenomenological Experience

Evoking stillness and encouraging the viewer to consider the nature and possibility of stillness is a subjective challenge and one that requires the careful coordination of embodied representation and spatial consideration.

Some artists have produced works that engage the viewer on a perceptual level, as was my intention, prompting them to consciously consider stillness as a form of quiet contemplation. Time and space are recurrent themes in this approach; we see them reduced, stretched and re-contextualised. The *Poetry of Stillness* (Fig. 10) by Japan/US duo Eiko and Koma provides an example of embodied motion through space and duration. These artists, who trained with the founders of Japanese Butoh Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo, perform a work that incorporates Butoh dance. Using barely discernible physical movements, they slowly invoke narratives of spiritual realms. The performance becomes, according to Roslyn Sulcas, ‘an utterly absorbing, potent drama of time and space—endless in the moment’ (2011). The performance, its rhythm and its sublime atmosphere through a ‘potent drama of time and space’ (Ibid.) are entrancing and, drawn in through the activation of the senses (vision, sound, vibration), the audience is drawn towards a meditative state. That is, the work evokes stillness through a performance of embodied motion.

Here, we can reflect on Suzuki’s previous comment: ‘When we reproduce the same psychic conditions out of which the Zen masters have uttered these Koans, we shall know them’ (1996, p. 179). Thus, I re-connect back to my Butoh experience in the 1980s, and I take from the work of Eiko and Koma the strategy of using Butoh performance to evoke the psychic condition required to experience the notion of a Zen Koan. In particular, it provides a reference for artwork two, *One Arrow*.

The activation of materiality and space to evoke the sensation of stillness is the subject of the sculptural installations of Japanese artist Takahiro Iwasaki. Inspired by the Japanese Haiku master Matsuo Bashō, Iwasaki’s *Reflection Model (Perfect Bliss)* (Fig. 11) is imbued

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3 Matsuo Bashō, b. 1644, was renowned during Japan’s Edo period.
with notions of contemplation that rest at the heart of Haiku poetry (NKV Gallery, 2011). A precision-constructed floating architectural model is suspended in the gallery; its reflection producing an echo or doubling of space. Akin to a mirror-like surface of a still lake, the illusion of the work’s multi-planed levels and its perceptual distortion speak of the duality we experience at times in the spatial environment. It is a poetic visual example of the sublime produced through meditative practice, as Iwasaki speaks of the spatial equivalent around us, which is accessible if we take a moment to perceive it.

I viewed Iwasaki’s artwork at the Gallery of Modern Art (Brisbane) during the 7th Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art exhibition in February 2013 and 2014, and took from it the phenomenological experience of reconnecting to the self—the stillness around and within—as well as the importance of precision in making sculptural forms. I was transfixed with the sculptures’ presence and ephemeral powers to hold my attention in an unexpected meditative experience. Inspiration from this work supports artwork number one, *Metronome*, which investigates how stillness can be evoked in spatial representation and the atmosphere that can be created by objects. In addition, this influenced the use of precision construction techniques in this work.

Stillness as Reflexive Experience, or Echo

Interactive technology adopts triggering with sensory items, such as sound, pressure, ultrasonic distance sensing, infrared motion detection, video detection and other forms as well. All require some form of disruption and active engagement by the user and a conscious
action predominantly occurs; however, in consideration of technology’s opportunities, interactivity can utilise a passive mode of operation. This consideration has keyed further contextual research to include ways artists have used technology to provide insights into the nature and possibilities of stillness through a reflexive experience.

Some artists have produced a literal interpretation of stillness through works that require the viewer to participate in a state of contemplation as they encounter the artwork. Here, the artwork is activated, ironically, through the viewer/participant becoming physically still and motionless in its presence. Australian artist Lynette Wallworth, on the other hand, has produced a sophisticated new media work that presents a more nuanced approach to interactive engagement. In *Invisible By Night* (Fig. 12), an interactive video sequence calls the participant to engage with the artwork by touching a misted (video) screen. Upon their touch, a woman moves behind the screen and advances towards the surface to wipe her hand across the condensation.

Catherine Wilson explains the effect of the artwork’s responsive action in the exhibition catalogue essay. She writes of the subject, ‘her searching gaze momentarily communicates wordlessly across virtual time and space…a moment of transference, an insight into the life-changing experiences of “another”, the installation is a zone of encounter with the self’ (2009, para. 2-3). That is, *Invisible By Night* sets up an interactive context for the participant to encounter the ‘self’ through the ‘other’—a crossing over in a moment of engaged stillness that prompts a momentary reflexive and meditative experience.

![Fig. 12. Wallworth, *Invisible By Night*, 2004. ©Lynette Wallworth. Photo by Colin Davison.](image)
Wallworth’s work is noteworthy here because it shifts beyond the gimmickry of interactivity to produce a contemplative experience of stillness as an encounter with self. This approach influenced my art-making, particularly in artwork number three, *Echo*, by presenting an alternative option for experiencing interactivity in a passive and reflexive way. *Echo* is, likewise, designed to engage the participant in an echo or trace moment of stillness through re-engagement with the *One Arrow* performance.

**Stillness as Representational Record**

Stillness in motion is seemingly a paradoxical statement and physical impossibility. To capture the essence of stillness in motion, I have set about investigating sculptural activity grounded in meditation practice.

Australian artist Lindy Lee adopts Zen Buddhist practice, the Koan curriculum and meditation as referents in her art-making (Smith, 2014, p. 119). She situates her practice as an Engaged Buddhist and, in this, she sets out to transcend the immediate bounds of socio-political agendas to explore the relationship with the world and reality that Zen offers (Fig. 13). Over 30 years, her art practice has evolved from early experiments with prints from the first commercial photocopier to portraiture and appropriation, and bold expressive paint applications that resonate with Zen calligraphy (Chiu, 2001).

Fig. 13. Lee, *The Life of Form: One Billion Worlds*, 2012. ©Lindy Lee. Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Damian Smith provides an insight into Lee’s methodology and its integration of meditation as follows:
For Lindy Lee, her works are empowered by precise contemplative periods, enacted both prior to and during the creation of her pieces. Indeed, it is from sustained meditational bouts that the diffuse yet luminous aspects of her works emerge (2009, para. 6).

Lee herself explains:

Whatever shape existence takes—sentient or insentient, person, tree or rock—has simultaneously tangible and intangible characteristics. The tangible is the physical and visible and the intangible is shadow realm comprised of the myriad and infinite shifting relationships that bring form into being—embodied reality. Everything that is has a shadow. It is not possible to separate dark from light, form from formlessness, the material from the immaterial. The immaterial has no agency within the world except through matter. The material has no substance or reality except through the evanescence of the immaterial (2012, para. 1-2).

I viewed the beautifully resonating retrospective exhibition *Lindy Lee: The Dark Absolute Freedom* at the University of Queensland Art Museum in 2014, which included Lee’s current method that adopts a Zen Buddhist technique of flinging ink (Fig. 13). In this, Damian Smith suggests she uses traditional Zen practice to encounter a personal Zen moment:

“ink splats” develop into sculptural forms, made by throwing searing molten bronze on to the foundry floor. This action mimics the traditional Chinese practice, which is understood as an act of renewal, where all that is held inside oneself is released (Smith, 2012, para. 3).

I experienced a meditative stillness in Lee’s works at the exhibition; her method and meditative presence came through several artworks installed in the gallery space, with her Buddhist philosophy overarching the exhibition. Reflecting upon the way Lee practices, I pictured myself alongside Lee in a studio, making the artworks with her and experiencing stillness in motion.

Like Lee, when crafting artwork four, *No Bow* (the arrow and release aid) out of casting wax, I entered a poiēsis and reflected on the Zen experience of the aim of the arrow with no bow. The experience was meditative, and engaging in the form assisted a poiēsis
moment that allowed me to enter an understanding of a Koan through the tangible—I was seemingly in the moment of making a Koan. Similarly, *No Bow (Record)*, which is a bronze cast of a target face, captures the Zen-like moments of enacting archery. Each arrow release, the moment of focus, is recorded on the target face similarly to Lee’s Zen moment of flinging ink splats—stillness in motion.

**Stillness as Conscious Experience**

Situating the context for engagement with one’s immediate environment provides the participant with a conscious experience relative to the intent. This can be achieved with cultural signification, which can include material, sound, space and symbolism. Understanding this concept has provided insight into how to effect an environment to evoke stillness as a conscious experience in the participant.

An example of art as conscious experience is evident in the work of Montien Boonma. Born in Thailand, Montien Boonma’s Engaged Buddhism approach responds to issues directly associated with Buddhism and the Buddhist community of his country. The Gallery of Modern Art Brisbane (GOMA) website introduces Boonma’s work (Fig. 14) as follows:

*Lotus sound* 1992 consists of terracotta bells installed in a curved wall-like formation. Above this tenuous structure hang gilded petals of the lotus flower. Concerned [with] the receding importance of Buddhist practice in daily Thai life, Boonma sought to re-create the inspiring and resonant sounds of bells in temple sanctuaries (GOMA, 2014, para. 3).

![Lotus Sound](image)

In *Lotus Sound*, Boonma makes reference to the ephemera and symbols of Buddhism while suggesting that there are other elements also to be appreciated when participating in Buddhist practice, such as the incidental beauty imbued in the immediate surrounding space through meditative awareness. For example, in his work *Salas for the Mind* (Fig. 15), he explores the intimate immediacy of ‘spaces for personal meditation’ (Ewington, 2012, para. 4) through reference to a Sala (a form of Thai architecture, an open pavilion adjacent to the main temple). Virginia Henderson gives insight into Boonma’s Sala:

Montien’s sala are places for healing and peace. They take inspiration from the ancient Khmer *arokeyasala*, which were resting houses along the road from Angkor to Northeast Thailand, where Montien spent his childhood (2007, p. 3).

Created in response to his wife’s passing in 1994, *Salas for the Mind*, which includes the sound of chanting, refers to personal healing. Boonma explains the symbolism cut into the steel forms:

The question mark represents what we don’t know, which is the obstacle. The exclamation mark, a mark of surprise, expresses a kind of hope, a not-knowing, a sense of discovery. I perceived a gap between these two…the question and the response—these two are never-ending. A response can turn into the subsequent question. It’s like our mind (Ibid. p. 181).

Fig. 15. Boonma, *Salas for the Mind*, 1995. ©Montien Boonma Estate.
I experienced *Salas for the Mind* and *Lotus Sound* while attending GOMA in 2012, and was enamoured with the spiritual resonance of stillness that Boonma created through his work. Boonma’s works instil an opportunity through space and object, to assist healing and peace—alternate perceptions of realising stillness. This inspired such engagement in my artworks, in particular number five, *Focus*, an artwork that sets out to evoke stillness as a conscious experience. *Focus* sets an opportunity in an environment to experience a moment of meditative focus and awareness and that becomes a personal space for reflection.

**Section 2: Technology and Aesthetics**

Alongside investigating how artists have represented and produced sensations of stillness, the contextual research for this project also involved identifying how artists have produced aesthetic expressions through the use of technology (technology-mediated art). From the harsh sterility of Pe Lang and Zimoun to the warm beauty of Gregorio Botta and Nam June Paik’s subversive works, there are myriad examples that can be called upon to address the research objective: overcoming the perception/use of gimmicks of technology.

Interfaces, interaction and phenomenological experiences can be produced by ‘lo-fi’ technology, with reduced complexity and an analogue approach⁴, as well as high-fi technologies. A lo-fi approach has been chosen by technology artists, such as German artist Pe Lang and Swiss artist Zimoun, who work in an analogue environment with the mechanical attributes of the work on display. Artworks such as Pe Lang’s *Falling Objects No. 60–67* (Fig. 16) and Zimoun’s *23 Prepared DC-Motors* (Fig. 17) have motors that move, electromagnets that pick up, then drop, objects and so on. Lo-fi timing and control circuits used by the artists require a form of programming; however, it is not dis-similar to digital programming. Analogue functionality exploits/responds to mechatronics (mechanical electronics) and produces an aesthetic that fully exposes what is considered to be the soullessness of the technology. In this regard, the works of Pe Land and Zimoun might be considered to be a critique on Western consumer society. With an overall aesthetic that is clean and refined, perhaps even clinical, and a repetition that occurs through multiple clones and ongoing movements, an encircling unrelenting attack by technology in vast numbers is suggested in their work.

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⁴ Analogue electronics incrementally manipulate voltage to perform a variety of functions, whereas digital electronics use set voltage (Logic) values—0 Volts DC (binary 0, Low) to (typically) 5 Volts DC (binary 1, High), and ‘cleans’ any incoming analogue signal of incidental nuances of phenomena.
There are reminiscences here of Walter Benjamin’s *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), with multiple (art) reproductions, in production lines. The aesthetic appearance, clinical precision of action and lo-fi fabrication of the artworks denounce gimmicky qualities as they produce *kinetics for kinetics’ sake* in the artworks. These kinetic, sound-based new media sculptures produce engaging, provocative installations.

In a similar way, artist Rebecca Horn presents technology *up-front* in the artwork as implied in Figure 18. Her working preference is for analogue equipment, such as motors, solenoids (mechanical switches) and mechanical gears (which are just out of shot in Fig. 18). She tends to show a beauty in the mechanical nature of technology as she seamlessly integrates it into a spatial relationship with the gallery.

Horn’s aesthetic shares that of Pe Lang and Zimoun in that she does not hide or encase the technology out of view; however, these authors work with multiples, whereas her art pieces are primarily singular. With the mechanics on show and capturing our attention, Horn avoids gimmickry through an aesthetic regard for the intricate complexity of mechanical operations.
The idea of mechanical operation is refined in *Anello (Ring)* (Figs. 19 and 20) by Italian artist Gregorio Botta. His lo-fi artwork employs simple rules of physics and reflected light on water. Using an electric motor to create a current and flow of water in an incised concrete ring, a shimmer is produced without the use of a data projector. This is the attraction of the artwork: its poetics are realised through technological simplicity. It uses new media and technology, albeit lo-fi, to address the objective of creating a sense of *stillness* through kinetic art.


Through greater complexity, albeit using analogue technology, Nam June Paik (Korea/US) critiques the social and cultural transposition of the TV set as a new religious or meditative icon. Televisions included in his working palette are hacked, manipulated and adjusted, as they are re-purposed into new media sculptures.

Paik foresaw social issues with technology, particularly in the medium of television. During the era when these artworks were made, television was in its infancy, and its potential and power were controlled by powerful stakeholders. Paik subverts this idiom in his work to suggest that society question this disseminator of information. In *Zen for TV* (Fig. 21), Paik dissolves information into the original electrical phenomenon—light. In *TV Buddha* (Fig. 23), he both employs and critiques the same technology as a Buddha stares at the screen and, in *Zen for Film* (Fig. 22), clear leader film runs in a loop of visual silence, with only visual ephemera such as dust and scratches on the film. Reminiscent of John Cage’s silent music score 4’33”, where the participant/audience experiences the silence of the theatre space with nuances of incidental sounds coming to the fore, as Heike Helfert notes, the visual silence of this work encourages the viewer ‘to oppose the flood of images from outside with one’s own interior images’ (n.d.). *Zen for Film* is an example of art provocatively creating a
representation of *stillness*, reflection and contemplation: one of this project’s research objectives relating to the research sub-question *stillness as conscious experience*.

A readymade approach is also adopted by American video artist Bill Viola, who typically works with multichannel high-end video productions presented on large screens.

Influenced by Zen, in *Heaven and Earth* (Figs. 24–26) he pares back the ‘screen’ to analogue (TV) vacuum tubes. The aesthetic Viola has imbued in the work through this (de-)construction might be compared with Paik’s lo-fi aesthetic and his critique of the medium through facing images. However, with the video sequence on the lower screen showing Viola’s newborn son and the video reflected onto it from the upper screen showing Viola’s mother on her deathbed, it prompts a contemplative response. Viola plays out the timeline of life with singular events of birth and death, collapsing time and space to reflect *stillness* through poïēsis. *Heaven and Earth*, keyed by Viola’s understanding of Zen, is a unique example of how the grounding context—Zen—is not overtly present, but imbues the work nonetheless. The lo-fi analogue approach supports my direction for aesthetic consideration; I can understand that with the use of vacuum tubes, an electro-static (attraction) aura is created by each tube that will attract an integration of this electro-static energy between each tube, seemingly a further metaphysical metaphor for the *perpetuation of love* (attraction) is suggested by this, which is unavailable with digital LCD screen technology. It is through analogue technology that layers of meaning can be applied, encouraging the viewer to
consider the specifics of the medium and reflect on the narrative that can be derived beyond gimmick and cliché. This approach assisted my research investigation of the sub-question: *how we might represent stillness as a reflexive experience?*


Section 3: Sport in Art—Art in Sport

For the contextual framing of the artworks in this research, it is important to consider examples of existing works that take sport as their theme. I have adopted archery as an art medium, in particular, the Kyudo style. As discussed in the *Stillness and Embodied Experience* in the *Silent Koan* section, this is in support of using archery as an embodied experience of stillness, and challenging reason through juxtaposition. The following artists and their artworks provide context for using archery as an art medium, and suggests ways to overcome a sport connotation.

From an artist’s perspective, sport may be a contentious subject because it is often perceived to be diametrically opposed to, or in competition with, the creative arts in terms of audience, funding and promotion. While sport and art are not an obvious mix, there are examples of it, and they provide precedents that help to frame my approach to archery-focused works. For example, the biennially awarded Australian Basil Sellers Art Prize (founded in 2008) is open to artists who unite art and sport. Panel judge, Chris McAuliffe, explains the relationship of sport and Australian culture on the prize’s website:
Not everyone would agree that sport is the key to understanding human experience. But it’s certainly true that Australians connect sport with anything from community life and personal achievement through to historical and political controversies (2013, para. 2).

Pertinent examples include art by Matthew Barney (US), Catherine or Kate (Aus) and Fiona Tan (Netherlands), who adopt an integrated sport/art practice. In his *Drawing Restraint* project (1987–present), Matthew Barney, an American university football player who also studied arts, analyses the position of the artist/athlete and vice-versa (Figs. 27 and 28). Of note is Figure 28, page 1, where Barney claims: ‘The athlete is the alchemist’, and goes on to suggest a working process through which sporting activity can accomplish transcendental perfection. Barney’s claim resonates with my intention—to achieve stillness through Kyudo archery technique.


Barney has used abseiling to create performance-drawing artworks (Fig. 27), has climbed around the interior of the Guggenheim museum, utilised football stadiums as
performance sites with marching bands and cast Para-Olympian Aimee Mullins as several characters in his *Cremaster 3* performance videos (1994–2002).

Barney applies athleticism and symbolism in theatrical orchestration of large-scale theatrical productions-come-art performances. It was Barney’s influence that provided me with the confidence to explore integrating archery in my research as performance art.

An Australian example of athletics as art is provided by Catherine or Kate. In a performance piece entitled *Duel*, 2010, (Fig. 29), the artists engaged in a ten-minute fencing bout, performed live at the *Fresh Cut* exhibition at the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2012). As Rachael Haynes explains:

> Leading up to the bout, the pair undertook formal lessons and investigated the history of fencing as both a competitive sport and as staged conflict in theatrical settings (2012, para. 4).

The performance was recorded by small cameras attached to each artist’s wrist, with a resulting three-channel video placing the viewer amongst the tension (Fig. 30).

![Fig. 29. Catherine or Kate, *Duel*, 2010, performance still. ©Catherine or Kate.](image)

![Fig. 30. Catherine or Kate, *Duel*, 2010, three channel video, still. ©Catherine or Kate.](image)
The professional attitude and dedication of the artists to their performance through formal lessons, research and presentation was a primary inspiration for me as an artist working in a multidisciplinary genre. Both artists challenged the concept of art as performance by including athletic activity, and this directly challenged the audience’s perception of art. The video sequences also provided an echo and reflexive opportunity to re-engage with the performance. Whether the artists intended to create simulacra as ‘critical fiction’ (Liljegren, 2013), is to be further researched. The artists approach to simulacra would then dictate the origin for the phenomenological experience for the audience.

Cultural traditions can define social activity and the development of its citizens in society. Fiona Tan’s art video, Saint Sebastian (Fig. 31), investigates one such cultural tradition. It presents a form of Japanese Zen archery called Kyudo, and in an accompanying video, female participants at tournaments perform Kyudo. Kyudo is performed as a sport, although, as mentioned in the Zen in the Art of Archery section, its primary and original application is as a method for meditation and attaining Zen awareness, through what Herrigel claims as ‘the artless art’ (1981, p. 17). Tan explains that the context of the event is a ‘coming of age ritual’ for the young female competitors in the tournament (Godfrey, 2004). Tan has represented Kyudo beyond its sport context and connotation with artistic sensibilities through film, sound and editing techniques, which explore the cultural ritual and the sensual qualities of the act.⁵

Fig. 31. Tan, Saint Sebastian, 2001, two channel video. ©Fiona Tan. Courtesy the artist and Frith Street Gallery, London.

⁵Tan’s European titling of the artwork refers to cultural differences, ‘since archery takes on very different associations in Kyudo’ (Adamou, 2014, para. 3).
As I have discussed in the theoretical review, my work aligns to a social benefit and, with the support of Engaged Buddhism, I realise my work through concrete action. Similarly, (the art movement) Fluxus, which extends on from Duchamp’s conceptualism and aesthetic, reflects Zen sensibilities:

The pedagogical function of Fluxus artworks is to help us practice life; what we “learn” from Fluxus is how to function as an ever-changing self that is part of an ever-changing world (Baas, 2011, p. 2).

Of note, a Fluxus event included an archery performance at the New York Craft Museum in 1967. The Fluxus event Kill Paper not People appropriates a Samurai warrior (actor) shooting arrows into a paper curtain, with varying effects occurring. Here, archery is incorporated as conceptual performance by removing its inherent violent opportunity and weaponised connotation towards mankind and re-contextualising it to suggest an alternate perception of archery (Figs. 32 and 33).

Merging two practices and cultures, these artists provide models through which sport can be appropriated by artwork. Barney combines athleticism, a personal spiritual (alchemical) development and an aim of Zen practice with art, whereas Catherine or Kate adopt an athlete’s focus to their artwork Duel, Fiona Tan presents the ritualistic quality of Kyudo archery with artistic sensitivity and Fluxus adopts an alternate conceptual approach to remove inherent signification. Each provides a precedent for archery as performance, and
each has provided inspiration for me as an artist to reflect the capacity of sport, and its inherent motion, to produce and represent embodied stillness.

Exhibition Experiences for Understanding the Evocation of Atmospheres

I attended *The Red Queen* exhibition at Tasmania’s Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in February 2014. MONA is privately owned, and the design and curation of the gallery is heavily influenced by owner David Walsh—a mathematician with curious traits and idiosyncrasies. However, any personal peculiarities have not been a detriment to the outcome of the gallery; rather, relative to the state-administered *white cube* style gallery, its atmosphere is enhanced. The architectural design brief included the notions of *threat* and *tension*. These characteristics are apparent in the narrow walkways, low lighting, almost claustrophobic spaces, the artworks themselves and the angular forms applied to space.

What I found remarkable about MONA were the purpose-built spaces for individual artworks. Much care and attention was applied in considering the artwork’s visual impact. Wall panels were inset with niches to hang works set into the wall space with low lighting. Rooms were purpose-built to a scale and proportion to suit an artwork’s form and size. Walkways guided the viewer into spaces to experience the artwork with maximum impact. It is here that I was inspired to further consider the presentation of my artworks and installations in terms of lighting, spatial placement and hanging.

What I was particularly taken by was the atmosphere that accompanies the spaces through the consideration of lighting. An example of its effect on the art can be seen in *Berlin Buddha* (Fig. 34) by Zhang Huan. It is made from ash, which slowly crumbles away when viewers walk by and disturb the air of the space immediately surrounding the work. The aluminium cast mould sits opposite, seemingly forlorn at the loss of its copy. Huan came to ash through an experience visiting a Temple in Shanghai. He writes:

> The temple floor was covered with ash, which leaked from the giant incense burner. Seeing this image of ash conjured a feeling inside of me: it was a beautiful material and it moved me greatly. These ash remains speak to the fulfillment of millions of hopes, dreams and blessings (2007, para. 1).

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6 QUT Architecture Professor Jim Gall discussed with me the architectural brief for the gallery, which his colleague worked on for MONA.
Here, Huan speaks of the Buddhist notion of impermanence, and the devotee’s perception of a compassionate experience when in attendance at the temple. The artwork, for me, was a powerful experience emphasised by the illumination of the space. The artworks seemingly hover in a void of darkness.

Fig. 34. Huan, Berlin Buddha, 2007. ©Zhang Huan. Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

At the International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA) in Sydney in 2013, Jon Drummond’s work, Twittering Machine (Fig. 35), employed an Arduino microcontroller, plastic rods and singing bowls, which assist Buddhist meditation practice. Long plastic rods were attached to the Arduino, which moved when tweets were received. In-turn, the rods struck the bowls to create a bell sound. The presentation was explicit: the technology was on show and suspended by wires, with the bowls set on a finished wooden plinth. The Buddhist singing bowls seemed out of context and were used as an aesthetic opportunity for effect. However, the work was intriguing for its integration of technology and networking with kinetics. The singing bowl’s sounds’ provided an intimate atmosphere similarly to a temple-like environment during meditation practice, and keyed my interest to incorporate my personal singing bowl in my work.

A second work, presented in the Redfern Carriageworks space, was Ryoji Ikeda’s Test Pattern (Fig. 36). It produced a monumental media experience, which was an overstimulated assault on the senses. To reference my journal notes: ‘Test pattern – Huge!! Strobing, sound was intense. The space was enormous’ (personal journal 5, 13-6-13). The work was like nothing I had previously experienced, and it left an indelible mark in relation to how media
art can affect the viewer. Inspiration taken from this artwork was the scale of the technology in relation to the exhibition space. Two elements–sound and video–in the hands of Ikeda, showed masterful use of a voluminous space, and aligned with my opportunity to exhibit in a large space. It therefore focused my attention on considerations when installing my exhibition.

Fig. 35. Drummond, *Twittering Machine*, 2013. © Jon Drummond. Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Conclusion

This contextual review has covered key areas and artists’ practices that have influenced the research and helped to form my responses to the research sub-questions in the associated topics of stillness as an embodied, spatial and phenomenological experience, as a reflexive experience, as a representational record and as a conscious experience. The topic, *Technology and Aesthetics*, has also been discussed in relation to pertinent artists. Each topic in the contextual review has affected directions in the art studio practice, and has illuminated alternate ways to consider stillness in artworks. While many more artists have focused on the topic of stillness, here the discussion has focused particularly on the various approaches of Buddhist artists. Such artists have taken quite different approaches; for example, Montien Boonma and Zhang Huan (mentioned in the discussion of MONA) use Buddhist symbolisms and references in their artworks, whereas Lindy Lee practices Buddhist meditation to attain

Fig. 36. Ikeda, *Test Pattern [no. 5]*, 2013. Installation image from Carriageworks. Commissioned by Carriageworks & The International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA). © Ryoji Ikeda. Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.
creative inspiration for her Buddhist artworks. Paik, Viola and Fluxus also contribute a Buddhist approach to the artwork and processes of making. Each artist provides examples of how to effectively adopt Buddhist perspectives in support of stillness. They each have provided keys to effect the multifarious nature of stillness in my artworks.

Sport in Art—Art in Sport (Section 3), makes an argument for the use of sport in art; it was noted that, paradoxically, sport appears to be diametrically opposed to art; however, a merging of cultures can be considered. What is particularly important in the inclusion of sport as art and art as sport is the second paradox that arises—momentary stillness in motion. Finally, the curation of MONA provided inspiration for the presentation of my artworks through considering the opportunity of instilling an atmosphere in the space. Lighting, the placement of artworks, and purpose built walling assisted to evoke an atmosphere of stillness in the examination exhibition in QUT’s Creative Precinct The Block exhibition space in October 2014.

Each artist and organisation critically discussed in the contextual review provides theoretical and contextual value by way of inspiration and research impetus for situating a research trajectory into the nature, qualities, representation, conditions and the affect of stillness through art.
Methodology

Practice-led Research

The overarching methodology of this project is practice-led research. Graeme Sullivan aligned practice-led research with other forms of research when he argued that, ‘the goal of [art practice as research in] constructing new knowledge can be arrived at from different points of view’ (2010, p. xiii). Sullivan continues: ‘visual art practice [as research] is a form of human understanding whose cognitive processes are distributed throughout the various media, languages, and contexts used to make meaning from images and objects’ (Ibid. p. xxiii). Subsequently, practice-led research entails, in brief, pursuing new knowledge and ‘human understanding’ (Ibid.) through iterative studio investigation, which, in turn, feeds back into the research pursuit and impacts upon the direction of the inquiry. In other words, practice-led research synthesises theoretical layers and meaning with material embodiment and visual language. A cyclical, reflexive approach produces a research trajectory, involves the synthesis of theory and practice, and leads to unanticipated findings.

More specifically, I have pursued what Jillian Hamilton and Luke Jaaniste refer to as evocative (art) practice; ‘that the research intent, and the role of the artefact, is to produce affect and resonance through evocation’ (2009, p. 4). Such research is qualitative in nature, as they go on to explain, ‘because it is poetically and purposefully ambiguous and irreducible in meaning, the knowledge, insight and embodied experience that is evoked by an artwork is not consistent or measurable’ (Ibid. p. 11). Hamilton and Jaaniste distinguish between art and design research, which they describe as evocative and effective, respectively, but they go on to argue that this is not a dichotomous distinction but a spectrum of practices, which may be synthesised by practitioners into a hybrid approach for particular ends.

Evocative art practice can assist the approach of poiēsis and such is the case in this research and its investigation of stillness, its qualities and its conditions. I have employed art practice to investigate how, given that new technologies tend to give rise to disruption, we might evoke an experience of stillness that encourages people to consider the nature and possibilities of stillness. Based on experiences of stillness, theoretical findings formed the initial impetus and direction for studio research; studio findings fed back into, and prompted, an extension of theoretical investigations, which, in turn, initiated new directions for creative practice.
This project involved a form of practice that is produced and is also to be comprehended as a representation as well as at an embodied level. Barrett and Bolt (2010) and Merleau-Ponty (1992) offer a theoretical understanding of art practice that adopts a personal, experiential approach and involves an intimate awareness of process and experiential learning. Barrett writes:

Because the approaches of studio enquiry often contradict what is generally expected of research…the impact of practice as research is still to be…fully understood and realised (Barrett & Bolt, 2010, p. 3).

This, of course relates to practice-led research on a personal, as well as a broader level. In terms of this research, moments arose during my research that were not expected, and led to alternate studio approaches that could be considered somewhat unorthodox for an arts practice—including meditation and archery—which both contributed to embodied knowledge.

It is also important to note that in new media art practice, methodologies from both art and design must be employed. An arc of research pursues the evocative, but is punctuated by predetermined, goal-oriented design processes. In practice, activities must be considered and planned not in a sequential or hierarchical way, but as complementary support for the preceding and following stages.

This dual approach appeared to produce parallel findings during the studio investigations, and it was only through reflexive observation and analysis of procedures, that I began to recognise and articulate my negotiation between these methods as a new media artist—a process I have come to call conscious bridging, which is discussed in detail in the section Unfolding of the Practice as a Conscious Bridging (part 1). To provide a foundation for understanding this concept I will first outline the mixed methods drawn from art and design practice that have been employed.

Methods

Interdisciplinary Practice

This research encompassed multiple theoretical perspectives—the connections of stillness to theology, art theory, aesthetics and poiēsis—as well as new media art’s
relationship to phenomenology, kinetics and technology. It has also incorporated a broad range of media forms (installation, sculpture, text, image, performance, screen projection, etcetera) to communicate meaning and evoke experiences. Given this spectrum of enquiry, interdisciplinary practice was adopted as the primary methodology.

Interdisciplinary practice necessarily involves a mixed-method approach. Several different methods have been applied across four main levels of enquiry in this research. In brief, these four tiers can be described as follows. Critical theory supported the critical analysis used to interpret theoretical texts and apply an order of understanding. As explained by Immanuel Kant:

If our faculty of knowledge makes any such addition, it may be that we are not in a position to distinguish it from the raw material, until with long practice of attention we have become skilled in separating it (1982, p. 42).

Undergraduate and honours studio practice and critique guided the contextual review of artworks, which, in turn, influenced the direction and form of the research. Art practice and experimentation with concepts and form were pursued, which were then complemented by pure technical research and a logical process of technical activity, design and development (i.e. prototyping, testing, refining, construction and fault-finding). Reflexive practice and intuitive processes were employed during the studio investigation to bring to light undiscovered meaning, refined expression and new directions for the research objectives. Further depth of reflexivity was pursued through embodied experiences involving meditation and archery training and this, in turn, influenced the concepts, aesthetics and form of the practice. Inherently, practice-led research asks us to consider alternate options and, as Sullivan offers, ‘different points of view’ (2010, p. xiii), to build on the foundation of our enquiry. The interdependency of analysis of theoretical findings and pursuit of outcomes in practice was, therefore, incremental and its development documented through process writing and, ultimately, in this exegetical form.

New media art is often, by its nature, interdisciplinary. It involves working across multi-modalities; moreover, the use of mixed media within a new media artwork requires embracing the skills, practices and processes of multiple disciplines. It also often involves collaboration across disciplines (with musicians, performers, programmers, etcetera) to pursue a common goal and work cooperatively to achieve it. This research project is interdisciplinary
in both senses. The many skills I employed in the design and construction of the artworks include woodworking for sculptural construction, metalworking for component fabrication, electronic engineering for circuit design and construction, programming for microprocessor control coding, videographer and editing skills for video sequences, VJing skills for interactive video control, and fine art (aesthetic) expertise for conceiving of, and producing, the art object, installation and setup of the finished artwork.

Collaboration occurred with dancers, sound artists, exhibition installers, and health and safety officers working on the project. Working across disciplines in collaboration can create challenges in communication and the interpretation of details and requirements, as each discipline requires its own approach, ordered sequence and knowledge of tools and equipment. Continual negotiation between discipline methods and processes is required by identifying and locating alternate knowledge and logic in the practice, and then planning their use for effective and efficient outcomes.

Working across what might be described as diverse theoretical positions as well as diverse practices in what might be designated art and design mediums and methods, required a constant reconsideration and readjustment of knowledge, practices and processes, as will be discussed shortly in Unfolding of the Practice as a Conscious Bridging (part 1).

**Reflexivity**

As explained in the Methodology section, experiences of stillness formed the initial impetus for the research and theoretical findings instigated the direction for studio practice. Studio findings then fed back into theoretical investigations, which, in turn, prompted new directions for the creative practice. Figure 37 demonstrates this approach by showing the reflexive nature of the process. Reflexivity provided a methodological environment that instigated a state of flux and iteration from which the research could emerge and develop responsively (as opposed to being pre-determined, structured, static and confined). This cyclical process is what Pierre Bourdieu (2008) defines as *reflexivity*.

In *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* (2008), Bourdieu clarifies that methods of reflexivity do not ‘indulge in the genre of autobiography’ (Ibid. p. 1). Instead, he positions reflexivity as an objective observation, one of distancing and looking at one’s process of action, investigation and doing. This dual approach to evaluation (looking inwards and outwards) means that reflection upon results loops back into the practice as the arc of a forward trajectory. An
ongoing process of analysis incrementally drives the direction of literature and contextual review, which, in turn, drives the practice forward.

There are various understandings of reflexivity, from David Bloor’s self-reference, to Peter L. Berger’s self-awareness (Bourdieu & Wacquaint, 1992, p. 37), but in this research project, Bourdieu’s notion of objective reflexivity played an important role in the qualitative approach of the methodology of practice-led research. Bourdieu illustrates his approach in his own practice as follows:

The most visible sign of the conversion of the gaze that is implied in adopting the posture of the observer was the intensive use I then made of photographs, maps, ground plans and statistics: everything was thrown in the pot (2008, pp. 61-62).

Fig. 37. Practice-led Research Method. Author’s diagram.
The benefit of Bourdieu’s approach for practice-led research is taken up by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt:

Because of its inbuilt reflexivity, the emergent aspect of artistic research methodology may be viewed as a positive feature to be factored into the design of research projects (2010, p. 6).

Figure 38 shows in detail the reflexive process of analysis, as explained by Barrett: ‘reflexivity demands that both the researcher and her/his methods be submitted to the same questions that are asked of the object of enquiry’ (2010, p. 6). As seen in the figure 38 diagram, an iterative process continues through the analysis, although as mentioned (on page 50), this sets an environment for a state of flux to transpire and enrich the research development.

In this project, Pierre Bourdieu’s process of objective reflexivity, in which ‘everything was thrown in the pot’ (2008, pp. 61-62), was supported by daily journaling (writing and drawing) and re-reading to make sense of the unfolding and of ‘being in-the-game’ (Barrett & Bolt, 2010, p. 4). Tools for capturing process (for driving the research and as an extrinsic method for reflection and evaluation of the outcomes of the research) also included a number of established techniques in practice-led studio research including:

1. Photo/video documentation
2. Exhibition and critiquing
3. Technology investigation and iterative prototyping
4. Presentation of artworks-in-progress at milestones to facilitate critical feedback, peer review, and participant/viewer comments
5. Online website and video of work in progress to attract critique and feedback

An attitude of reflexivity aided the achievement of the project’s objectives in a number of ways. Firstly, reviewing each journal and reflexive media form (website & video journaling) has provided insights into points of potential redirection, which helped to identify opportunities to further refine theory and practice in an iterative and incremental way. As discussed in the contextual review, exhibition critiquing, which was documented in journals—an active reflexive method—provided unique insights for reflexively understanding
artworks. Process videos uploaded to YouTube provided an opportunity for reflexive feedback from viewers.

Secondly, it has provided a method for evaluation of the peaks and troughs of the research, the moments of crystallisation and of reconsideration, and this is all recounted in the following section, *Unfolding of the Practice as Experiments in Stillness (part 2)*.

Thirdly, reflexivity provided an outcomes analysis tool for exploring the implications of the research. The general process of analysis is shown in Figure 38. This process provides an opportunity for understanding and organising tasks associated with the research, as the researcher applies a reflexive approach.

![Fig. 38. Method for Data Analysis. Author’s diagram.](image)

Here, an analysis of the outcomes and findings was achieved through an ongoing review against the research objectives of the research, and articulating the findings in the exegetical writing. The concrete contributions of the research to an ongoing research
trajectory in the field of new media art and the representation of stillness is detailed in the section, *Reception and Reflection on the Outcomes*.

Finally, the process of reflexivity has led to new insights into the methodology of interdisciplinary new media art. This insight, which I refer to as *conscious bridging*, is taken up in its own section, which follows.
When consumed with creating artwork and involved in its, at times, unique processes of making, one can perceive emerging forms of originality. This discussion is a case in point. By synthesising a unique studio experience with theoretical support, the valuable contribution of this emergent insight can appeal to a broader interdisciplinary practice.

Implementing Bourdieu’s notion of objective reflexivity enabled unique insight to be achieved. As noted in the previous section, through the process of reflexivity, the subject (artist) becomes once removed from the investigation to gain an objective bird’s-eye view of the practice. But it is more than this. In turning reflexivity back on the methodology and looking at my practice, not rather than in my practice, a clearer and more accurate use of Bourdieu’s reflexivity could be enacted. Here, I draw upon the explanation of Loïc Wacquant, who writes:

Reflexivity does not involve reflection of the subject on the subject…it entails, rather, the systematic exploration of…the organizational and cognitive structure of the discipline…it is not the individual unconscious of the researcher but the epistemological unconscious of his discipline that must be unearthed (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 40–41).

When implementing reflexivity in this way, it is a process to review the activity of studio investigation as process. From this perspective, multimodal practices and methods came to be defined as knowledge structures, epistemologies and research processes, and a new (original) awareness of the interdisciplinary methodologies of practice-led research began to emerge.

To put this in more concrete terms, and as expressed in the Introduction and Methodology sections, in new media art practice, methods from both art and design must be employed. An arc of emergent practice-led research pursues what Hamilton and Jaaniste refer to as an ‘evocative’ or artistic intention (2009). However, at the same time, this arc is punctuated by predetermined, sequenced, goal-oriented, design processes (what Hamilton and Jaaniste refer to as ‘effective’ research) (2009). We see the latter approach occur in, for example, the design of circuit boards that are inherent elements of an artwork. In practice, this duality of evocative and effective intentions and art and design methods means that activities
are driven on one hand by logic and predictive sequences and on the other by intuitively listening to nuances of ephemera. However, these two approaches must be considered and planned not in a sequential or hierarchical way, but in a complementary manner that ensures support for and transition between art and design processes.

Bourdieu’s notion of reflexivity has assisted my understanding of the relationship formed between the seemingly dichotomous practices of art and design in the pursuit of new media art. Through reflexive observation and an analysis of procedure, I began to articulate my negotiation between the methods of art and design and to understand how I navigate between their different knowledge and effects. This is a process that I have come to call conscious bridging.

Conscious bridging is the recognition of, or rather a maturing awareness of, an overarching negotiation between dichotomous (art and design) methodological approaches required of new media practice. It involves the integration of modalities as a harmonious practice. When enacting a series of moves between types of (art and design) activities, conscious bridging is the flow that enables a smooth transition between mental and cognitive thought states. It involves being cognisant of an overview of the research intent and the task at hand, as well as two distinctive (art and design) paths of action that need to occur, and stepping between these states while merging them as a fluent process. This requires mental agility and nurturing an ease of process between intentions to ensure the seamless flow of activity. Figure 39 introduces the concept, which will be explained in the following discussion in the Recognition section.

Fig. 39. Conscious Bridging in Practice-led Research Process. Author’s diagram.
This leads us to question how we might go about reconciling the dichotomous methods and approaches of new media art through conscious bridging? Conscious bridging occurs through three core activities, namely, recognition, location and planning, which are discussed in the following section.

**Recognition**

The first level of cognition necessary for enabling conscious bridging is recognising the differences between the two processes; that is, the difference between poetics of practice and applied knowledge, or what Giorgio Agamben (through reference to Greek philosophy) refers to as poiēsis and praxis (1999, p. 68).

More specifically, Agamben defines praxis as productive activity and the ‘manifestation of a will that produces a concrete effect…(prattein, “to do” in the sense of acting)…[It is the work] of the artist and the craftsman as well as that of the workman’ (Ibid, p. 68) and so one that draws upon explicit knowledge. On the other hand, he relates to poiēsis as a function of intuition that involves ‘the fact that something passed from non-being to being (poiein, “to pro-duce” in the sense of bringing into being)’ (Ibid. p. 68). Martin Heidegger explains it as a higher-order concept and ‘the dialogue of the divine’, and refers to its association with the term poetry (1977, p. 34). Poiēsis traverses the meaning ‘to create’ (through or from) and ‘to produce an effect’ through a form of tacit knowledge.

Barbara Bolt suggests that ‘tacit knowledge provides a very specific way of understanding the world, one that is grounded in material practice’ (Barrett & Bolt, 2010, p. 29). She explains it through the example of artist David Hockney, of whom she writes, ‘his engagement with the tools and technologies of drawing practice produced its own kind of sight or logic’ (Barrett & Bolt, 2010, p. 30). Estelle Barrett defines tacit knowledge as ‘embodied knowledge or “skill” developed and applied in practice and apprehended intuitively’ (Ibid. p. 4). Michael Polanyi explains tacit knowledge as ‘more than we can tell’ (1997, p. 136), and continues to explain his point with the example of knowing a person’s face amongst many; however, we are unable to explain how. Here, we might understand tacit knowledge as distinct from explicit knowledge, with its own kind of logic.

Applying these dichotomous terms to my own research project, I began to more clearly recognise the distinctions. Explicit knowledge and praxis are required and applied to designing and hardwiring circuitry, to write the operation code and to upload it to microcontroller boards, which control kinetics and interactivity. For example, to technically
draw a printed circuit board design using open source software requires learning the software’s application and logic processes, and applying explicit knowledge (say laws of physics and mathematics), which are applied to effectively create the design. This is an example of productive activity, or praxis.

Tacit knowledge and poiēsis, on the other hand, is experienced through studio investigation when absorbed in the application of art making, engaged intuitively with the materiality and ideas of the practice (Fig 39).

The following describes my practice in relation to Bourdieu’s reflexivity, which led to my realisation of the distinctions between such knowledge and practices in my disciplinary field. Daily journal entries and photographic/video documentation assist the discipline of reflexivity, as a feedback loop, and objective distancing required for self and project analysis. What became apparent during various reviews of journal entries were instances of frustrations resulting in procrastination and unwillingness to continue resolving tasks. My understanding at the time of documenting was critical of this practice, believing I was ignoring my obligations to finish a task; however, this understanding was far from the truth. Upon a more broad, retrospective review of journal entries, the ebb and flow of activity appeared to be supporting a quality of work, albeit in a delayed timeframe. Coming back to something with fresh eyes is a common approach; however, for me, activities moved around in similar areas of technical requirements. For example, when unable to solve an electronic fault on equipment in a repair activity (an explicit knowledge and praxical task), I would move, shifting task focus\(^7\) to recording sound and editing for an interactive sculptures sound sequence (Figs. 40–42).

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\(^7\) This practice finds parallels with the theory of displacement activity/behaviour, however the difference is a conscious awareness of the need for shifting the task.
This became a logical application activity, although creative and intuitive elements were included that merged explicit knowledge and praxis—using sound editing software—with tacit knowledge and poiēsis—creating sound sequences. With the activity complete, I would return to the equipment repair task and solve the issue with less frustration (Fig. 42). It seemed that an external activity/exercise assisted the mental clarity required for the former problem and it appeared to act as a primer for (re)engaging with the original task.

In this above example, it became apparent that there are varying modes of thinking involved in undertaking the particular tasks in this research project, depending upon whether there is effective or evocative intent. Recognition of such multimodal processes assisted with the awareness that within one’s practice and research, it is necessary to differentiate between the types of knowledge being applied at any moment. From this initial position of ‘recognising’ differentiated methods, we can begin to locate where, and how, their underlying knowledge functions.

Locating

The second level contributing to the awareness of conscious bridging is locating where the recognised alternate logics and knowledge—praxis and explicit knowledge/poiēsis and tacit knowledge—occur and may occur in one’s practice (Fig. 39).

The artist/designer needs to be fully aware of their materials, their uses and what knowledge applies to produce the desired outcomes. Mediums and materials, as well as our perspective on their uses, can define what knowledge we require for their productive and material use. A new media artist, however, employs a range of mediums in their practice (in my case, this includes art materials, readymade (found) objects and technology (circuit boards, computers, video etcetera) and the line can become blurred as they merge together without separation or distinction. Different methods could be deployed in their realisation as art or design materials within a multidisciplinary practice. Therefore, conscious bridging is required to locate the attributes of materials in terms of realisation and use.

My practice offers an example of the need to locate both effect and affect in materiality. When designing technology, quality is paramount for continued and faultless operation. A standard of perfection is assumed and expected by the consumer, and provided by the manufacturer. My practice, therefore, includes accurate design, craftsmanship, refined finish and professional presentation. The skills required have included learning software applications to draft circuit board designs from prototyping development, learning several
code languages to effect control programs of microprocessors and computer scripts and researching network systems to program and accurately control multiple hardware. All require adopting standards of language and logic to enact functionality—explicit knowledge/praxis.

Contrary to these constraints of standards, other studio activities have allowed more direct freedom of expression to permeate the artwork—tacit knowledge/poiēsis. Analogue technologies (somewhat classed as redundant antiques) were sourced and used to provide serendipity and texture to the artworks and to refresh the viewer with an alternate and paradoxically new experience. Making wax models for bronze casting, with inspiration from works by Jasper Johns, similarly lessened the tension of structure and purpose around the work. The criteria of quality were engaged to ensure the bronze casting was successful; however, the materiality was subject to liminal effect or a transitional state. Paradoxically, attention to detail in the final finish of the bronze meant that it was in keeping with a handcrafted result. In such ways, each artwork saw attention to praxis and poiēsis within their materiality, producing an outcome that married aesthetics and function.

I concur with Barbara Bolt’s reading of Material Thinking by Paul Carter (2004) in which she defines the logic of practice, writing:

it is in the joining of hand, eye and mind that material thinking occurs, but it is necessarily in relation to the materials and processes of practice, rather than through the “talk”, that we can understand the nature of material thinking (Barrett & Bolt, 2010, p. 30)\textsuperscript{8}.

As with many disciplines of design and creativity, there is a logical process to managing the successful outcome of a project. Put simply, new media artists need to differentiate between the logics and materiality of disciplinary practice. Conscious bridging involves reflexive observation of and productive negotiation of dichotomous logics in project tasks, as we think through design process and, at the same time, think materially.

In reviewing my journals, I have discovered that I have invariably linked design approaches (coding, hacking, modifying or retro-fitting found objects) with the alternate paradigm of art activity, which involves its own kind of logic, thus enacting an alternate

\textsuperscript{8} This discourse can perhaps be aligned with Hannah Arendt’s thesis in The Human Condition (1998) on labour, work and action, and Heidegger’s discussion on handlability in Being and Time (2008). However, such a historical investigation of this concept is not within the scope of this discussion and I refer the reader to Bolt for further understandings of these theories.
awareness. Knowing where the design and art lines digress and need to be merged, and flowing between them, requires conscious bridging.

Planning

When dichotomous logic and knowledge in a research project have been recognised and located, the third level—a planned process of activity—can then be established to assist the efficiency and quality of production. As explained, explicit knowledge and praxis, and tacit knowledge and poieis, each require an individual logic that needs to be planned to complement the transition between tasks—quite like moving across stepping-stones (Fig. 39).

I will explain what I mean through an example that illustrates how I have applied the conscious bridging concept to planning a design task. My project required the design and manufacture of a printed circuit board (PCB)—an entirely explicit knowledge/praxis task. As I had been previously engaged in studio/poieis activity, I first had to transition into the design task. Drawing the design loosely, a hand-drawn schematic was developed of circuit modules, including where they would be placed physically within the associated equipment (Fig. 43). This commencing task of drawing the design loosely with limited regard for engineering standards, was somewhat evocative and responsive to poietic activity. From here, the drawing moved into a computer drawn mock-up showing the placement of components on a board (Fig. 44), again the gestural notion built from poieis activity. Next, a hardwired circuit prototype was tested (Fig. 45). The final stage involved drawing the design in the PCB design software according to the electrical schematic layout and governed by electronic engineering theory—a fully explicit knowledge/praxis-based task (Figs. 46–49). The process was planned and built upon through acknowledgement and awareness of the practice, and it transitioned from tacit knowledge and poieis, to explicit knowledge and praxical application, with efficient results, and importantly, was stress free.

In this example, practical activity preceded conscious mental activity; hence, the need to bring the brain up to speed through exercises that enabled a mental agility between states, so-to-speak. Planning then, is an important tool for working through the process of conscious bridging.
Fig. 43. General sketches, personal journal 5, 21-6-13.
    Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 44. Circuit mock-up in Illustrator.
    Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 45. Circuit prototype.
    Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 46. Screenshot using open-source design software Fritzing.
    Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 47. Screenshot of completed printed circuit board design.
    Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 48. Completed board.
    Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 49. Board with components.
    Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.
An example of an alternate and planned task is using a separate drawing journal for reflexive drawing moments as a tacit knowledge and poiēsis activity (Figs. 50–53). Mediums such as objects, equipment and materials, which form parts of the artworks, were sketched as a process that was quiet, meditative and intuitive. It is as if I were imbuing a meditative stillness into the mediums themselves prior to them being physically incorporated, to evoke and contribute an overall atmosphere of stillness. Tangibly, this is probably unrealistic, however, the process involved sharpened my perception and aligned my consciousness to an aesthetic as part of a cohesive synergy.

Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

During this investigation, and the writing of this exegesis, conscious bridging was also employed when moving between varying modes of theoretical research. For example, to warm into the theoretical research, much reading and note-taking was done and structure was considered, with writing actioned against the notes. For the contextual research, the mode was similar; however, for the studio practice discussion, the style changed to a more reflexive and free-form writing approach. Conscious bridging enabled me to recognise varying modes of writing and to locate, and plan the theoretical, contextual and studio practice write-up.

It is the artist’s individual growth and expansion of awareness through the research that inherently works back into the research, its documentation and the artwork that comprises the outcomes of the research. Conscious bridging, which emerges during the course of investigation, serves to support this awareness; however, we can recognise it as a process only by stepping back in a truly reflexive sense.

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9 With Eastern notions of metaphysical Baraka, aside.
I propose that the process of conscious bridging can assist artists, designers and academics to negotiate the growing complexities of interdisciplinary and multi-modal work. As part of the language of new media practice, conscious bridging involves an awareness of alternate and seemingly dichotomous intentions, approaches, methods and processes of creative art and design projects. It is a skill that is developed by recognising the differences and locating where one is at in terms of process and planning transitions as moments between them. Once developed, it enables the multidisciplinary artist to be fluent in both fields and, as with a fully bilingual speaker, to think in both languages, seemingly unaware of a disruption of thought.
Unfolding of the Practice as Experiments in Stillness (part 2)

Inspiration for the artworks that are presented here arrived in different ways over the course of the project; however, they always occurred as an outcome of a process that involved meditation, visualisation and reflexivity—but it was not all that easy. Since August 2011, there has been considerable experimentation, testing, iteration and refinement of ideas. Initial ideas evolved into stand-alone works that were limited in depth and seemed, upon reflection, to be token gestures of symbolic representations of stillness. However, with persistence, the first artwork produced was artwork number one, *Metronome*, an idea that germinated in April 2012. Refinement and iteration continued until November 2012, when it was exhibited as work in progress at The Block’s *Ignite 2012* exhibition.

I was advised in February 2012 that my final PhD examination exhibition would be in The Block at QUT. During the *Ignite 2012* exhibition I enjoyed a generous exhibition space and considered a networked installation opportunity. Around November 2012, the second artwork idea came about that would resolve into the production of an archery performance artwork, *One Arrow*. The evolution of the concept began to run its own course, where answers to inquiries became obvious transitions and acceptances, and everything began to feel right as I worked in anticipation of an embodied stillness experience.

While working on the networking component of *One Arrow* to include a reflection or echo for artwork number three, *Echo*, a new moment of realisation occurred. When I was writing Apple Script code in September 2013 to interface between a video detect program and external hardware, I realised that I could write other code to effect programs on the computer screen, which could then be projected. Out of this, further development evolved into artwork number five, *Focus*, in March 2014, which was developed as an experimental approach to initiate a conscious experience of stillness.

Continuing research ensued and assisted in strengthening the foundation and context of the artworks. The cliché is an artist’s, and particularly my, worst nightmare. A personal criteria for and objective of this research has involved resolving technology’s common perceptions of its gimmick quality to realise technology-mediated art objects as poiēsis. I was particularly concerned to ensure that the technologies’ inherent gimmick qualities and other artwork clichés would not present a superficial cloak and distraction. A practice-led methodology, in which theory and practice are inextricably intertwined, ensured that artwork development attained a refined state in line with the depth of the research. The process of
conscious bridging, described in the previous section, helped ensure an efficient and effective work practice. At the same time, continued meditation and archery practice provided intimate insights into embodied experiences of stillness that enabled me to better understand its ephemerality and potential material and experiential representations of it.

Considering the Exhibition Space

The space in which the work was presented—The Block at QUT—is an overwhelming and somewhat intimidating void. Upon approval of my examination exhibition there, I became concerned about the scale and quantity of work that would be needed to fill the space. However, while attending a PhD examination exhibition of artworks by Daniel McKewen there in March 2012, I was assured by the strategic use of three large-scale video screens, which filled space effectively. Along with the experience of Ryoji Ikeda’s installations in MONA, it led me to utilise the main large space to present a networked installation. Figure 54 indicates the arrangement of the artworks in the small and large rooms of The Block exhibition space.

Fig. 54. The Block exhibition layout, 2014. Author’s diagram.
Experiments in Stillness

Artworks were created for each space to include, collectively, experiments on how we might represent and evoke the sensation of stillness through contemporary artworks and thus encourage people to consider the nature and possibilities of stillness.

As a series of experimental artworks, they each respond to a sub-question of this research enquiry, namely, how might we represent stillness as an embodied, spatial and phenomenological experience, as a reflexive experience, as a representational record and as a conscious experience. In this they are imbued with research on stillness from the fields of philosophy, theology, meditation practices, art theory and art history, aesthetics and poiēsis, as outlined in the theoretical and contextual review. They also reference the relationships of new media art to phenomenology, spatiality, kinetics and technology.

Artwork one, Metronome, is an experimental representation of stillness in the form of a kinetic spatial installation. Artwork two, One Arrow, is a representation, through performance involving meditation and archery practice, of embodied stillness. Artwork three, Echo, presents a reflexive echo of the embodied stillness captured in One Arrow. Artwork four, No Bow, presents stillness through a representational record as a trace or handcrafted residue of the performance. Finally, artwork five, Focus, is an experiment in provoking a conscious experience of stillness through digital capture and relay.

A Readymade Aesthetic and Simulacra

Besides the key research investigation of stillness described above, each artwork presented here also reflects further theoretical layering drawn from the literature and contextual review presented in this exegesis. Underpinning the artworks and providing an aesthetic coherence through them is the use of a readymade aesthetic. The artworks One Arrow and Echo include readymade items such as a Teac reel-to-reel tape deck and Pioneer speakers, with associated amplifier systems. One Arrow also includes archery equipment as a readymade item (Fig. 55). I made the decision to employ readymades in the artworks to enable the reading of technology as art object. This serves to subvert the reading of technology as a seamless function in the service of praxis to the reading of technology as imbued in a readymade art object—as poiēsis.
Aesthetics was a primary consideration in the type of technology used for the artworks. There are two forms of electronics that make up technology: digital and analogue. Digital electronics were used in the networking control system—the Arduino clone and XBEE transmitter circuits—as well as the programming code, which requires the accuracy of digital technology. Digital electronics relies on yes/no or 1/0 data. For example, a linear rise in temperature of a sensor is sampled at specific times to give an aggregate and stepped value. Digital clean ups input signals of the nuances, such as static and hum, likely to affect the quality of the data.

Analogue electronics, on the other hand, use multivariable and linear values of data; for example, the slow rise in temperature of a sensor is sampled continuously. In this instance, the analogue apparatus also captures real-world nuances, such as static, glitch and hum (serendipity), and plays them back. Analogue electronics sit well with the notion of an expanded awareness of Zen because it also opens one’s perception to the experience of immediate reality through all of its multivariate nuances, such as warmth to signals and added texture through glitches and unrefined output. It is for this reason that analogue sound equipment (for example the Teac reel-to-reel tape deck) was used.

Technology was also used to affect simulacra. While Metronome (Fig. 56) may appear to be a readymade, it is removed in several ways from an original metronome. It stands at around one metre tall, and is an interactive, networked, new media sculpture. What is altered is the signified. The original meaning—a time signature device for music study—becomes a
(new, different) time signature device for pacing motion (and the relative lack of motion, or stillness). In this regard, it is a tool for phenomenological reflexivity, and it is in this way—through difference and repetition—that simulacra are incorporated into this project.

An Arduino microcontroller is used for technology interfacing and control (Fig. 57). However, I wanted to simplify and extend on Arduino capabilities. An electronic circuit design and prototype was developed, which is an Arduino clone with XBEE transmitter and relay control included (Fig. 58). I then decided to fabricate the circuit further as a commercial-equivalent circuit board (Fig. 59)—in this regard, it also operates as simulacra.

Other aesthetic considerations of analogue technology include the notion of an echo, which reflects Deleuze’s notion of difference and repetition. The Metronome sculpture creates
an echo in perpetuity through a continual repetition of motion. Echo is also apparent through the repeated forms of the analogue technology in the artwork *One Arrow*: the Teac *wheels* of the reel-to-reel and the *wheels* of the cams on the archery compound bow, as well as the circular speaker cones of the Pioneer speakers. An echo or reverberation appears with the replay of the recorded sound event and the overall repetition of the performance.

**Ephemera**

The exhibition presentation also included ephemera in the form of *Ephemera* work and *Zen House* photographs. I am drawn to such materials in exhibitions. I enjoy looking over artists’ sketchbooks, seeing their initial inspiration and gestural insights quickly transcribed into sketch form as a fleeting vision sparks their creativity. I am also drawn to the residues of process, which are typically presented in a glass case and present personal understandings of a working process. Thus, I presented a case of ephemera to provide the viewer with insights into the creative processes of my studio research. It revealed that which is seemingly hidden away—written code, circuit board design and construction, mistakes that contribute to success, and journal reflections—and it offered intimate insights into a three-year journey of PhD research (Figs. 95 and 96).

A deciding influence on the inclusion of ephemera was my visit to QUT’s Art Museum in October 2013, when Alfredo and Isabel Aquilizan’s artworks were exhibited. In particular, the work *Disclosure: Project: Another Country* (Fig. 60) included the display of a cabinet that housed stripped paint from a gallery wall, with an associated photograph on the adjacent wall. This seemingly aligns with Danto’s suggestion that (in considering Pop’s objective) there is no difference between art and everyday life/objects, which inspired my decision to make the *Zen House* (Fig. 61) documentation. It portrays the renovation of my house during the research, when the mindset of art was omnipresent.
Artwork Number One: *Metronome*

*Metronome* (Fig. 62) was the first art piece that was made through this research process. It was an intensive one hundred and sixty-five-day project that involved research, design, prototyping, testing, construction, component manufacture, development and presentation. *Metronome* stands at approximately one metre high and reflects notions of Duchampian-altered readymades and Arthur C. Danto’s simulacra (2004).
This interactive, kinetic sculpture includes networked video control. As the viewer moves closer to the Metronome sculpture, their proximity is detected and a measure of their distance determines the speed of the metronome’s arm-swing speed, which slows upon approach. At the same time, an adjoining video sequence plays a video of the swinging metronome. Its speed is similarly adjusted in relation to the viewer’s proximity to the Metronome sculpture. The video sequence playback creates a remediated form of the metronome, and a duality of representation in an alternate, albeit interconnected space.

The artwork was produced to facilitate an experience of spatial stillness, where the viewer is encouraged to adjust their relationship with time. The metaphor reflects the experience of meditation in which, as one approaches levels of deep reflection, time seems to slow. The examination exhibition version included a video sequence of a drawing process, with the same intent applied (Fig. 109). Drawing, as an evocative and poiēsis practice, is a meditative experience for me. At moments of attention and focus, time seems to stand still, and this element could be considered to align with the Metronome artwork in terms of effective/affective balance and enhancement.

The initial inspiration for this work came from my theoretical investigation in mid-April 2012. During online research I found a catalogue published for the 2007 Biennale of Electronic Arts in Perth, entitled Stillness: Art + Science + Technology. Although the work contained within the exhibition did not contribute directly to my contextual research as exemplars, a quote from Paul Thomas piqued my interest. He wrote, ‘The essence of stillness is where the pendulum has slowed to its imperceptible vibration’ (2007, p. 4). In my past visual art honours degree project, I had created an interactive and networked sculpture The
One Key Piano, 2010. When I read the pendulum quote, my mind was cast back to The One Key Piano and envisioned the Metronome artwork.

Design and prototyping began in May 2012, with testing a gearbox design controlled by an Arduino microcontroller (Fig. 63). This continued until August, when the video control software VDMX was interfaced with the control (a process of explicit knowledge/praxis or application of technology). With the basic system tested, I began the design and construction of the metronome case in QUT’s Design Workshop J Block at Gardens Point in late August. This process of design and sculptural activity was more aligned with tacit knowledge/poiēsis as it began with sketching and followed a more intuitive and serendipitous process, and then merged into a technical approach (Fig. 64). Further system construction, testing and code writing continued to the end of October 2012 (Figs. 65–71).

Fig. 63. Pinxit, Metronome, 2012, gearbox testing.
Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 64. Pinxit, Metronome, 2012, technical drawing by Author.
Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

A company provided, to my specifications, the graduation scale vinyl sticker for the front panel. The plinth was sourced from amongst redundant stock at QUT’s Creative Industries storage centre and re-sprayed. In late October 2014, I filled in the open side panels with plywood, which converted the four-sided option to a single-fronted metronome (Fig. 72).

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10 See reference list for YouTube video of The One Key Piano and its installation, The Final Note.
To my detriment, I did not realise that this action would inhibit networking transmission signals to the VDMX software via Bluetooth during the exhibition presentation.
Artwork Number Two: One Arrow

One Arrow is the key, or principal artwork of this research project. It encompasses artwork number three, Echo, through a technology-networked arrangement while both also sit separately as stand-alone works. One Arrow includes many layers of expression and multiple modalities and mediums. It is a true example of merging between art and design practice with its multiple knowledge, logic, embodied activity and physical forms. It includes performance (archery, Butoh dance), a backing soundtrack and real-time recording, technology networking, hardware program control, software coding and lighting. It incorporates a readymade aesthetic and notions of Zen Koan.

The initial inspiration for this work began with visual drawings, sketches and notes in November 2012 (Fig. 73). In December 2012, I met with QUT’s Health and Safety officer to discuss the possibility of using archery as performance in The Block during my examination exhibition. The officer was supportive and gave advice for approval. From there, I focused on making this idea professionally achievable and presentable.

The project evolved quite quickly—it was developed conceptually then broken down into its various components to support a planned structure for researching. It was here (from artwork number two onwards) that I began to use conscious bridging to identify respective art and design knowledge for planning and efficient implementation of practice. Theoretical research, which ran concurrently with the studio development, assisted in bringing a contextual depth to the work and refinement of the ideas within it. Some examples include quotes, such as, ‘true existence comes from emptiness and goes back again into emptiness’ (Suzuki & Dixon, 2010, p. 100). Along with Shunryu Suzuki’s insight, this inspired me to consider emptiness in the work. This was achieved by causing the projected archery arrow to disappear into emptiness, with a paper streamer screen hiding the target butt (Fig. 74).
Archery equipment was researched and an order placed with a local supplier for a Hoyt compound bow, arrows, release aid and further equipment in early December 2012. The bow arrived from the United States at the end of February 2013. A local archery club was sourced and, by requirement of the club’s policy for new members, an application for a beginners training course was submitted for the available course at the beginning of March 2013.

In January 2013, I considered the viability of including a sound element through a reel-to-reel tape deck to record and playback incidental sounds of the shooting action (Fig. 75). From here, research began on an appropriate tape deck that would be able to interface with the digital controller of an Arduino microprocessor.
The Teac A-3300SX reel-to-reel tape deck, which was produced circa 1975, was unique among brands of the same era due to an external remote control interconnect feature, indicated by the red arrow on Fig. 76 of the Teac A-3300SX schematic diagram. This allows interfacing with the digital controller of the Arduino Microcontroller. The networking system included artwork number three, *Echo*, so both artworks were designed concurrently (Figs. 77–84).
Fig. 78. Pinxit, *One Arrow*,
  system control test,
  personal journal 6, 8-9-13.
  Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 79. Pinxit, *One Arrow*,
  system communication design,
  personal journal 8, 28-5-14.
  Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 80. Pinxit, *One Arrow*, Arduino clone
  in bow box. Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 81. Pinxit, *One Arrow*, Arduino codes.
  Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.
The artwork began with the ringing sound of a Nepalese meditation bowl being struck
by an assistant (who also fulfilled the role of marshal to ensure the safety of the audience).
Five seconds elapsed and the experimental sound art piece entitled *Om*, by collaborator Rex
Hardjadibrata, began to play. The Butoh performer slowly emerged from black crepe paper
streamers with an arrow in her hand. She slowly moved down an archery shooting lane and
set a paper target in place. She continued slowly in the role of an approaching spirit of
consciousness with an arrow—a representation of stillness—to where I sat in meditation on
cushions. As she arrived, the sound stopped and she lowered her hand in the gesture of a gift. I rose and moved to where the compound bow was positioned and the Butoh performer handed the arrow to me. Raising the bow to shoot activated the tape deck, which began recording sound from the wireless microphones attached to my collar and the target butt.

When the shot was completed, the tape deck stopped recording and rewound. I returned to the cushions with the Butoh performer rising to move slowly towards the target area with the experimental sound art piece playing. She removed the paper target prior to merging into the darkness through the streamers. The assistant then rang the Nepalese meditation bowl to indicate that the performance was complete and the area was safe for audience movement. With the performance complete, and the sound of the archery shoot recorded, it was ready for playback in artwork number three, *Echo*.

The work was a direct representation of embodied stillness, through performance, which enacted stillness in mediation practice (motion in stillness) and stillness in the moment of the arrow’s release (stillness in motion). Through a focused intensity of vision, the audience was also engaged with suspended time and motion, sound and spatial vibration; the stillness moment was captured in echoes and ephemera as resonance.

Butoh performers, Jordan Gilmour and Megan White, were collaborators in this work (they shared a schedule of performances). Incorporating Butoh performance was inspired by my theoretical research and reflective writing in my journal. I ventured, ‘Butoh inclusion will contribute a psychic condition supporting notions of a Koan experience and evoking an atmosphere of stillness’ (journal number 7, 10-3-14).

To further evoke the atmosphere of Butoh, a sound piece was introduced. Experimental sound artist, Rex Hardjadibrata, collaborated here with the production of a sound piece of static and glitch—the nuances typically removed in digital sound production. Rex produced an abstract sound piece in response to my brief and keywords that focused on notions of Zen and stillness. The static sound reflected falling sand, a Butoh metaphor for change.

**Artwork Number Three: Echo**

*Echo* was developed concurrently with *One Arrow* as part of a two-part networked system. The intention of this artwork was to produce a reflexive experience by re-engaging the audience with the *One Arrow* stillness event through an echo or trace. It incorporates Zen
Koans drawn from John Stevens’ text, *Zen Bow, Zen Arrow* (2007) (Figs. 85 and 86), which were composed by Awa Kenzo, a Zen Kyudo archery teacher (1880–1939).

![Koans drawn from John Stevens’ text, *Zen Bow, Zen Arrow* (2007) (Figs. 85 and 86), which were composed by Awa Kenzo, a Zen Kyudo archery teacher (1880–1939).](image)


Each of the Koans provides insight into the Zen notion of archery while (re)situating the viewer in the experience of the performance as it is re-encountered through audio recordings of the event.

This work is triggered by an audience member passing a lighted spot on the gallery floor. Video trigger software (produced by Zac Poff) prompts an Apple Script code (which I produced through a combination of Arduino microprocessor code language and Apple Script code language) to begin. This opens a video sequence of the five Zen Koans. The code simultaneously sends wireless control data to the tape deck to begin operational playback of the recorded sounds of the archery performance shoot of *One Arrow*. At the completion of the video Koan sequence and the recorded sound playback, the artwork resets with the Teac reel-to-reel rewinding, ready for the audience to re-trigger it.

The use of video detection to trigger the sequences is a passive method of interaction. A reflexive stillness experience is produced through the combination of recorded sound playback and the fading in and out of the video Koan sequences.

**Artwork Number Four: No Bow**

Inspired by Awa Kenzo’s pen name, which reflects his Kyudo archery practice, *No Bow* is a tangible, or concrete realisation of what Lindy Lee refers to as the ‘intangible is shadow realm’ (2012). An archer aims to experience *No Bow* at full draw and at the release of
the arrow—it is the precise moment of stillness, when an archer is at-one with their focus and spatial awareness; the visible and invisible realms.

The idea to include a bronze sculpture to represent No Bow occurred at the end of a Vipassana meditation retreat in February 2013, when I purchased a book in a local bookstore. The book, The Sculptural Heritage of Tibet (Weldon & Singer, 1999), included an image, amongst many wonderful examples, that piqued my interest (Fig. 87).

Having made bronze sculptures for past artworks, the image showing the Buddha was poignant to me. However, it was the surface finish—in particular, the addition of pigment—that captured my interest and inspired my direction. It prompted recall of Jaspers Johns’ Ballantine beer cans sculpture (Fig. 6), and the approach this work took to simulacra. These pieces began to fit together in my mind. Two bronze works, No Bow: Record 11(Fig. 98) and No Bow (Fig. 88 & 99), with added patina and paint finish, represent a record of stillness—the phenomenological and Zen experience of archery. The material of bronze supports the permanence of the notion of record of activity and evokes the simulacra. However, poïësis and the capture of tacit knowledge and experience were at the heart of this artwork.

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11 The event of Western Indoor archery uses a target face (with three individual targets) for each competitor. One arrow is shot at each of the three individual targets, and this ensures that arrows will not damage each other.
Artwork Number Five: *Focus*

*Focus* came about through a realisation when working on artwork three, *Echo*. I speculated that by writing code I could create an interactive artwork that would appear and function *on the computer screen*. This presented an opportunity I had not previously considered.

The artwork *Focus* was produced through a computer code-editing platform called *Processing* (Fig. 89). To write code in the Processing platform, conformation to a language style was required that was different to the code style used in Arduino microprocessor language, and also different to Apple Script code language. Research, learning and trial and error were needed to attain the proficiency needed across these code languages.

To trigger the resulting work, a participant stands in front of the computer’s web-camera, and the code initiates facial detection and tracking. This triggers a reflection of the participant’s face on a facing computer screen, with an animated series of expanding and fading circles over the centre of the face and random coloured rings appearing at times. The effect is similar to water rings that radiate in concentric ripples.

The work supports what might be referred to as stillness as conscious experience. The viewer sees the expanding and fading circles appearing over their reflected face and is drawn into a convergence with their reflection. This suggests an expansion of consciousness, which might be likened to focusing on stillness in meditation. A sound loop that I composed is played with the work. The Nepalese singing bowl (used in the performance) was recorded and edited for additional effect.

![Fig. 89. Processing code with web-cam image and animated rings overlayed, 2014. Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.](image)
I presented a two-day exhibition of the five experimental artworks in The Block exhibition space at QUT, from Wednesday, 29th October to Thursday, 30th October 2014, which attracted approximately 30–40 attendees during the official evening opening event, including QUT staff, students, general public and family. Examination viewings took place on each of the two days.

I had to wear many hats to coordinate the event, which included artist, performer, curator, electronic technician, graphic designer (Fig. 90), public relations and promotion, administrator, PhD student (under examination) and host. It was an intense week of focus and shifting of attention between tasks and duties that became a test for conscious bridging in application. When difficulties occurred, time was taken to prepare and merge into the task with a more effective approach to overcome the difficulty.

On June 24th and 25th 2014, I was able to gain access to The Block for a Development Day, when collaboration began with The Block’s exhibition technician Blair Walkinshaw, who assisted with installation and lighting design and contributed to an efficient installation planning process for the exhibition set-up (Figs. 91 and 92). Works were then delivered to The Block exhibition space on Monday, October 27th for set-up.
On the second day of set-up (Tuesday, October 28th 2014), the Butoh performers, Jordan Gilmour and Megan White, arrived to rehearse in the space with the sound sequence. The rehearsal gave them the opportunity to experience the space, lighting, equipment, sound and atmosphere of the performance. Ongoing technical set-up continued with the functioning and fine-tuning of equipment (Figs. 93 and 94). Towards the end of the day, the QUT OH&S officer, Glenn Goyen, visited to discuss safety procedures and suggested minor changes for the public opening.

On Wednesday, October 29th, set-up continued until 10:30 am. Artwork number one, Metronome, was having difficulty networking via Bluetooth to the MacBook to control the VDMX software running the video sequence. At the time, I did not realise that in-filling the metronome panels (Fig. 72) in the lead-up to the exhibition would compromise
communication and networking. I decided to set the video sequence at an intermediate playback speed for the exhibition and the *Metronome* began to function correctly.

For artworks two and three, *One Arrow* and *Echo*, I also had to make adjustments to the codes to synchronise the play and rewind times for integration between the two artworks.

The *Ephemera* (Figs. 95 and 96) cabinet was set up, with individual lighting to provide the opportunity to experience an intimate representation of the studio and research investigation. *No Bow: Record* and *No Bow* (Figs. 97–99) were then positioned on the wall opposite the *Ephemera* cabinet. Hanging on fishing line with soft direct lighting, *No Bow* gently moved and its shadow swayed as if ‘in-flight’ towards the target of *No Bow: Record*, which suggested a notion of poiēsis.

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Fig. 95. Pinxit, *Ephemera*, 2014.  
Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 96. Pinxit, *Ephemera*, 2014, close up.  
Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 97. Pinxit, *No Bow: Record* and *No Bow*, 2014. Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

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The paper target scrolls (Fig. 100) used in the performance of *One Arrow* were positioned on the wall adjacent to the main exhibition space. They were added to after each performance to provide an echo/record of the event. The clean hole of the arrow passing through the paper served to reflect the fine-tuning of the archery equipment, the months of archery practice and the release of the shot.
Upon arrival, the audience travelled through an anteroom, viewing the ephemera and No Bow sculptures. Then, coming into the larger void, they were seated and presented with the performance of artwork two, One Arrow, in the main exhibition space (Figs. 101 and 102). Low lighting in this space was designed to require the audience’s eyes to adjust to the atmosphere of the space over time. The main installation items—meditation cushions, stereo speakers, tape deck, bow, paper target scroll, streamer screen and video trigger floor spotlight were spot-lit to focus attention. The darkness reduced the perception of boundaries created by walls, etcetera, simulating emersion in a void-like atmosphere. This ethereal space was enhanced by the seemingly floating objects, picked out by light.
The audience then moved into the smaller back room installations and continued to view the exhibition. *Focus* was next encountered in the ancillary room at the rear of the main exhibition space. Three mini-iMacs were placed on shelves on adjacent walls at varying heights. Small LED desk lights illuminated the viewer’s face for an evocative visual experience (Figs. 103–107). The sound loop of the singing bowl gently played and echoed in the space, which assisted the experience and atmosphere of meditative stillness.

Fig. 103. Pinxit, *Focus*, 2014. Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.

Fig. 104. Pinxit, *Focus*, 2014. Photo by Megan White.

The *Metronome* sculpture was in the last ancillary room (Figs. 108 and 109). It continued in faultless mechanical operation over the two-day period, providing an evocative spatial stillness experience.

![Fig. 108. Pinxit, *Metronome*, 2014. Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.](image)

![Fig. 109. Pinxit, *Metronome*, 2014, with video sequence. Photo by Vaughn Pinxit.](image)
Reception and Reflection on the Outcomes

One Arrow: Artist's Reflection

The Nepalese singing bowl rings its soothing tone when the attendant strikes it lightly, crystal clear in the darkness of closed eyes. The sound of static, and then the deep resonant sound of an elongated droning frequency emerge in the space, announcing the entry of an ethereal, slow-moving form. I release myself to the energy, knowing the Butoh performer is beginning their walk towards me—a sudden clatter of paper means the target scroll unfolds. The static continues; my awareness drinks in the entire surrounding atmosphere, accepting—not analysing.

Ever closer—I feel energy building: the audience is silent. An abstract sound indicates thirty seconds of static is left, I count and can sense the Butoh performer is closer. Twenty-seven, twenty-eight, eyes open and accustomed very quickly to the low lighting, I rise up off the cushions, the Butoh performer lowering behind me. Everything is fluid and automatic; in my hand the bow, I tilt it and the tape deck begins to record, I begin to count again knowing I must make the shot in around fifty seconds. My right hand drops to my side as the arrow is placed gently in it; it is set on the bow and nocked on the string—fifteen, sixteen—I attach the release aid to the string—twenty-nine, thirty.

Lifting the bow, my hand pulls hard, drawing the string back slowly, the bow arm lowers so the scope settles on the paper scroll target—thirty-five, thirty-six. Settling on the target, my breath slows and seems to stop my heart—forty-four. The following number dissolves, focus expands—stillness—the arrow releases independently of my action. It flies through the centre of the paper target; then, a resonating sound as the arrow hitting the target butt behind the streamer screen is captured on the tape deck and amplified through the speakers.

I stand with the bow slowly rotating forward from the inertia: awareness returns. I set the bow down as the tape deck stops and rewinds, I move back to the cushions in a seemingly awkward motion as one returns from an out-of-body experience. Sitting, eyes closed, the Butoh performer rises with the static sound filling the hall; then, the deep resonant tone pulsing through my body reawakens my mortality. I melt into a meditation; the singing bowl recalls my attention with two clear resonating strikes—elevation—the audience.
**One Arrow: Audience Reflections**

A comment book provided the opportunity for audience members to write about their experience and perceptions of the work. Academics, postgraduate students, undergraduate students and the general public took the opportunity to respond.

One described the atmosphere they experienced as ‘peaceful and calm, soothing to the mind’ while another compared the atmosphere with a temple. I had not considered evoking a temple-like environment. Montien Boonma’s works reference the temple as a place of refuge, with imbued atmospheres of stillness; in hindsight, I can see the similarity.

Another comment referred to the experience of the *One Arrow* performance, writing:

> The shooting of an arrow was the perfect conduit to channel my focus. I felt I was watching that moving circle with a singular concentration in sync with the artist/performer. The type of action and its brevity worked well to bring the audience into a zone of presence.

This suggests that *One Arrow*’s representation of embodied stillness resonated at some level with this member of the audience, who experienced a sense of presence in the moment of a work that represented embodied stillness. Another audience member described the experience as ‘sublime’ while another communicated experiencing a sense of presence in the quiet moment of *One Arrow*, writing, ‘the sheer quietness, slow rhythmic Butoh walks, vulnerability of human existence, an instance of a shooting arrow, so perfect’. Another mentioned stillness directly, interestingly in tandem with energy and peace, writing:

> I am so moved by the energy + stillness of today’s performance. The Butoh dancer, Megan White, added a brilliant dimension to the meaning of stillness when she passed Vaughn the arrow, I felt so much beauty + peace.

Here, the representation of stillness as a spatial, embodied and phenomenological experience appears to have found its mark. The sensation of stillness and motion and motion in stillness that I recounted at the beginning of this thesis, and which I have invested in this work, found resonance in these viewer’s recounted experiences of this work.

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12 Ethics approval was not required for this collection of feedback.
Another attendee’s comment suggested the consideration of the nature and possibilities of stillness, writing, ‘Beautiful + powerful works—particularly loved the bronze sculptures + performance—will resonate for a while—thank you’. The notion that the experience will ‘resonate’ with them is particularly evocative and suggests a conscious, reflexive experience. Indeed, the artworks promoted another attendee to consider the nature of stillness more intimately:

Really wanted to be alone in the rooms just contemplating and experiencing.
So beautiful, tones, light, meditation, the ghost-like arrow delivery. So peaceful but brutal.

Contemplation of the ‘ghost-like arrow’ as simultaneously evoking peace and brutality suggests the integration of juxtaposition, as in a Koan.

The sounds of the One Arrow performance captured the attention of one attendee, who commented that, ‘I enjoyed the small, sharp clicks and clacks of the bow being picked up and prepared. And the anticipation of the arrow’. This presents me with an element of the work that I take for granted—incidental sound provides an opportunity for further exploration of recording the incidental sound of performance.

As discussed, Hamilton and Jaaniste argue that: ‘Because it is poetically and purposefully ambiguous and irreducible in meaning, the knowledge, insight and embodied experience that is evoked by an artwork is not consistent or measurable’ (2009, p. 11). In other words, feedback from audiences cannot contribute to claims that the intent of an artwork has been achieved. However, they continue that,

feedback might be sought from respected colleagues…[and] the purpose of gathering such insights is to allow the artist to reflect upon the project and its evocation and affect and to see their work through the insights of others, which may shed new light on the practice and its possibilities (Ibid. p. 9).

These insights assisted my understanding of the artwork as research outcomes that are informed through its reception. Moreover, it is gratifying that qualitative feedback suggests that the experience of stillness was achieved for some audience members. Pertinent correlations can be linked from the audience comments to the research question, the sub-
questions and the objectives of the research. On reflection, it can be considered that the artworks have successfully assisted some audience members to consider the nature of stillness.
'Where I’ve participated in so many art works over the years as an arts practitioner, witnessing endless expressions of arts of 30 min to well over an hour, I’ve had to fully engage with all my senses to find meaning and connect with the art experience, i.e. constantly think to make connections. 

Within your 5 min of art... of stillness and calm, I was, I believe, taken to a place of complete mindfulness, being in the moment, my world slowed to a heartbeat and my imagination took precedence... The visual imagery of the Butoh walk carrying the stillness and calm bow... Of a woman... juxtaposed with the powerful meditative and calm Vaughn on the red cushions became a springboard for complete creativity.... the complete opposite experience to what I have felt in recent theatre experiences. This calming and beautiful platform suddenly, within moments of starting, became a springboard for pure imagination, thoughts, in fact my whole “baggage” of past experiences was somehow instantly connecting and transcending into the moment.... unconsciously.... I think, how can this be? 5 min worth of art, yet I feel like I never before have been so overwhelmed with feeling, emotion, thought and reflection'.
M. Wilcox

Fig. 110. Pinxit, One Arrow, 2014. Photo by Louise Gregg.
Conclusion and Findings

Art research is speculative in nature. It may contribute to human experience by expanding awareness and understanding of the self and life (religious, political, economic, social, physical and perceptual). In this research project, I have conducted theoretical, contextual, and practice-led studio research to establish ways in which we might represent and evoke experiences of stillness through technology-mediated artworks.

Through my sustained, embodied research into mindfulness and the intimate experience of stillness, I have developed a deeper understanding of how we might bring about an awareness of the atmosphere and effect of stillness. The relationships of stillness and theology (in particular as theology framed by D.T. Suzuki); stillness and phenomenology (as phenomenology is explained by Maurice Merleau-Ponty); and stillness and embodied experience (as experience is defined by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt), have each contributed to deeper theoretical insights into situating and explaining stillness at a philosophical level.

The activity of archery provided an opportunity for me to experience stillness during my youth. It is through this reflection and the theoretical support of Arthur C. Danto, that archery was included in my work. Meditation practice also provided intimate insight into stillness and enabled me to better understand its ephemerality and ponder its representation—materially and experientially.

Continual research, which cycled between theory and practice, oscillated between art and design methods and involved reflection on and through practice, has assisted in strengthening the conceptual and material aspects of the artworks presented here. A practice-led methodology ensured that the artwork attained a refined state in line with the depth of research. Conscious bridging between art and design methodologies supported an efficient and effective work practice and helped to reconcile theoretical and contextual points of view.

As a result, I have produced a series of experiments into creating intimate atmospheres, experiences and moments of stillness. Through the aesthetic of the readymade and hacking technology, I have produced installations that provoke reflections on time and space. Through the performative element of archery and reference to Zen Kyudo archery, I aimed to imbue installations with embodied stillness, which, in-turn, was reflected back in a second artwork to promote a nuanced understanding of stillness as representational echo. Through Zen experience of the suspended moment of archery, bronze sculptures further
suggest possibilities of stillness as a representational record. Finally, I have written code to affect a conscious experience of stillness as reflection upon the self.

Audience members experienced these artworks as experimental outcomes of the research question, sub-questions and objectives, with evidenced comments reflecting on their experience that suggest they have, indeed, considered the nature and possibilities of stillness.

Further practical outcomes of the research include the formulation of a practice-led research methodology for new media art, which I refer to as conscious bridging. This new framework will be further researched and developed for academic publication. An academic paper (Pinxit, 2015) has been published with a Sage peer-reviewed journal (The Journal of Visual Culture, Fall 2015) that discusses elements of my research and its value to society.

At times, trusting my instinct and reaching through praxical knowledge to produce poiēsis and evocative art practice has presented unique moments of inspiration. As I became the enactor, proponent and subject of this research, my art practice evolved and matured beyond my expectations. I hope that it will inspire, invoke debate and support those who are searching for ways of thinking about the nature and qualities of stillness. I have sought alternate ways of conceptualising and realising experiences of stillness mediated through technology, and ways of thinking of technology’s capacities that go beyond thinking of it as confined to incessant interruption.
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(see 'Additional information')


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Figure 3. Pinxit, *Practice day at the 1982 Australian Junior Nationals*. Photo by Darrell Coomber. Courtesy Darrell Coomber.


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Figure 25. Keziere, R. (1992). *Bill Viola, Heaven and Earth, 1992*. Video installation. In a small alcove, a wood column extends from the floor and ceiling, with a gap in the centre formed by two exposed monitors facing each other two inches apart, mounted to upper and lower columns respectively, a black-and-white video image on each monitor. 9ft 6in x 16ft x 18ft (2.9 m x 4.9 m x 5.5 m), 29:52 minutes. ©Bill Viola. Courtesy Bill Viola Studio.
Figure 26. Keziere, R. (1992). *Bill Viola, Heaven and Earth*, 1992. Video installation. In a small alcove, a wood column extends from the floor and ceiling, with a gap in the centre formed by two exposed monitors facing each other two inches apart, mounted to upper and lower columns respectively, a black-and-white video image on each monitor. 9ft 6in x 16ft x 18ft (2.9 x 4.9 x 5.5m), 29:52 minutes. ©Bill Viola. Courtesy Bill Viola Studio.


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Support Work

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29th - 30th October 2014

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PhD Exhibition

Stillness:
a meditation in new media art

The Block, OUT Creative Industries Precinct
29th - 30th October 2014

Professor Jillian Hamilton

Focussed intensity.

Since the futurists revealed in the transformative potential of the machine in the early twentieth century, artists have contemplated the speed and intensity with which technology has gripped our lives. Now, as the ley lines of the digital age run through us, and we are always, ever connected to the network, we are open on all fronts to technologies that prompts us to absorb, act, interact, or react. Disconnecting from the hum of technology provokes a sense of loss, of separation. When we shut down our gadgets or leave them behind, their absence resonates as if the ache of a body phantom. It is this captivation with demanding, insistent, omnipresent technology that much contemporary media art evokes as it plays on our delight in provoking a machine to react.

Vaughn Pinxit's new media work does not set out to corral interactivity into a trigger-response affect. Nor does it comment on technological utopias or technological determinism. Instead, technology is deployed in his installations and performances to gather us into a state of stillness. Paradoxically, it is associated with the suspension of time, of space, of motion, of objects, of the senses. Here stillness is a metaphor for presence, for being in the moment, at one with all that is, was and will be, a momentary collapse of time. It is the state of presence that has been described as ‘focussed intensity’ in Western Philosophy and, in Buddhism, as a continuum of energy and time. It is the essence that runs through us when we know that our quivered arrow will find its mark, that the ball we shoot will cut a straight path through its suspended arc. It is the mesmerizing repetition of the metronome, being at one with the rhythm of a horse, the flow of grace of the dancer and expressive movement of the painter. It is the momentary collapse of time, space, all things, and our being into one.

Dr Keith Armstrong

Stillness and Stasis.

Our apparent inability (or unwillingness) to grasp the scope and reach of the problems of ecology are evidenced by today’s ever worsening series of environmental indicators. Not only do we cause the ecological problems that threaten us today, but also they are now inherent in our world that correspondingly forms the way we are. A world and a society built this way cannot assure anyone or anything a ‘future for the future’.

But the end of this way is fast approaching. We must find multiple strategies to break into, and ultimately out of, this circular wrench of destruction, re-crafting ourselves to become new kinds of socio-environmental subjects (new kinds of citizens). This will require many and multiple methods, actions, approaches and inputs, which must tap all of our disciplinary strengths. The experimental arts can definitely not be excepted.

In a timely fashion therefore, Vaughn Pinxit reminds us that “the quality of stillness” (that he engenders via his work) “transcends cultures, nations and religions”. Posed in this way his work can be understood as a particular kind of connective, cultural project, aiming (be it in a small way) to help us become those new types of subjects. And whilst Vaughan may not directly foreground the ecological project, his close commitment to ‘engaged Buddhism’ reveals a covalent hand.

The all-engaged Thich Nhất Hạnh reminds us though that, “for things to reveal themselves to us, we need to be ready to abandon our views about them.” And so Vaughan has found his own potent use of stillness in this socio-creative journey that has he notes, ultimately “supported a quality, which I could not initially imagine”.

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Ephemera 2014, assembled objects.

Much of the artwork is hidden away, such as written code, circuit board design, control systems, and journal reflections. The ephemera will add a personal quality to the exhibition. A series of images titled Zen House, support the as A. C. Danto suggests; there is no difference between art and everyday life.

No Bow 2014, bronze, patina, pigment.

Stillness record.

Two bronze sculptures form this work. A cast of a target face, and a cast of an arrow and the release aid modelled from casting wax, are finished with patina and pigment. The work identifies with Zen kyudo teacher Awa Kenzo’s pen name - No Bow.

Focus 2014, processing code.

Conscious stillness.

A code written in Processing, detects facial recognition and superimposes animated water rings on the face. This can suggest an expansion of consciousness relative to the focussing on stillness in meditation.

One Arrow 2014, media, performance.

Embodyed stillness.

Butoh supports a psychic atmosphere to enhance the understanding of a koan (as juxtaposition) through the archery performance of embodied stillness. Networked technology aids the interactivity, and contributes to form the artwork Echo.

Echo 2014, video, sound.

Reflexive stillness.

Part two of artwork One Arrow; recorded sound plays back with a video sequence of Zen Koans, leading into a reflexive stillness experience.

Metronome 2014, plywood, technology.

Spatial stillness.

Adopting notions of Duchampian altered readymade and simulacra aesthetic, the metronome is an interactive kinetic and networked sculpture. Detecting distance of the viewer slows the pendulum and the video sequence. As one approaches meditation, time seemingly slows.