



Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

Reflective Embodiment of the Four Elements of Nature as a Metaphor for Personal Expression

By Kirsti van Zyl

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Baccalaureus of Technology: Surface Design

in the Faculty of Informatics and Design

at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Supervisor: Alettia Chisin

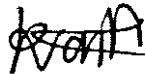
Co-supervisors: Avryl Dahl and Karen Suskin

Cape Town

November 2010

8 DECLARATION

I, Kirsti van Zyl, declare that the contents of this dissertation/thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation/thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.



Signed

25th October 2010

Date

ABSTRACT

A personal, phenomenological expression and discovery has been conducted, through being immersed in the four elements of nature, namely water, air, earth and fire. Each series represents one of the four elements. The established, Western interpretations of the four elements have been contrasted with my personal embodied interpretation. The result of this was a concept based on the discovery of my context within the environment, manifested into an artistic reflection of my appreciation of creation. Embodiment, therefore, provides the theoretical framework as it is the merging of the body and mind in our interactions with the outer world, as a way of gaining knowledge and experience (Hocking, Haskell & Linds (eds.). 2001: xviii). Phenomenology of perception, according to Langer (1989: 158), is the study of structures of perception, and as a supporting theory, it ties in with embodiment and how our thoughts and feelings are a result of our physical body's conversation and interaction with the outer world. Embodiment is a tool used to rediscover that dialogue, and is one I have applied in order to design and create subjective and conceptual fabric sculptures. I have embodied my sculptures, shaping and installing a meaning, dictated by my experiential body perception. These two theories were important for my research in order to engage with and interpret my body's experiences within the elements of nature

Inspiration for my product was derived from Deepa Panchamia, for her structured yet organic, pleated structures and Annalisa Vobis for her use of organic inspiration and the resulting conceptual interpretations. Andy Goldsworthy was also inspiration to me for the emphasis he puts on the raw and natural aspects of experience and process. This is evident in the non-permanent characteristic of his land art. An important factor of this range is the display and exhibition of the sculptures, by recording each series within the context of each element it represents, it grounds and highlights the strong inspiration of nature and process, evident within each sculpture. The entire range is created from polyester organza that has been permanently pleated and then hand manipulated to create 3-Dimensional, abstract sculptures. The use of this fabric creates a transparent, ethereal atmosphere, where the inner and outer layers of the sculptures seem to merge and interact, reflecting and indicating a fleeting moment of ghostlike embodied expression. Apart from the sculptures being the result of a self-expressive, introspective process, they are also aesthetically based conceptual art pieces with great potential to being translated into a variety of applications.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank:

- **Alettia Chisin** - for her guidance and encouragement throughout the year.
- **Avryl Dahl** - for her guidance and enthusiasm, especially in the theoretical aspect of my research.
- **Julia Brewis** - for being my mentor for the past five years, and having enough faith in my capabilities to push me further.
- **Karen Suskin** - for assisting me practically and theoretically by sharing her invaluable experience and suggestions.
- **Bryan Ramkilawan** - for his support, enthusiasm and inspirational 'chats'.
- **Anina Black** - for accommodating me so patiently.
- **Craig Ferguson** -for his love, support and patience. I could never have made it through the year without him.
- **My family** - for their love, support and encouragement, without who I wouldn't be where I am today.

GLOSSARY

Conceptual art: "Conceptual art is not about forms or materials, but about ideas and meanings... It challenges traditional art status.... therefore it demands a more active response from the viewer, indeed it can be argued that the conceptual work of art only truly exists in the viewers mental participation" (Godfrey, 1998: 4). Conceptual art asks questions not only of the art object: Why is this art? Who is the artist? What is the context? But also the person who looks at it or reads about it: Who are you? What do you represent? , It draws the viewer's attention to themselves, making them self-conscious" (Godfrey, 1998: 15).

Phenomenology of perception: "Things as we experience them are discovered through a subject-object dialogue: the lived body. This lived body is when intentional consciousness is experienced in and through our bodies, not just in our heads... The body is a flesh made up of the same flesh as the world, this is how we come to know and understand the world...The whole lived body is an intentional body, which is lived 'through' in relation to its possibilities in the world. This body can only be understood as a whole/as it is lived. It is an experiential body... You can never experience anything separate from your body being engaged in the world...The meaning that I bring to my perception is that of embodied perception. It is by virtue of my embodiment that I can experience things as being up/down; close/far etc...therefore space is always in relation to my body as situated within the world... The world is what we live out, but do not think or speak. When we bring it to reflection, we make it conscious" (Robbins, 2008).

Theory of Phenomenology: "Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from a 1st person point of view....the central structure of an experience is its intentionality (Stanford University, 2008). It is the study of phenomena and how they appear in our experience...therefore the meaning things have in our experience/ the significance of: Objects, events, tools, time, the self and others, as these things are discovered and experienced in our 'life-world'. It is also the study of the structure of the various types of experience: Perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and its conscious choice to bodily awareness/embodied action/social activity. The structure of these forms of experience involves intentionality" (Stanford University, 2008).

Embodiment involves the head, heart and the hand to interpret and understand life's happenings. According to the book *The embodied mind*: to be embodied is a "reflection in which body and mind have been brought together...reflection is not just *on* experience, but reflection *is* a form of experience itself and that reflective form of experience can be performed with mindfulness /awareness...By not including ourselves in reflection we pursue only partial reflection, and our question becomes disembodied" (Varela, Thompson & Rosh. 1991: 27).

PROPOSAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
GLOSSARY	v
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Statement of research problem	1
1.2 Background to the research problem/context	1
1.3 Significance to knowledge/ knowledge gap	2
1.4 Topic area	2
1.5 Clarification of basic terms and concepts	3
1.6 Research questions and sub questions	4
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 Key concepts	5
2.2 Theoretical under pinning	5
3. METHODOLOGY	8
3.1 Approach	8
3.2 Data collection	8
3.3 Data analysis	13
4. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH	14
5. EXPECTED OUTCOMES, RESULTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH	14
6. REFERENCES CITED	15
7. SUMMARY/ABSTRACT	16
8. KEYWORDS	17

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of research problem:

The purpose of this research is to explore the four elements, through embodiment, in order to create my own subjective interpretation. This will be reflected in the production of soft sculptures.

Art has been a valid form of expression through the ages. I claim that art in contemporary society still has value, only on a more esoteric, subjective and personal level.

The four elements have appeared constantly throughout history, varying in definition and purpose. Cultures such as the Greeks, Indians, Buddhist and Chinese have all mentioned the elements, each having their own unique interpretations and significations. I aim to create conceptual art that will reflect my personal interpretations.

1.2. Background to research problem/context:

Having been exposed to embodiment as a design tool for creating conceptual meaning, it has allowed me to explore and reflect many personal conflicts and understandings through my design. This subjective process requires the integration of the head, the hand and the heart to interpret understanding of life's aspects and happenings.

Looking at various textile sculptors and landscape artists, I will investigate the methods, purpose and meanings of their artworks. These case studies will be further expanded on in the literature review.

1.3. Significance to knowledge/knowledge gap:

Art has had value throughout history, through varying forms of expression, some of social commentary and others purely subjective. This subjective expression is the route I will be following.

Through my research I will be expanding on the existing body of knowledge, namely conceptual art. With this approach I intend to develop on a personal and spiritual level. I believe that there is a current, renewed appreciation of nature. I aim to contribute to this renewed interest through an embodied design process that enables me to become in tune with the elements of creation.

1.4. Topic area:

I will be reflecting on the theory of Embodiment, referring to the book: *The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience* (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1991). I will discuss the above theory, in combination with the theory of Phenomenology, specifically Maurice Merleau-Ponty's "Phenomenology of Perception", discussed in the book of M. M, Langer (1989).

I will combine and reflect on the above two theories in my research process. My conceptual framework will be based on the four elements, namely: fire, air, water and earth. I will briefly discuss their appearance and meaning to humanity through history. I will then outline my personal research and discoveries of the four elements, specifically highlighting on the emotional qualities that emerged.

1.5. Clarification of basic terms and concepts:

I will be applying a conceptual approach to art and design, in order to pose a question to the viewer. According to the book *conceptual Art* (Godfrey, 1998), conceptual art is focused more on ideas and meanings than the actual material or form of the artwork. This is a challenge to the traditional definition of 'art', therefore demanding a more active response from the viewer (Godfrey, 1998: 4).

It asks questions of the viewer, directing their attention inwards. The intended meaning of the work is not that of the artist, but is defined by the viewers' response, and it can therefore be argued that conceptual art only truly exists in the viewer's mental participation (Godfrey, 1998: 4). I will manipulate my materials, space and form in a conceptual manner in order to reach the viewer on a sub-conscious level.

As mentioned earlier, I will be using embodiment of the four elements and their representations as a design tool. This design tool requires the integration of the body and the mind in order to interpret understanding of life's events. In order to make our embodied experience conscious we have to reflect on our lived experience (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 27).

I will practice embodiment via a variety of methods and exercises. By immersing myself within each element, I can experience and document them on a tangible level. Sitting within the environment in which the elements naturally occur, I can also experience them from an interactive viewpoint.

1.6. Research question and sub-questions:

To what extent can the four elements be used as a form of subjective expression?

Sub-question one:

What place does phenomenology and embodiment have in the process of creating conceptual art?

Sub-question two:

To what extent is embodiment in current art and design being used through conceptual sculpture?

Sub-question three:

Can a conceptual interpretation of the four elements be demonstrated through embodied soft sculpture, and if so, how?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Key concepts

- 1.) Embodiment Theory as referring to the book: *The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience* (Varela, et al., 1991).
- 2.) The theory of Phenomenology, specifically Maurice Merleau-Ponty's "Theory of Perception", sourced in the book of Monika M, Langer (1989) called: *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception: a guide and commentary*

2.2. Theoretical underpinning:

The theory of 'Embodiment' will form part of my theoretical framework, with reference to the book: *The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience* (Varela, et al., 1991). The supporting theory is *Phenomenology of Perception* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as discussed by M.M, Langer (1989). By discussing the theory Phenomenology of Perception and Ponty's claim that the object is not separate from the person perceiving it, I will create a link to embodiment as a form of experience and perception. I intend to apply this concept to the creation of abstract sculptures, encouraging thoughtful contemplation from the viewer, hopefully creating an intentional consciousness.

I will be applying this embodiment as a design tool. According to Varela (1991: xvi) embodiment consists of both the body as a lived, experiential structure and the body as the context of cognitive mechanisms. The human mind is the closest and most familiar example of cognition and knowledge, performing cognitive tasks such as vision and memory (Varela, et al., 1991: 8)

Varela argues that if cognitive science is to include human experience, it must have some method of exploring and knowing what human experience is. He then states a Buddhist tradition of *mindfulness* as being that tool. Mindfulness is to experience what one's mind is doing as it does it (Varela, et al., 1991: 23). Varela's description of embodied, is: "reflection in which body and mind have been brought together, it is not just reflection on experience but reflection as a form of experience". By not including ourselves in reflection, we pursue only partial reflection, and our question becomes disembodied (Varela, et al., 1991: 27). In the same sense as Ponty's theory of *Phenomenology of Perception*, we can see that in order to be conscious or aware we need to include our body in our experience or reflection.

Phenomenology, according to the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, is the study of structures of consciousness, the way we experience things and the meaning they have in our experience. These can be objects, events, tools, others and ourselves. It also studies the structure of these experiences: perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion and desire (Stanford University, 2008).

Merleau-Ponty's definition of Phenomenology is that it is the study of essences, such as the essence of perception (Langer, 1989:163). Monika M. Langer discusses Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception in her book *Merleau- Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception: a Guide and Commentary* (Langer, 1989). In her assessment of the theory she states that Ponty is primarily concerned to show that perception is not an imposition, but rather a "pre-reflective dialogue between the perceived world and the perceiving body", or subject (Langer, 1989: 151).

Langer highlights that Ponty stresses a fundamental importance of the experiential body as being part of the pre-objective world (Langer, 1989: 158). This means that all our 'external' and 'internal' perceptions, feelings and thoughts are products of the continuous dialect and interaction between the experiential body and the external, realistic world (Langer, 1989: 158). Going back to his earlier statement of the 'subject' being part of the 'object', Ponty enlarges on his theory of *Phenomenology of Perception*, where he discusses art as being an example of an expression of meaning. This meaning is invisible and appears only within the visible. Therefore, meaning is sealed within the artwork, and is continuously being reshaped by the subjects (Langer, 1989:161-162). I hope to embody my sculptures, shaping and installing a meaning, dictated by my experiential body perception.

Using a cube as an example, Ponty states that consciousness produces structures by possessing them (Langer, 1989:11). Therefore, in viewing the cube, you go out of yourself, into it. Your view and your body emerge from the same being. Therefore it is the body that makes the cube (Langer, 1989:162). This example explains an embodied perception, where the body is 'part' of the object being perceived. It requires the entire body and all of its aspects to understand and make this object have meaning. Langer elaborates in saying that, In order to make this perception of the object conscious, it is important for us to go back to our actual experience of the world and rediscover the dialogue between our lived body and the exterior world (Langer, 1989:17-18). Through this reawakening of perception, consciousness loses its 'internal'/ 'external' barrier, the body ceases to be a barrier to consciousness and in-turn becomes the link between the inner and outer experience (Langer, 1989: 18-19). I intend to immerse my entire body within the experience of each element, using every aspect in order to generate a subjective understanding of that pre-reflective experience.

In the same sense as embodiment, Ponty explains that in order to remain conscious, one needs to reflect continuously on all experience types. This reflection is always conditioned by the subject's situation within the world (Langer, 1989: 19). Therefore, the things we perceive, we perceive with reference to our bodies (Langer, 1989: 40-41).

I will be applying my understanding of the above theories of phenomenology of perception, along with the theory of embodiment, to the topic of the four elements. In light of this, my practical research will be a result of my introspection, within the context of the elements. My approach to the meaning and representation of the four elements is more of an intuitive based one, where by emerging myself within the elements, I can come to a unique understanding of each element separately and as a whole. The outcome of this self-reflection will take the form of conceptual soft sculptures.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Approach

My practical research is a conceptual approach of embodiment. I will achieve this conceptual meaning through a manipulation of space, structure and material. Through this embodiment I intend to create my own understanding of the topic, and portray that understanding to the viewer through an abstract art piece. I will begin my design process with no preconceived idea of the final outcome. Personally I will reflect and embody my life's experience within this artwork. Once I have internalized and made conscious the encounter of my topic, I will explore the properties of my subject matter and theme, and how the one can reflect the other. I will do this by allowing my material to guide and form itself from within my embodied process.

The practical outcome of my experimentation will take the form of sculpture. The themes for each sculpture are that of the four basic elements of life. These sculptures will be exhibited in a 'site-specific' area. Therefore, I will be displaying and documenting my sculptures in an area that relates to the element each specific sculpture represents.

3.2. Data collection

My practical inspiration will be derived from the work of Deepa Panchamia and Annalisa Vobis. These artists inspire me as far as their techniques, applications and manipulations of textiles go. I want my work to be an exploration of the structural properties of fabric. I will achieve this by experimenting with fabric manipulation methods, using a variety of textiles. Each fabric will be chosen for its inherent properties and how I can apply them conceptually in my design. The fabric manipulations chosen for each fabric will again be representative of the conceptual message I intend to portray. By embodying the four elements of nature, I hope to capture, emulate and translate these aspects through an internalized understanding and consciousness.

My aim is to mould, form and manipulate the textiles as a medium, essentially moving textiles away from its two-dimensional form. Inspiration will be drawn from Deepa Panchamia, a textile artist based in London. Deepa's initial source of inspiration came from the sea shell, with its perfectly ordered and structured pattern. She creates sculptures and installations that experiment with scale, space, surface and structure. Deepa's focus is on the manipulation of fabrics through her own experimental techniques. Her sculptures can be moulded and transformed to create an interactive three-dimensional structure (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.). Her

process is that of a controlled, structured method, yet by utilising techniques such as cutting, pleating, folding and stitching, she reconstructs the fabric in a very organic, gradual manner (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.). This is exactly my aim, to create structured, yet organic sculptures through manipulation of a traditionally two-dimensional material, into a three-dimensional structure. This will be done using my own experimentation and combination of fabric manipulations.

Deepa's architectural formations are made solely from transparent textiles and leather. Each of these fabrics is chosen for how their properties allow her to explore structure, surface, scale and space. Deepa's style is distinctive by her use of natural colours and these transparent fabrics. These fabrics allow her to generate a third dimension in her sculptures, drawing attention to the inner surface of her work. This over-lapping of texture and density adds interest and depth. The neutral colours that Deepa uses has a way of diffusing the outer light through the textural lines and folds, creating shadows and tones, again achieving a sense of infinity (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.). I hope to create a similar sense of textural infinity, where the contours and motion of my sculpture has a life of its own. I aspire to her goal of pushing the boundaries of textiles, to create structures of balance, rhythm and endurance, all while being aesthetically pleasing.

Annalisa Vobis' biomorphic-shaped sculptures are an artistic investigation of the cycles and systems of organisms in nature. She approaches her work in a process oriented manner where she explores her own being within the process. Annalisa's main focus is on change and transience. She reflects this through biomorphic imitations of processes such as melting, crystallization and growth (Annalisa Vobis, n.d.).

Although Annalisa's goal is more of a literal, realistic replication of the systems in nature, I share a common inspiration of nature and its purpose in life. By applying a similar sense of self-exploration through my process, I hope to portray an artistic reflection of my understanding and appreciation of creation. By choosing fabrics for the specific properties they have that I can adapt, reconstruct and manipulate, I hope to take textiles out of their two-dimensional stereotype and apply them conceptually to an artistic design discourse.

I will take further inspiration from the land artist Andy Goldsworthy. He was born in England in 1956 and studied at Bradford Art College and Preston Polytechnic. Andy works in the open air, using materials that he has found around him. These materials are as such: snow, ice, leaves, bark, rock, clay, stones, feathers, petals, twigs (Goldsworthy, 1990: i). Andy becomes familiar with the site he works in by drawings that explore the location and space.

Shapes such as the ball, patch, line arch and spire are prominent in his work. An important shape to Andy is the hole, looking into the hole creates a feeling of uneasiness and instability. He believes that the black hole is the earth's energy made visible (Goldsworthy, 1990: i). Although my design will emerge from my process, I aim to use shapes and harmonies from within the natural elements. At the end of my embodiment process, I will hopefully have come to a clear and intuitive understanding of how and why these shapes are present.

Andy explores the tension in working in the area where he finds his materials, and is undeterred by the weather changes. His intention is not to make his mark on the landscape, but to work in harmony with his environment in order to change and adapt perception and understanding of the earth, a characteristic evident in nature itself (Goldsworthy, 1990: i).

This focus on the non-permanence of nature, leads to his art being sensitive and alert to changes in material, season and weather. By leaving his sculpture within the element in which it was created it slowly begins to disappear or disintegrate. This effect the environment has on the sculptures is one he records and documents via photography. The cycle his art takes, growing, staying and decaying is shown when it is most alive through this photographic evidence (Goldsworthy, 1990: i) The above characteristic of non-permanence and the effect nature has on his art is one I admire and strive to share with him.

Andy believes that his touch is transient and part of the process. The importance of him and his body as part of the seasons and changes is fundamental (Goldsworthy, 1990 i). This is an important factor in the process of embodying your subject matter or context, in order to design from a much greater and refined understanding. Similarly, being in tune with nature and its elements is an important factor for me as a designer to grow on a spiritual level of consciousness. I hope to create a unique and guided interpretation of nature through an in-depth study and connection. By contrasting the many symbolisms man has made of the elements of nature, I hope to create a contrast to my own.

The four elements of nature are a simple, yet complex example of the broader context of the environment. Each of these elements is of great importance to the function and survival of our society. By tracing these elements through time, we see that individuals and cultures have interpreted the elements in various ways.

Empedocles, a Greek philosopher and scientist, who lived in Sicily in the 5th century BC, was the first to introduce the idea that everything is made up of different combinations of four basic materials, namely: fire, earth, air and water. Plato and Aristotle accepted the theory and carried it through Europe into the 17th century (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 801).

Modern occultists reinterpreted the elements as standing for four conditions in which energy can exist:

- Air-gas.
- Fire- electricity.
- Earth- solid.
- Water- liquid (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 801).

Greek physician Hippocrates stated that, in medicine, the four elements can be combined with the four 'humours'. The humours are four liquids present in the body; it is believed that different combinations determined each mans temperament and physique (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 801).

They are as follows:

- Fire- yellow bile, choleric.
- Air- blood, sanguine.
- Earth- black bile, melancholic.
- Water- phlegm, phlegmatic (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 801).

It was believed that disease is caused by an imbalance of the humours. Phlegm can cause colds, yellow bile means jaundice and a strongly Sanguine person must be bled frequently (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 802).

Symbolic meanings of the elements are varying; fire and air are usually seen as active, positive, creative and masculine. Earth and water are seen as passive, negative, receptive and feminine elements (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 802).

French writer Gaston Bachelards sums up the characteristic qualities of the elements:

- Earthly joy- riches and impediment.
- Aquatic joy- softness and repose.
- Fiery pleasure- desire and love.
- Airy delight- liberty and movement (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 802).

Somewhere in the 15th century, once the four elements theory had been accepted, spirits became associated with each element, later named the elementals. The Neo-Platonist's, who are followers of the school of philosophy in Alexandria in the 3rd century AD, were the first to associate the spirits with the elements. They believed that these spirits lived in every part of nature (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 802).

Paracelsus, a 16th century physician, traveller, alchemist and mystic, invented the word gnome. According to Paracelsus, man is made of three substances: spiritual or godly, soulful or astral, and visible or terrestrial (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 802). These spirits are considered invisible to humans and can exist perfectly within their elements, they are as follows:

- Water- undines and nymphs.
- Earth- gnomes or pygmies.
- Air- sylphs or Sylvester's.
- Fire- salamander or Vulcan's (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 802).

The elementals are between man and pure spirits, they have flesh, blood and bones; they breed, eat, sleep and physically resemble human beings, but move as quickly as spirits (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 802).

The elements are also apparent in astrology where many traditions honour the sacred circle or Zodiacal wheel (Hall, M., 2010). Ptolemy is credited with making the association between the four elements and the signs of astrology in the 2nd Century AD. He adapted the original theories of the elements, assigning three signs to each element (Hall, M., 2010).

The signs and their corresponding element, have certain qualities assigned to them:

- Fire signs: the spirit, inspired, energy, instinctual, outgoing, active.
- Air signs: the mind, intellectual, ideas, detached, social, conceptual.
- Water signs: the emotions, imaginative, nurturing, introverted.
- Earth Signs: the body, practical, sensual, grounded (Hall, M., 2010).

3.3. Data analysis

Using textiles as my medium, I want to create four series of large-scale sculptures where the materials, forms, structure, context, placement and colours will all be applied in a conceptual manner to comment on each certain element. I intend to create these structures through experimentation with a variety of textiles, using fabric manipulations of various forms. Taking inspiration from Deepa Panchamia and Annalisa Vobis, I intend to explore the structural properties of textiles as a design medium.

They will be abstract, interactive sculptures meant for the purpose of a 'site-specific' exhibition. In this manner, the sculptures will be exhibited and documented within a context that brings further comment to their conceptual representation and meaning.

I will stick to a neutral colour palette so as to not detract from the intricate detail and texturing. In this subtle way I will not have too much voice over the message in the sculpture itself. Another reason for my choice of colour is that to use light, neutral and transparent fabrics will not create confusion with the detail of the fabric manipulation. Having said that, I may choose one highlight colour for each sculpture that is representative of the element it is based on. I will experiment with a variety of fabrics, specifically chosen for their properties and characteristics. By experimenting and reconstructing these fabrics I will use their properties as part of the conceptual framework. The formation, colour palette and specific arrangement will be symbolic of each of the elements and the emotion I will reflect and embody through the process.

The textiles I will be experimenting with are as follows: crystal organza, matt organza, Vilene interlining, poly-linen and linen, sun filter, cotton voile and cotton, frosted terylene, silk, calico, felt, cotton scrim and silk chiffon. I will be applying the following fabric manipulation techniques: pleats of all kind, folds, tucks, ruche, crinkle, pin-tucking, furrowing and smocking of all kinds.

Through this process I intend to portray my own intuitive understanding and interpretation in the four elements, as dictated to by my own experience.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH:

The significance of this research is to expand on the existing knowledge of conceptual art, and its signification and value. Nature and its importance to our existence, is a source of inspiration for many current, conceptual artists and designers. By combining embodiment as a design tool with a subjective interpretation of the four elements, I aim to comment on art and its value in contemporary society.

5. EXPECTED OUTCOMES, RESULTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

I aim to contribute to society a unique and artistic interpretation of the elements. My interpretation could contrast previous cultural definitions and interpretations. On a practical level I expect that my soft sculptures will demonstrate unique methods for utilising fabric as a structural medium. Also I will create a conceptual message and meaning for each shape, context, colour and structure. This conceptual meaning will link with what I experienced or embodied within the topic of the four elements. Through this embodied journey I aim to create awareness in the viewer, pertaining to the value of art as a form of self-expression.

6. REFERENCES SITED

Annalisa Vobis. n.d. Home. *Annalisa Vobis*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.anneliesevoibis.com/index.htm> [10 March 2010].

Cavendish, R. (ed.). 1985. *Elements and Elementals: The illustrated Encyclopaedia of mythology, religion and the unknown*. 3: 801-803.

Deepa Panchamia. n.d. Philosophy. *Deepa Panchamia*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.deepapanchamia.com/> [10 march 2010].

Godfrey, T. 1998. *Conceptual Art*. London: Phaidon Press LTD.

Goldsworthy, A. 1990. *Andy Goldsworthy: A collaboration with nature*. Harry N. Abrams, incorporated: New York.

Hall, M. 2010. The four elements in astrology. *About.com*. [Online]. Available: <http://astrology.about.com/od/foundations/p/Elements.htm> [3 April 2010].

Langer, M.M. 1989. *Merleau- Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception: A guide and commentary*. London: Macmillan Press LTD.

Robbins, B.D. 2008. Maurice Merleau-Ponty. *Myth's and logo's*. [Online]. Available: <http://mythsandlogos.com/MerleauPonty.html>. copyright 1999 [27 February 2010].

Stanford University. 2008. Phenomenology. *Stanford encyclopaedia of philosophy*. [Online]. Available: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/merleau-ponty/> [27 February 2010].

Varela, F.J., Thompson, E., & Rosh, E. 1991. *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive science and human experience*. London: MIT press.

7. SUMMARY/ ABSTRACT

Through this research I intend to explore and discover my own context within the four elements. I aim to achieve this on an intuitive and esoteric level, simultaneously demonstrating the past and current value of art as a form of expression. My goal is to discover how the value of art, in our contemporary society, can be relayed to the viewer in a conceptual sculpture. I will investigate and internalise the emotional perceptions of my experience and knowledge, and hope to reflect this understanding in my final artworks. Through this process, I hope to create aesthetic and contemplative, conceptual art.

8. KEYWORDS

- Conceptual art
- Sculpture
- Phenomenology
- Phenomenology of perception
- Embodiment
- Cognition
- The elements
- Emergent

THESIS

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

LIST OF FIGURES	iii
LIST OF TABLES	iv
1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	4
2.1. Embodiment theory	4
2.1.1. Mindfulness meditation	7
2.2. Phenomenology of perception	9
2.3. Conclusion	12
3. CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	14
3.1. Current experts in the field of conceptual textile sculpture.	15
3.1.1. Deepa Panchamia	15
3.1.2. Annalisa Vobis.	18
3.2. Past expert in the field of conceptual land art	21
3.2.1. Andy Goldsworthy	21
3.3. The four elements of nature	26
3.3.1. The four elements traced through western society	26
3.4. Data collection: A description of a process based on an embodied interpretation of the four elements.	28
• Water	28
• Air	30
• Earth	32
• Fire	34
3.5. Data analysis: An assessment of my interpretation.	37
• Water	37
• Air	37
• Earth	38
• Fire	39
3.5.1. Table 3.1. : A comparison of the objective vs. subjective words against traditional, Western interpretations of the elements.	40
• Water	41
• Air	41
• Earth	42
• Fire	42
3.6. Conclusion	43

4. CHAPTER 4: MY RANGE	45
4.1. <i>"Pleated Elements"</i>	45
• Water	47
• Air	51
• Earth	56
• Fire	63
4.2. Immersed within the elements	67
• Water	67
• Air	69
• Earth	71
• Fire	73
5. CHAPTER 5: EXHIBITION	75
5.1. Inspiration	75
5.2. My Concept	76
6. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	77
7. BIBLIOGRAPHY	79

LIST OF FIGURES	PG
Figure 3.1: Skyski, 2007	15
Figure 3.2: Skyski, 2007	15
Figure 3.3: Transparent, 2007	16
Figure 3.4: Labyrinthe, n.d.	17
Figure 3.5: Labyrinthe, n.d.	17
Figure 3.6: Radiolarian Ooze, 2009	19
Figure 3.7: Radiolarian Ooze, 2009	19
Figure 3.8: Inner Landscapes, 2008	20
Figure 3.9: Wet feathers wrapped around the stone before the incoming tide, 1999	20
Figure 3.10: Ash throw and shadow, midday sun, 1999	22
Figure 3.11: Stone chamber, 1999	23
Figure 3.12: Water Embodiment, 13 th May 2010	29
Figure 3.13: Water Embodiment, 13 th May 2010	29
Figure 3.14: Air Embodiment, 13 th May 2010	31
Figure 3.15: Air Embodiment, 13 th May 2010	31
Figure 3.16: Earth Embodiment, 23 rd May 2010	33
Figure 3.17: Earth Embodiment, 23 rd May 2010	33
Figure 3.18: Fire Embodiment, 20 th September 2010	35
Figure 3.19: Fire Embodiment, 20 th September 2010	36
Figure 3.20: Fire Embodiment, 20 th September 2010	36
Figure 3.21: Fire Embodiment, 20 th September 2010	36
Figure 4.1: Fluid Independence: Gather, 2010 [Frontal view]	48
Figure 4.2: Fluid Independence: Gather, 2010 [Posterior view]	48
Figure 4.3: Fluid Independence: Journey, 2010 [Frontal view]	49
Figure 4.4: Fluid Independence: Journey, 2010 [Posterior view]	49
Figure 4.5: Fluid Independence: Emerge, 2010 [Frontal view]	50
Figure 4.6: Fluid Independence: Emerge, 2010 [Close-up]	50
Figure 4.7: Encompassed: "Inhale", 2010 [Frontal view]	52
Figure 4.8: Encompassed: "Inhale", 2010 [Posterior view]	52
Figure 4.9: Encompassed: "Exhale", 2010 [Frontal view]	53
Figure 4.10: Encompassed: "Exhale", 2010 [Posterior view]	53
Figure 4.11: Encompassed: "Within", 2010 [Frontal view]	54
Figure 4.12: Encompassed: "Within", 2010 [Posterior view]	54
Figure 4.13: Encompassed: "Within", 2010 [Lateral view]	55
Figure 4.14: Encompassed: "Within", 2010 [Lateral view]	55
Figure 4.15: Reconnection: "Ascend and Descend", 2010	57
Figure 4.16: Reconnection: "Ascend", 2010 [Frontal view]	58
Figure 4.17: Reconnection: "Ascend", 2010 [Posterior view]	58
Figure 4.18: Reconnection: "Ascend", 2010 [Aerial view]	59
Figure 4.19: Reconnection: "Descend", 2010 [Frontal view]	60
Figure 4.20: Reconnection: "Descend", 2010 [Aerial close-up]	60
Figure 4.21: Reconnection: "Delve", 2010 [Aerial view]	61
Figure 4.22: Reconnection: "Delve", 2010 [Posterior view]	62
Figure 4.23: Reconnection: "Delve", 2010 [Aerial close-up]	62
Figure 4.24: Emergent: "Elevation", 2010 [Frontal view]	64
Figure 4.25: Emergent: "Dance", 2010 [Frontal view]	65
Figure 4.26: Emergent: "Dance", 2010 [Close-up]	65
Figure 4.27: Emergent: "Dance", 2010 [Aerial view]	66
Figure 4.28: Pleated Elements, Series 1: Water, May 2010	67

Figure 4.29: Pleated Elements, Series 1: Water, May 2010	67
Figure 4.30: Pleated Elements, Series 1: Water, May 2010	68
Figure 4.31: Pleated Elements, Series 1: Water, May 2010	68
Figure 4.32: Pleated Elements, Series 2: Air, August 2010	69
Figure 4.33: Pleated Elements, Series 2: Air, August 2010	69
Figure 4.34: Pleated Elements, Series 2: Air, August 2010	70
Figure 4.35: Pleated Elements, Series 2: Air, August 2010	70
Figure 4.36: Pleated Elements, Series 3: Earth, October 2010	71
Figure 4.37: Pleated Elements, Series 3: Earth, October 2010	71
Figure 4.38: Pleated Elements, Series 3: Earth, October 2010	72
Figure 4.39: Pleated Elements, Series 3: Earth, October 2010	72
Figure 4.40: Pleated Elements, Series 4: Fire, October 2010	73
Figure 4.41: Pleated Elements, Series 4: Fire, October 2010	73
Figure 4.42: Pleated Elements, Series 4: Fire, October 2010	74
Figure 4.43: Pleated Elements, Series 4: Fire, October 2010	74
Figure 5.1: Crystal World, 2008	75

LIST OF TABLES	PG
Table 3.1: A comparison of the objective vs. subjective words against traditional, Western interpretations of the elements	40

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

TO WHAT EXTENT CAN THE FOUR ELEMENTS BE USED AS A FORM OF SUBJECTIVE EXPRESSION?

The purpose of this research is to investigate the four elements of nature through a subjective process, in order to determine my own interpretation. These elements are: water, air, earth and fire. The knowledge and understanding I gain will be influenced by my lived experience, through an introspective process, namely, embodiment. This is a tool and process used to help me experience, internalise, analyse and interpret the meaning of visual perceptions. Therefore my aim is to create esoteric and aesthetic fabric sculptures that will reflect self-expression, an essential characteristic of 'art'. Through my research, I aim to expand on the field of conceptual art, which involves an emphasis more on the meaning and idea of the art work, than that of the materials used. By engaging with nature and using it as inspiration, I hope to grow on a personal and intuitive level.

My research question and sub-questions are as follows:

To what extent can the four elements be used as a form of subjective expression?

- What place does embodiment and phenomenology have in the process of creating conceptual art?
- To what extent is embodiment in current art and design being used through conceptual sculpture?
- Can a conceptual interpretation of the four elements be demonstrated through embodied soft sculpture, and if so, how?

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical background of my research, stating how each theory is relevant in the process of creating conceptual art. This will be a discussion of Sub-Question 1. Both practical and theoretical components will be underpinned by the following two theories: The theory of **Embodiment**, based on the writings of Varela (1991) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's **Phenomenology of Perception**, cited in the book of Langer (1989). In an explanation of the 'Theory of Embodiment', Varela (1991: xvi) claims that embodiment consists of both the body as a lived, experiential structure and the body as the context of cognitive mechanisms. Varela states about embodiment; "reflection in which body and mind have been brought together, it is not just reflection on experience, but reflection as a form of experience" (Varela, et al., 1991: xvi).

In describing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's theory of '*Phenomenology of perception*', Langer (1989: 158) stresses the fundamental importance of the experiential body as part of the pre-objective world. This means that all our 'external' and 'internal' perceptions, feelings and thoughts are a product of the continuous dialect and interaction between the experiential body and the external, realistic world. Langer (1989: 17-18) states that when viewing an object in the external world, *in order to make this perception of the object conscious, it is important for us to go back to our actual experience, in order to rediscover the dialogue between our lived body and the exterior world.*

The methodology review will address Sub-Questions 2 and 3. Sub Question 2 will be case studies of current artists who are active in the field of conceptual design. I have chosen two current textile sculptors and one land artist to serve as inspiration for my practical research. The first artist I will reflect upon is Deepa Panchamia, a textile artist based in London. She inspires me on a practical level, *where she creates sculptures and installations that experiment with scale, space, surface and structure.* Deepa focuses on the manipulation of fabrics through her own experimental techniques, more specifically the structural properties of textiles as a design medium. The second artist, Annalisa Vobis inspires me on a more theoretical level through her conceptual use of subject matter and context. Annalisa's sculptures are an artistic investigation of the cycles and systems of organisms in nature. She approaches her work in a process oriented manner where she explores her own being within the process. The land artist who I will mention as inspiration for the exhibition and documentation of my work is Andy Goldsworthy. He embraces the non-permanency of his art as determined by the fragile nature of his material. Created within the environment in which his subject matter originated, his art decays over time. He records his art in the form of photographs. *I intend to expose my soft sculptures to the very element they represent.* By emerging each artwork within the environment it is created 'from', I want to record the effects on my art piece. In the final exhibition of my work, I hope to achieve a documentation of the process, growth and decay of my soft sculptures. This will serve as proof that my art is not intended as perfect, but reflects a sense of change and process, as inspired by forms and elements within nature.

I will also discuss a brief history of the elements and their signification in various cultures, possibly creating a contrast against my personal and esoteric interpretation, still to be investigated. The four elements of nature range in symbolism and meaning, according to a variety of cultures and time. I will be focusing particularly on Western society.

Question 3 will discuss the possibility of demonstrating a conceptual interpretation, of the above elements, through representational sculpture. The outcome and emotions that emerge from within my embodied experience will be referred to at this stage. Also included in chapter three is a detailed outline of my design process and product development. I intend to enact and record a series of exercises as a form of idea generation. I hope to discover various emerging emotions through this process and relay these into a tangible art piece. This will eventually lead to various sketches and samples, which will be analysed within this chapter. Finally I will speak about the exhibition of my work.

The theory will thread into my practical component, where the manifestation will be soft sculpture. I aim to experiment with manipulation of various fabrics and their structural properties. I will use neutral and transparent textiles, leading away from the surface and single-coding that focuses purely on the visual aesthetic, towards the conceptual meaning of the artwork. The outcome will be a combination of subjective self-discovery and embodied knowledge. This idea will manifest into a tangible representation, of my intended meaning, simultaneously underlying the relevance of art as a form of expression, in current contemporary lifestyle.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

WHAT PLACE DOES EMBODIMENT AND PHENOMENOLOGY HAVE IN THE PROCESS OF CREATING CONCEPTUAL ART?

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical background to my research. I have chosen two different theories that I will compare, contrast and merge, in order to align with my practical component. The first theory I will unpack is *Embodiment*, referring to the writings of Varela (1991), which will serve as the conceptual framework, underpinning both practical and theoretical aspects of my research. I will also highlight an example of embodiment as a technique in practice, as discussed by Hocking, Haskell and Linds (2001).

2.1 EMBODIMENT

Having been taught and used the holistic form of embodiment as a design tool, I have come to a clear and logical understanding of what it is to embody. I use meditation and concentration as a tool to embody and analyse my experience. The first step is to focus and clear my mind of all distractions, random thoughts, subjective emotions and preconceptions. Once fully in this state of being, it is possible to allow the outside world to slowly come to mind, constantly filtering the information received. By remaining focused and in control, it is possible to see, hear, feel and taste an experience on an entirely unique level. Every detail, no matter how small, can be noted and stored in my mind, allowing me to mentally recall this particular experience almost exactly as it appeared. The things I would normally perceive are no longer the same, all senses adapt to the nature of this moment. In this moment I can deeply understand and truly grasp the meaning of the object or experience. This process of embodiment is not fully completed until reflection is carried out. Reflection is an inner process of recalling and re-experiencing this event, sometimes physically, after it has happened. According to Varela (1991:11), reflection is an act determined by our personal biological, social and cultural beliefs and practices. This process can be practiced and perfected until it is natural and automatic, leading to a keen awareness and observation.

Varela investigates the link between human experience, mindfulness meditation and cognitive science, all as sciences of the mind. Embodiment involves our physical body, as well as our phenomenal or experiential body. It is the integration of thinking, being, doing and interacting within our objective environment. To embody something is to gain knowledge through embracing our experiences and interactions with the environment/world (Hocking, *et al.*, 2001: xviii). This

holistic approach involves feelings, emotions, desires, and our bodies, in order to transform our perceptions (Hocking, *et al.*, 2001: 77). Kozik-Rosabal states that unlike the rational, intellectualizing experience we automatically have on a daily basis as conditioned beings, embodiment is a deliberate and intentional act on a more spiritual level of embracement (Kozik-Rosabal, 2001: 104). I hope to gain insight into my experiences and interactions with the natural environment through practical research. I intend to achieve this via an integration of my all of my senses, actions, thoughts and physical interactions. With this method, I hope to deliberately counteract the conditioned, automatic reactions and understandings I have of my surroundings.

According to Varela (1991: 5), human experience and cognitive science go hand-in-hand. The reason he gives for this statement is the human mind and it's functioning, stating that the human mind is the most familiar example of cognition and knowledge. The metaphor that Varela uses for cognitivism is the computer. The resemblance it has to cognition is in the essential, characteristic use of symbolic representations of the outside world (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 11). When applying this to the human body and its functioning, the mind is seen as the cognitive system and knowledge gained through the interpretation of symbols from the outside world, is the result of this cognition. Mental representations are occurrences of a formal system, the minds activity gives these representations their colour, belief, desire, intention etc (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 43).

Cognition as I understand it is as form of functioning that leads to knowledge gained through representational symbols and systems. It takes place in an environment consisting of components that work together, combining, analysing and interpreting the meaning of perception and external information. This environment on a biological level is the human mind or human intelligence. The outer information refers to our perception of the world and its elements. The way in which we perceive these elements, is guided by our bodily senses, being how we see, hear, smell and touch. This is then internalized and interpreted in our mind. However, these interpretations are determined by our upbringing, cultural context and prior experiences.

According to the writings of Varela (1991: 8), there are two alternatives to this cognition: the *Emergent* approach and the *Enactive* approach. I will be focusing on the 'Enactive' approach to embodiment. The enactive approach, as described by Hocking, is a constantly changing view in the process of embodied and interactive reflection. It is a view of something through and alongside our own experience, an engaging in conversation and exploration of meaning that emerges through interaction (Hocking, *et al.*, 2001: xxxi). This is relevant to my line of research, in that I intend to embody nature through a specific experience of mindfulness meditation. This experience is fluid and changing, by interacting and engaging with this process, I will gain an in

tune and constant yet adaptable understanding of the elements. The enactive approach, as named by Varela, is perceptually guided action. This is the study of how the perceivers act in their local/current situation. These situations are constantly changing depending on the perceivers' activities. This means that understanding depends on the senses of the perceiver, not on a pre-given environment. In such an approach, perception is not just part of the surrounding world; it also contributes to this surrounding world. Moreover, noting Merleau-Ponty, Varela states that the organism both initiates and is shaped by the environment (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 173). According to Varela (1991: 9), we inhabit a world with particular properties of colour, sound, movement, etc...and we view these properties through a subjective, internal representation. This representation is not of a pre-given world or understanding, but is based on the actions performed by the physical being that inhabits the world. An 'enactive' approach to embodiment will guide my practical process and research. I intend to view the elements of nature through my experience of them. This will be an extant form of gaining knowledge from my interaction with nature.

An example of embodiment in a manifested situation is described by Johnna G. Haskell, where she speaks of embodied awareness in education. She describes a program consisting of outdoor activities in order to generate an embodied respect for nature. Haskell states that embodied perception arises through ones actions with the world and that embodied awareness emerges while experiencing these unfamiliar contexts. Inspired by Varela, Haskell states that experiencing these actions within the world is not a pre-given path, but one that we create simultaneously to the experience. This is an 'enactive' approach to embodiment, honouring human experience, not separating previous experience or interaction with the environment. The generation of respect through embodiment is something that emerges while interacting within the particular space you are experiencing. Haskell believes that we as human beings are becoming increasingly disconnected from the natural world surrounding us, no longer working in and 'with' the land. She highlights the importance of revitalizing embodied experience within our communities, bringing to mind inseparability of the body and mind. Haskell (2001: 284-285) refers to her program as consisting of 'body-mind' activities in education, stating that they often facilitate a respect for animals, nature and its resources. This program promotes an emergent embodied awareness leading to respect. Haskell measured this reaction through interviews, journals, poetry and conversations with the students. Directly linked to my practical approach, this example highlights the purpose and intention I have on a personal level.

2.1.1 Mindfulness Meditation

Varela states that in order to reflect and analyse our experience in an effective and beneficial way, we can apply meditation, he specifically refers to a Buddhist form called *Mindfulness/Awareness Meditation* (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 21). This form of meditation, according to Haskell, is named embodied awareness. It is a way of being that allows us to enquire experience, know and be with the world (Hocking, *et al.*, 2001: 75). Lind describes being mindful as a state of open-ended learning, where we are present in our actions and in tune with our senses (Hocking, *et al.* 2001:81). Hocking's description of mindfulness is to be 'with body', immersing ourselves in the phenomenon before us, allowing it to spill through our being (Hocking, *et al.* 2001: 78).

Meditation in our western society is defined as, a state of concentration where consciousness is focused on one object. A trance can often occur, leading the person meditating to an altered state of consciousness. The goal of meditation is to get away from the everyday mundane, un-concentrated experience and everyday reality. Buddhist mindfulness meditation, as described by Varela, is the exact opposite. The purpose of mindfulness meditation is to be present with one's mind, to be aware of what the mind is experiencing on a simultaneous level. It is to re-engage with the phenomenal world and be fully present with ones actions, making your behaviour more responsive and aware. (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 23).The goal of mindfulness meditation is to lead the mind away from any distraction and preoccupations, back to the pure essence of experience itself. Therefore when fully developed, one's mind is present in all daily embodied experience (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 22).

Varela describes that the first thing to occur to someone when trying to *mindful-meditate*, is the tendency of the mind to wander and be distracted from any activity you are physically performing. We as human beings have many thoughts, emotions, feelings, desires, passions, daydreams, opinions and judgments continually running through our mind that we aren't even aware of. Mindfulness calms the mind, allowing you to focus for longer periods of time on its own functioning and perceptions. A description of the mindfulness process is as follows: Sit still and upright. An object is used as a focus of attention, usually the breath because it is a simple, steady constant and rhythmic bodily activity. If the mind does wander or get distracted by random thoughts and feelings, instead of focusing on the feeling to try put it out of the mind, it is important to acknowledge the thought and put it aside, bringing your mind back the object/breath. The important aspect here is not allowing an afterthought to follow, as well as to be mindful of the breath, not thinking of the breath (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 25). As mentioned earlier, I intend to apply a reflective process of analysing my experience in order to gain a

deeper understanding of my topic. The simple process of meditation as a form of filtering out unnecessary thoughts and distractions and focusing on only one object of your perspective is one I will be applying in order to embody the elements of water, air, earth and fire. I hope to *immerse myself within each element to experience them on a tangible level, being aware and recording all objective and subjective reactions that occur.*

I have noticed that as conditioned human being, I have come to identify and group objects in my experience from a habitual stereotypical conditioning. I have a fixed idea about every familiar object; this however is far from the true reality of these objects. If I try to be aware of what I perceive in a concentrated manner of mindfulness, the discrepancy will become evident. We may know how to draw a tree without looking at one, but this is done in a symbolic manner, have we truly seen the tree? If we look deeper there are things about that familiar object that you may never have noticed. This can include a combination of senses and feelings, experiencing the tree in a whole new light. Varela notes that during mindfulness meditation, the tendency for the mind to wander and grasp onto passing thoughts and ideas is also as a result of this cultural and contextual conditioning throughout our life, one that overbears the natural tendency of mindfulness, slowly making it disappear. This however can be broken after mindfulness practice; you can gradually tame the mind and begin to get to know yourself, your mind and your own experience (Varela, et al., 1991: 26). Pertaining to the four elements of nature, the above point of human conditioning is one I am currently investigating and discovering within my practical process. When thinking of each element, I have a fixed, symbolic and limited idea of the appearance of this object. This form of automatic referencing of an object in your experience is one I hope to overcome via practice and perfection of the mindfulness meditation method.

Heesoon Bai (2001: 93) proposes an example of environmental education via a form of mindfulness. He speaks of teaching people to perceive the natural world as sacred, orientating us towards intrinsic valuing of the world. We can do this through participation of the senses. The sights, sounds, scents, tastes and the feel of the natural world about us are all transforming experiences. A description of Bai's proposed situation of mindfulness meditation is as follows. In the context of a forest on a warm summer day, sitting under the shade of pine trees, he encourages you to do the following: calm your mind and heart, breath slowly and deeply, paying full attention to every detail of breathing. You may notice the sweet pine air entering your lungs, invigorating and then leaving your lungs. Picture a similar process happening in the trees, as you breathe in and out, visualize the trees and human beings exchanging breaths. This creates an intimate being-to-being, body-to-body connectedness with the forest. Bai states that with this process you can become one with nature, feel it inside you, defend it, love it, and it can motivate

you to be more aware of the harm you do to it (Hocking, *et al.* 2001: 94). This above described form of mindfulness and embodied understanding is the exact process I will follow throughout my endeavour to engage fully with the elements, in order to experience, internalize and interpret the four elements of nature into a subjective art sculpture.

2.2 PHENOMENOLOGY OF PERCEPTION

The supporting theory that I will discuss is Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, referenced by the writings of Langer (1989). By focusing on aspects that are better suited to my research, I can use this theory to create a clear understanding of my topic. *Phenomenology* is also closely tied in with the process of embodiment having similar characteristics that I can overlap and intertwine.

Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness, as well as the structure of experience (Stanford University, 2008). It involves an effort towards creating contact with the pre-reflective world around us, as well as describing our actual experience. Maurice Merleau-Ponty focuses on studying the essence of perception, noting that it can be practiced and identified as a manner or style of thinking (Langer, 1989: 163). Having been inspired and guided by the writings of Merleau-Ponty, Varela offers the theory of embodiment and cognitive science as a continuation to the research in the phenomenal field. Varela supports Merleau-Ponty's statement that our bodies are both physical structures and experiential structures, inner and outer, biological and phenomenological ones. Varela goes further in saying that in order to understand this, a detailed investigation of the embodiment of knowledge, cognition and experience is required (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: xv).

The practice of phenomenology of perception is similar to that of embodiment in that it involves the experiential body being part of the object of its perception, as well as its emphasis on reflection as a way of bringing the meaning of experience to consciousness. In Langer's commentary on the *Phenomenology of Perception*, she notes that the world is an already established meaningful one. This already acquired consciousness within the context of the world is the starting point for the phenomenology of perception as a study (Langer, 1989: 159). When speaking about reflection from a phenomenological viewpoint, Varela states that the mind awakens in an already existing world that is reflected upon as we grow and live within that environment. This reflection is made possible due to our structures. Therefore, we reflect upon a pre-reflective world that is simultaneously not separate from us. This contradicting point opens a space between the self and the world, embracing the distinction and continuity between them.

Merleau-Ponty's work is committed to exploring this space (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 15). Varela goes on to quote Merleau-Ponty in saying that perception is the background from which all acts stand out and that the world is the natural setting of all thoughts and perceptions (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 3).

Langer highlights that Merleau-Ponty's main concern is to show that perception is a pre-reflective communication or dialogue between our experiential body and the perceived world. He claims that the object is not separate from the person perceiving it. He goes further by claiming that although the subject is part of the object/world, it is sufficiently apart from it, for a communication between them to arise. This exchange, once conscious, is where meaning emerges. His focus therefore, is on making us aware that all our internal and external perceptions are as a result of this continuous dialogue. Langer states Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that we as phenomenal beings are part of the natural world and shape our own world and experience through our daily life activity (Langer, 1989: 151).

Merleau-Ponty states that in our perception of an object, there is a tendency to overlook where it originates from, forgetting the important part we as the subject play in the making up of those objects, and how we come to perceive them as objects (Langer, 1989: 23). This idea of the body and the object being the same is described as embodied perception, where the body is part of the object being perceived. *Your view and your body emerge from the same being.* This perception requires the entire body to make meaning of the object. This means that the body is not a barrier to consciousness, but a link between the inner and outer experiences (Langer, 1989: 18-19). According to Langer's interpretation, reflection on this outer world is an important aspect needed in order to gain perspective. Therefore reflection is not a theoretical disembodied activity, but rather an involved and physical one, conditioned by the beings situation in the world. In the same sense as embodiment, Merleau-Ponty explains that in order to remain conscious, one needs to reflect continuously on all experience types (Langer, 1989: 19).

Langer states the following concept of Merleau-Ponty, where he states that "the primary condition of all living perception" is spatial existence. He then describes his investigation of spatiality through the idea of 'body image'. He explains that our body is immediately present to us because we *are our body*, meaning we know where our limbs are without having to look at them (Langer, 1989: 39). Speaking of the experiential body, he coins the term 'the lived body'. He states that this lived body cannot be separated from the world, the world is the setting in which actions are performed. Perception is based on figure-background structures and is always with reference to the external object as well as the manner in which the body is acting within this context. This is only because of your 'body image' and its characteristic pre-reflective orientation

and motility in that you are immediately aware of where your limbs are within its function in the world. This is due to a habitual and automotive association of knowing where your limbs are without thinking or reflection (Langer, 1989: 41). This figure-background structure is something I hope to demonstrate in the display of my sculptures. They will be placed within the context they are based on, manipulating the viewer's perception of the sculptures.

Langer uses an example of your viewing the house across the road from your kitchen window. Your position in my kitchen can be specified precisely, yet it is the lived body which enables you to take up such a position in objective space and makes the house stand out against the background of the sky. This phenomenal body also allows you to shift your gaze to a bird flying past, momentarily making the bird the figure, while the house recedes to form the background. The body is the crucial condition that makes this figure-background structure possible. It therefore cannot itself be one of these structures. Referring back to the words of Merleau-Ponty, Langer mentions his definition of the body as the space between the experience and perception. It is this third term and 'betweenness' that is the main focus of the Phenomenology of Perception (Langer, 1989: 41).

Embodied reflection, Phenomenology of Perception, Mindfulness meditation and Cognitive science are all forms of examining experience and phenomena of the mind. Varela states that they are human activities, each expressing our human embodiment. They involve paying careful attention to every moment of experience that you physically and mentally go through, analysing, internalizing and interpreting that moment and all of its aspects and structures in such a way as to never forget their details. Each is open to the other through their methods of examination. According to Varela Mindfulness, as a practice of examining experience, bridges the gap between science and human experience (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 20).

2.3 CONCLUSION

The elements will be manifested through me as conceptual sculpture; these sculptures will be a metaphorical representation of the four elements of nature. In order to truly understand and investigate these elements on a spiritual and personal level, embodiment is a necessary tool for my design process. Embodiment via a form of mindfulness meditation will help me to interpret my experiential understanding of the four elements, and reflection on that experience will only create a deeper understanding. I will specifically be applying an Enactive approach to embodiment; this involves going beyond an objective/subjective separation and exploring experience through implicating my lived body in situations of discourse. This creates knowledge gained from physical participation, filling the space between my perceptions and experiences of each element (Hocking. *et al.*, 2001). Without this embodied process of investigation, my intended concept and message will be superficial or unclear in my end product. Therefore, embodiment is a key aspect in the process of creating conceptual art, as a way of representing conscious experience on a unique and subjective level.

My practical work will be a narrative, poetic, representation that embraces the interconnectedness of body and mind. I intend to explore a variety of possibilities and meanings within my process, allowing for the emergent nature of emotional understanding. The beginning process of this narrative will be in the form of automotive writing. By applying Mindful Meditation in and about the element, I will free my mind of its inhibitions and occupations, and begin to write until all outer distractions are cleared and I am conscious, and in tune with that one element. Re-visiting my writing, the language intertwines and enfolds me, enabling me to continually re-experience these moments of conscious perception. This is a Phenomenological based investigation where I shape the process and the process shapes me (Hocking. *et al.*, 2001).

Phenomenology is the study of structures of perception. It has a similar outlook to perception as the theory of embodiment, where it states that our bodies are part of the object or world we perceive. There is a space between experience and perception, this is the physical body and it requires the entire body to make meaning of an object. This makes the physical body a link to inner and outer experiences. Therefore without my physical body as a structure of perception between my mind and the tangible elements, I would not achieve embodied awareness. My body is the link, allowing me to perceive the elements, and is part of my understanding at the same time.

In the next chapter I will discuss how I applied these theories to my practical process, in order to research and interpret my understanding of the natural elements, into a tangible design that

illustrates a conceptual self-expression. I will discuss the artists who are active in creating conceptual art inspired by nature, investigating to what extent they may be using embodiment as a form of gaining or portraying knowledge of the natural environment, within their art. I will go further by tracing the four elements, through Western society, in order to create a contrast between their interpretation and my personal embodied understanding of the elements.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

TO WHAT EXTENT IS EMBODIMENT IN CURRENT ART AND DESIGN BEING USED THROUGH CONCEPTUAL SCULPTURE?

The purpose of this chapter is to link theory with practice, by referring to experts in the field, as an attempt to establish to what extent *embodiment is being used in current art and design*. Embodiment is the main focus of my research, and flows from theory into practice. By applying a holistic method of experiential learning, through the use of my entire being, involving both body and mind, I hope to create a strong personal and spiritual concept behind my resulting soft sculptures. The focus of this chapter is to investigate two artists current in the field of conceptual sculptures based on nature, and deduce whether they apply embodiment as a design tool. I will also mention a past land artist who inspires the documentation of my artworks, that I intend to use. In this chapter I will trace the various meanings and representations of the elements in Western society, as a contrast to my own interpretation. I will investigate the four elements through embodiment in order to capture, emulate and translate a conceptual, personal narrative to the viewer. The applied research approach is a *qualitative method that involves primary and secondary data collection types*. My secondary sources are books and internet sites. While reflecting on this secondary research, I will embody and interpret my own understanding through a primary research source, which is embodiment, or knowing through action and reflecting on that action. This primary source will be contrasted with the secondary research. My understanding gained from this process will be *transmitted through my being and manifested into a conceptually based, esoteric soft sculpture*.

3.1 CURRENT EXPERTS IN THE FIELD OF CONCEPTUAL TEXTILE SCULPTURE.

3.1.1 Deepa Panchamia

Deepa Panchamia will serve as my main source of inspiration. She is a London based textile artist who creates sculptures, commissioned interior wall hangings, wearable art and exhibited installations. Deepa is greatly inspired by the structure, space, scale and emotions in nature. This is something she strives to imitate and translate in her sculptures. Her goal is to bring nature into the home, reflecting the natural external environment, which contrasts with the inner mad-made environment we have all become accustomed too. This inspiration is evident in **Figures 3.1 and 3.2**, where she designed a series of structures that are directly inspired by the Finnish landscapes, seasons and nature (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.).



Figure 3.1



Figure 3.2

Deepa Panchamia, *Skyski*, 2007, Sculptures, Finland, (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.).

Deepa's original interest was in imitating and investigating the organic forms, patterns and textures of sea shells. She was mainly concerned with how to manifest these properties within textiles. Deepa's focus is now with textiles as a design medium and she has developed her art into the manipulation and reconstruction of all textiles. Her philosophy is to push the boundaries of textiles, as a challenge to the conventional perspective of their use and purpose. She strives to reach a balance where her work is aesthetically pleasing as well as rhythmic and continuously abstract (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.). In **Figure 3.3**, we see a series of suspended sculpture installations, where Deepa is making comment on and portraying the notion of scale and perspective.



Figure 3.3

Deepa Panchamia, *'Transparent'*, 2007, Textile Installations, Transparent exhibition, Granary Gallery, Fiskars, Finland (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.).

Deepa's artworks can be manipulated and transformed, being pliable yet stiff and structured at the same time. These contrasting characteristics are created in a process oriented manner, where the three-dimensional shape gradually forms itself as she works. This creates an ordered design process where the piece evolves through a series of stages and steps (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.). By approaching my work with no preconceptions of the final outcome, I will

allow the inspiration, understanding, journey and hope from my experience, to emerge within the process.

Deepa mainly uses translucent organza's and leathers in combination with her own, advanced methods of cutting, pleating and stitching. This methodology is performed in a controlled yet organic process, exploring the structural potential of these textiles. She chooses each fabric for how their inherent properties can be manipulated to explore her philosophy of textiles as a non-conventional form of art (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.). By utilising these light, transparent materials, Deepa manages to create a ghostlike feeling of weightlessness, simultaneously allowing the viewer access to the innermost layers and details of the structure. This adds a third dimension to her art, conveying a sense of infinity and continuous morphing of interactions between inner and outer space. **Figures 3.4 and 3.5** are an example of Deepa's pleated sculptures. In the same light as Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of Perception, Deepa is exploring the transition or dialogue between the inner and outer; transparent and solid; complex and simple; surface and reflection (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.).

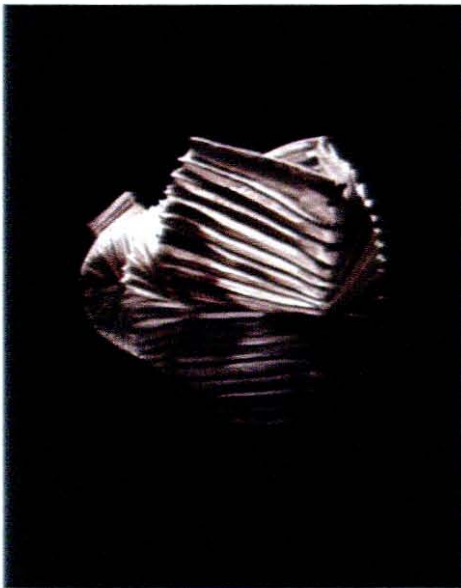


Figure 3.4



Figure 3.5

Deepa Panchamia, *Labyrinthe*, n.d., textile sculptures (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.).

The notion of a space between the inner and outer, the objective and subjective, the lived and the experiential is a phenomenological characteristic, one that I will attempt to portray through my soft sculptures. I will show this in a conceptual manner, where I indicate contrast and space *via manipulation of the textiles*. On a theoretical level, this exploration of the spaces between understanding and perception is the focus of my embodied design process. I have applied an embodied method of experiencing each element on an intuitive and conscious level, one that leads to a spiritual knowledge of the inner and outer experience of the body as a vessel to experience. Deepa also uses neutral colours, allowing diffusion of surrounding light through the sculptures, *creating shadows and tones that intensify the mobile and organic qualities of her structures* (Deepa Panchamia, n.d.). My sculptures will also be neutral whites and beiges. With this colour palette, I hope to allow space of engagement for the viewer. My colour use, along with the use of transparent textiles will allow the viewer insight into the inner, hidden layers of conceptual meaning I have placed within each artwork.

3.1.2 Annalisa Vobis

Another artist that inspires me is Annalisa Vobis. Her sculptures and installations are the opposite of Deepa's realistic and abstract art, which are entirely conceptually based; all her artworks are filled with meaning and significance. Annalisa is also inspired by nature, focusing on the systems and life cycles of organisms in the natural environment. Her biomorphic-shaped sculptures reflect *metamorphic cycles of organisms in nature and natural processes like melting, crystallisation and growth* (Annalisa Vobis, n.d.). She achieves this investigation through a process-oriented manner. A fundamental aspect that she tries to reflect in her work is the notions of change and transience (Annalisa Vobis, n.d.). This idea of change is one that happens continuously when embodying an object, experience of environment. In order to understand reality in its broader context, we need to *understand and accept this notion of change*. The preconceived impressions and superficial emotions we have on a pre-reflective level, change, adapt and morph as we gradually become more observant of the experience. Within the repetitive principle of processes based investigations, Annalisa explores the innermost depths of her being; this is a form of embodying her topic and interests (Annalisa Vobis, n.d.). I hope to achieve this sense of embodied process and understanding, in order to make conscious my experience of the four elements, so that it will be easier to reflect this connection and meaning to the viewer on a subconscious level.

Annalisa creates site specific installations, where she places and records her sculptures within a natural environment. This creates a link to what she is commenting on and strengthens the impact on the viewer. An example of this site specific work is seen in **Figures 3.6 and 3.7** in this project, Annalisa studies an organism called a Radiolarian; it is a marine plank tonic protozoan. A distinct characteristic of the organism is that it has a transparent skeleton; this is immediately evident in Annalisa's interpretation. These organisms live in the deep part of the seas and when they die, their glass shells sink into the Radiolarian Ooze that eventually forms sedimentary rock. Annalisa's focus is on the decay and recycling of these micro-organisms, emphasizing that in nature, nothing is wasted (Annalisa Vobis, n.d.). She contrasts this concept of the natural reuse system with plastic consumerism and the resulting rubbish and landfills. This concept is made clear through her use of plastic as a design medium. Annalisa places this sculpture within the water and documents it via photographs. In the same manner as Annalisa, my sculptures will be placed within the element or environment they comment on, but not subject to a realistic portrayal of a certain aspect or cycle of that environment. The sculpture will be recorded via photographic documentation. This will guide the viewer to a deeper visual understanding of the meaning behind my sculpture.

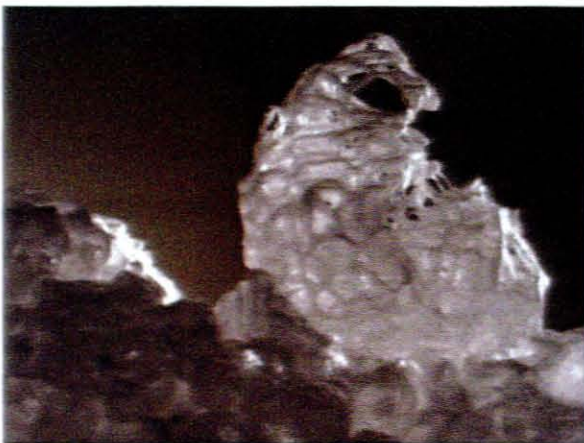


Figure 3.6



Figure 3.7

Annalisa Vobis, *Radiolarian Ooze*, 2009, plastic foil, 108" x 72" x 80" (Annalisa Vobis, n.d.).

In **Figure 3.8** Annalisa mimics the crystallisation process as inspired from a novel by the French writer Stendhal, called "Inspired by Love". In his novel, Stendhal states the crystallization is a state of mind where the unattractive qualities of a new love are "transformed into perceptual crystals" of purity and perfection (Annalisa Vobis, n.d.). Annalisa investigated the inner landscapes of human perception and the effects of this experience, specifically love, through a contrast in material and space within this sculpture. Again with reference to a Merleau-Ponty's idea that the outer and inner reflect and effect each other, we as experiential minds and bodies are influenced by our perceptual experiences.



Figure 3.8.

Annalisa Vobis, *Inner landscapes*, 2008, acrylic felt and fabric, 91" x 80" x 50" (Annalisa Vobis, n.d.).

3.2. PAST EXPERT IN THE FIELD OF CONCEPTUAL LAND ART

3.2.1. Andy Goldsworthy

I will take further inspiration from the land artist Andy Goldsworthy. His vast experience and deep embodied understanding of nature, as well as the documentation of his transient, non-permanent sculptures, is truly inspiring to me. Andy was born in England in 1956 and studied at Bradford Art College and Preston Polytechnic.

Andy works in the open air, using materials that he has found around him. These materials are as such: snow, ice, leaves, bark, rock, clay, stones, feathers, petals, twigs (Goldsworthy, 1990: i). By adapting and accepting the seasons, materials and change nature has to offer, Andy is able to work in collaboration with nature to create temporary, transient and fluid designs. Before working with nature Andy created an instinct for nature. He achieved this through a physical embodied approach of immersing himself within the elements of nature, in the hopes of understanding nature as a whole. He still does this by drawing sketches that explore the location and space he will be working in (Goldsworthy & Friedman, 2004: 1). This characteristic of non-permanence, prominent in Andy's art, allows him to come to a deeper understanding of nature's cycles, as seen in **Figure 3.9**.

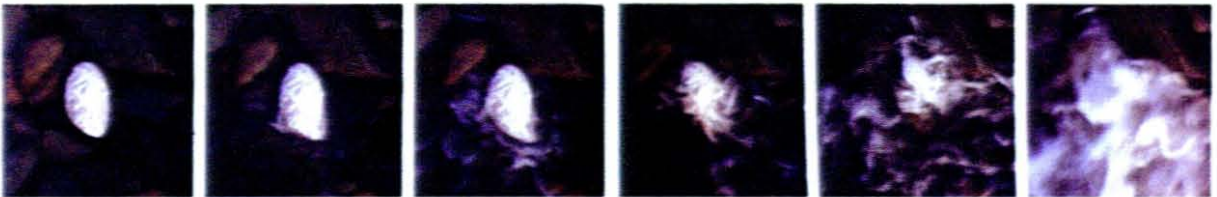


Figure 3.9

Andy Goldsworthy, *Wet feathers wrapped around the stone before the incoming tide*, 1999, feathers, Carrick Bay Dumfreisshire (Goldsworthy & Friedman, 2000: 56-57).

Although Andy doesn't claim to be applying an embodied method, it is implied and evident in his photographic evidence, where he is often included in the picture as a record of his experience on a physical level. This is seen in **Figure 3.10** where he records the shadow formation created from throwing ash under the midday sun.

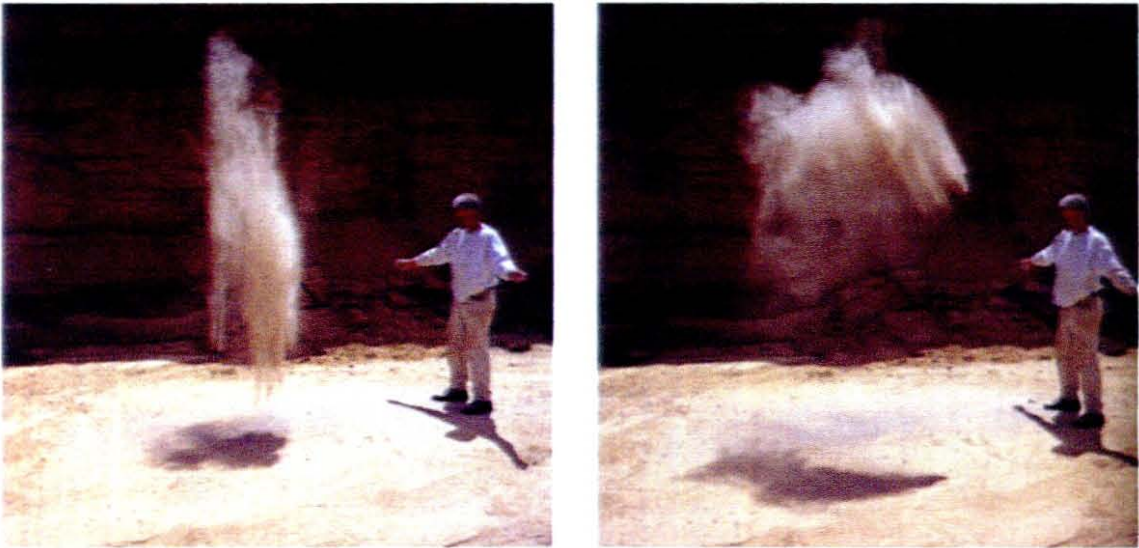


Figure 3.10.

Andy Goldsworthy, *Ash throw and shadow, midday sun*, 1999, ash, Galisteo, New Mexico (Friedman & Goldsworthy, 2000: 150).

Another, clearly embodied method of design and process is evident in **Figure 3.11**, where Andy was commissioned to create three life size stone chambers. They were each completed a year apart, marking the passage of time. Andy was able to embody his experience of building the structures, into the sculpture itself. When making the sculptures he was working in extremely cold weather, therefore he states that the chamber formed a coat of stone to protect him from the elements (Friedman & Goldsworthy, 2000: 16). This experience allowed him to create a sense of intimacy and warmth within the enclosed space. It also encourages the viewer to engage with his sculpture by placing their body within the space. By placing the sculpture as just visible above the skyline, it draws the eye not only to the chambers themselves, but simultaneously to the environment it sits in. Andy states that this creates a dialogue between intimate, internal perspective and external, distant landscape (Friedman & Goldsworthy, 2000: 1). This communicative characteristic of the internal perspective and the external world is a point highlighted in Merleau-Ponty's '*Phenomenology of Perception*', one that I will be commenting on in my own sculptures.



Figure 3.11.

Andy Goldsworthy, *Stone chamber*, 1999, stacked millstone grit, Clougha Pike, Lancashire (Friedman & Goldsworthy, 2000: 18).

Andy's use of only natural materials means his art is sensitive and alert to changes in material, season and weather. By leaving his sculpture within nature, it slowly begins to disappear or disintegrate. Andy documents the process of decay with photographic evidence; this creates a clear record of the growing, staying and decaying cycle his art takes (Goldsworthy, 1990: i). Andy discusses his approach to the photography of his work as being simple and routine, all good and bad work is documented. He has to maintain a balance between photographs that are in harmony with the experience, yet not interrupting the making. Andy states that his photographs are a result of his art, what's left after the artwork decays, reflecting the transient characteristic of nature. Therefore his photographic documentation is a Phenomenological way of capturing an outdoor experience and expressing it in an indoor space, although it doesn't retain the true energy of the real life experience, it creates a dialogue between the inner and outer experience and manifests it into a physical and permanent record (Freidman & Goldsworthy, 2004: 9). This form of photographic documentation of the process is one I am inspired by. I hope to document my embodied process of design from beginning to end. This photographic evidence will capture and record my experience of the elements of nature, allowing me to reflect on it at a later stage. Through this method I will gain more and more understanding over time. I also intend to immerse my sculptures within the element they represent, once finished. These photos will record this moment, as a source of contrast to what they looked like before and after exposed to nature's effects. Andy believes that his touch is transient and part of the process. The importance of him and his body as part of the seasons and changes is fundamental (Goldsworthy, 1990: i). In other words, our body and the part it plays in our experience, is just as fundamental as it is temporary. Just as seasons and moments pass in a flash, our physical effect on our surroundings passes in a moment, leaving only a memory. This idea of my touch being a momentary influence during the process of designing my sculptures is one evident in the end result. My transparent, white structures indicate only a fleeting moment of ghostlike, embodied expression.

The above three artists all have a common source of inspiration, which lies in nature. I too have taken inspiration from nature, specifically the four elements of water, air, earth and fire. However, my approach is more intuitive, spiritual and philosophical, as opposed to the realistic representation of Deepa's sculptures, the technicality of Annalisa's installations and the impermanence of Goldsworthy's land art. I am not concerned with realistic imitation of the physical characteristics of nature; instead, I hope to use these physical properties in a holistic and conceptual manner, in order to portray a personal narrative. This concept will be inspired and dictated to by my personal experiences of the elements, gained via an embodied process of understanding. I too will be exploring and applying the conceptual use of space, scale, surface

and structure, outlining a narrative about embodiment and a phenomenological understanding of the world. This phenomenological approach is based on my understanding that we as experiential beings are part of the natural world and our daily activities shape our experiences of that world. The phenomenological view of experience is that the object is not separate from the person perceiving it, yet sufficiently apart from it for a communication between them to arise. I understand this space between the subject and object as the exchange space, where meaning emerges. This is where my concept lies.

By looking at the above artists, my opinion is that an embodied design process is being used in an implicit manner. They may not directly mention how they embody and experience their concept, but a personal discovery and connection is evident through their abstract pieces. My aim, however, is to apply embodiment in a theoretical manner to every step of my design process. Therefore embodiment is a fundamental aspect of my self-expression. By outlining and describing my understanding gained through this method, I can come to a deeper understanding of the four elements, and hopefully this will be evident in my art creations. The following section will discuss the elements through Western society, as a contrast to my possible embodied interpretation.

CAN A CONCEPTUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE FOUR ELEMENTS BE DEMONSTRATED THROUGH EMBODIED SOFT SCULPTURE, AND IF SO, HOW?

3.3 THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF NATURE.

My main source of inspiration on a conceptual and direct basis is, as mentioned continuously throughout my research, the four elements of nature. By investigating the various interpretations, symbolizations and importance's of these elements in Western society through the ages, I will create a contrast to my own unique, experiential interpretation of earth, air, fire and water. The Information gleaned from a description and then an analysis of the elements and their associations through the ages will provide data and inspiration that will inform the development of my practical product.

3.3.1 The four elements traced through western society.

The idea of the elements as the original source and make-up of everything on earth was introduced in Sicily 5th century BC, by Greek philosopher, Empedocles. This idea was adopted by Plato and Aristotle and carried right through to 17th century Europe (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 801). Somewhere in the 15th century the Neo-Platonists, who are followers of the school of philosophy in Alexandria in the 3rd century AD, began to associate spirits with each element. They believed that these spirits lived in every part of nature. These were later called Elementals and were considered invisible to humans and can exist perfectly within their elements. They are as follows:

- Water- Undines and Nymphs.
- Air- Sylphs or Silvestre's.
- Earth- Gnomes or Pygmies.
- Fire- Salamander or Vulcan's (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 802).

In the Greek field of medicine, the four elements were seen in conjunction with the four 'humours'. This idea was introduced by a Greek physician, Hippocrates. The humours are liquids present in the body; it was believed that different combinations of the humours determine each mans temperament and physique, and that an imbalance of the humours could cause disease (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 802). They are as follows:

- Water- phlegm, phlegmatic.
- Air- blood, sanguine.
- Earth- black bile, melancholic.
- Fire- yellow bile, choleric (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 801).

Modern occultists took this idea further by reinterpreting the elements as symbolic for four conditions in which energy can exist:

- Water- liquid.
- Air-gas.
- Earth- solid.
- Fire- electricity (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 801).

Symbolic meanings of the elements were soon adopted, even within astrology. The elements of fire and air are seen as symbols for active, positive, creative and masculine. Earth and water are seen as passive, negative, receptive and feminine elements (Cavendish. (ed.), 1985: 802).

French writer Gaston Bachelards associates the following characteristics to the elements:

- Water- *softness and repose*.
- Air- *delight, liberty and movement*.
- Earth- *joy, riches and impediment*.
- Fire- *pleasure, desire and love* (Cavendish (ed.), 1985: 802).

Ptolemy is credited with making the association between the four elements and the signs of astrology in the 2nd Century AD. He adapted the original theories of the elements, assigning three signs to each element (Hall, 2010). The signs and their corresponding element, have certain qualities assigned to them:

- Water signs: the emotions, imaginative, nurturing, introverted.
- Air signs: the mind, intellectual, ideas, detached, social, conceptual.
- Earth Signs: the body, practical, sensual, grounded.
- Fire signs: the spirit, inspired, energy, instinctual, outgoing, active (Hall, 2010).

3.4. DATA COLLECTION: A description of a process based on an embodied interpretation of the four elements.

I used a form of mindfulness meditation as a tool to achieving understanding of the elements, through an embodied awareness. This is as an exercise to open up and be present and engaged in the moment. It involves consciously not inflicting ego or preconceptions on your experience. These moments are serendipitous and mindfulness meditation is the tool to finding them.

- **Water-**

In order to embody water as the first element, I chose to experience water in the form of a waterfall. I chose this environment because it meant I could strengthen my experience via a hike up the mountain, slowly becoming relaxed, mindful and conscious before I even arrive to the waterfall. A waterfall contains and is surrounded by noise and smells. The feeling of the ice-cold, fresh, mountain water and the strong visual excitement contained within the water are all experiences involving all of my senses. The mindful, meditative method I applied went as such: by sitting at the waterfall and taking a few deep breaths, I focused on one noise: the water, helping me to clear all other distractions. Once I had reached a relaxed, meditative state, I then did an exercise of automatic writing. This is where I just wrote whatever came to my head, without punctuation or stopping. If it was a thought on something other than the water, I didn't focus on trying to get rid of it, but rather got it out of my mind, on to the paper, and let it go. I wrote all my observations, dictated to by each and every sense. My writing soon became more emotive than objective. This, however, I only noticed when reflecting on my writing after that day. I did this process until I felt fully engaged and aware of everything about the water and certain clear understandings of conscious experience were foremost in my mind. After this process I did a short sketch of one area in my environment and then another exercise where I wrote down the objective vs. the subjective words of my introspective perception of the water and my experience of the water. By recording my experience with photos, as seen in **Figures 3.12 and 3.13**, I was able to take the experience back home with me. Through constant reflection, I slowly began to notice more and more about each moment of my experience; it seemed as real as if I were going through it again. I could hear, smell and feel what I did as if I was there, just from reading what I wrote. From this understanding, a concept gradually began to emerge. This concept describes my interpretation of water and its symbolism to me personally, and will be outlined in the next section.



Figure 3.12

Ferguson, C, *Water Embodiment*, 13th May 2010, [photograph], Constantia Neck.



Figure 3.13

Ferguson, C, *Water Embodiment*, 13th May 2010, [photograph], Constantia Neck.

- **Air-**

For my experience of air I chose the edge of a mountain where I was on the pinnacle, the edge, creating an alert and conscious experience where I was unable to get distracted because I had to focus on standing strong against the powerful wind I faced. Air as an element is not physically visible to the human eye, but the effect it has on its surroundings is what makes its presence known. By placing myself within a space where my body was the object physically affected by the wind, I was able to experience and 'see' wind/air as an element. I had an interesting experience with the element air, it started to rain during my embodiment and I was able to experience water and air simultaneously, creating a strong link between the two elements as working together, following on from one another both as fluid, cold, life sustaining elements. I embodied air in the same manner as described above; however, I found that by closing my eyes I was able to better connect with and understand the experience of wind. Because of the chaotic nature of this experience, I had to apply the automotive writing after the actual moment of embodiment. This meant that I had to be truly in tune and concentrated on the experience I was having, in order to properly recall it afterwards. Having practiced mindfulness with water, I was able to have a longer concentration span this time. Sitting down after my meditation, I was still immersed within the element, although not as extreme as before, I was still able to embody and write about it. As with water, I once again performed the writing exercises after this embodied experience. Photos of the context in which I experienced the wind are seen in **Figures 3.14 and 3.15**. These photos are visual aids I used to strengthen and remind myself of how I felt, what I smelt, saw and experienced on that day. These, along with the writing exercises, are tools I used to constantly reflect on my interpretation of wind/air, in order to build the concept around my sculptures. This concept will be outlined in the next section.



Figure 3.14

Ferguson, C, *Air Embodiment*, 13th May 2010, [photograph], Constantia Neck.



Figure 3.15

Ferguson, C, *Air Embodiment*, 13th May 2010, [photograph], Constantia Neck.

- **Earth-**

I chose to embody the earth in its entirety; this was done on the slopes of a mountain, within a pine tree forest. Unlike air and water, there were no audio sounds as a link, distraction or connection to the element on a physical level. This stimulation of the senses was in the form of silent connections within my subconscious mind; my goal was to discover this connection and dialogue. I experienced earth in the same mindful manner as the above elements, while sitting on a rock, a fallen trunk and on the floor of the forest, this enabled me to embody a different history of each of these elements, according to its past life and experiences. This story was dictated to by my embodied connection and understanding of the environment. I asked questions like; When and why did this tree fall? What was the experience of the tree as it fell? It was the perfect platform for me to embody the entire environment of the earth as a life sustaining, link to all earthly beings and objects. Not only did I embody earth within the soil and dirt of the actual earth, but every aspect, including the things that are made from and with the earth. It felt as if I was alone, immersed within a forest of over bearing higher powers that towered over my body, their shadow a reminder of their presence and power. I am looking down over society and the repercussions of mans choices. I preformed the exercise of automotive writing within a relaxed, position on top of and immersed within the earth. This is seen in **Figures 3.16** and **3.17**. Reflection with the use of the photos and writing exercises, done after that day, enabled me to gain a deeper connection and understanding of the earth as a powerful, superior and awesome element. I slowly began to unpack and form this connection into a concept, one that will be enlarged on in the next section.



Figure 3.16

Ferguson, C, *Earth Embodiment*, 23rd May 2010, [photograph], Newlands nature reserve.

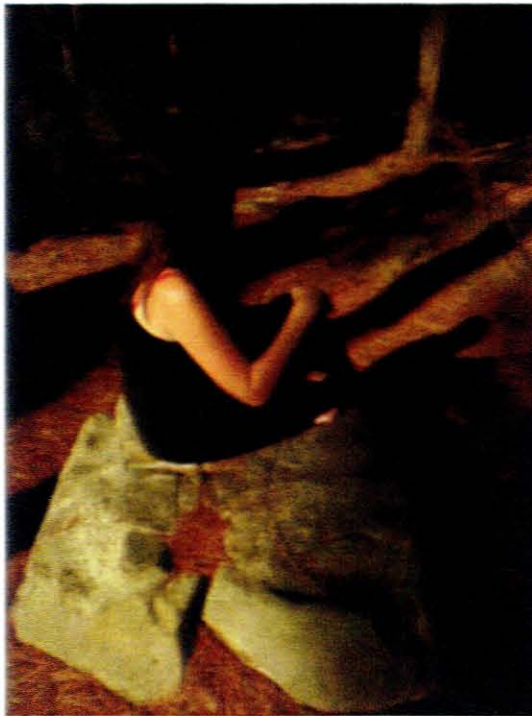


Figure 3.17

Ferguson, C, *Earth Embodiment*, 23rd May 2010, [photograph], Newlands nature reserve.

- **Fire-**

I chose to embody fire within nature, where I could experience building and starting the fire myself. In this manner I was involved with the process and cycle of the lifetime of the fire, immersing myself within the experience of a single flame. This embodied experience was performed at night where the fire is most powerful and evident. Fire in my experience stimulates all of the senses, the burning heat I felt tingling over the top layer of my skin, the crackling noises as it slowly melts, dries out and disintegrates the wood it feeds and is based on, the only thing stopping the flame from disappearing skywards into the invisible wind tunnel above. Lastly, the mesmerising, vibrant colours and shapes it forms as it reacts to the air it feeds off, jumping and clinging to its surroundings. **Figure 3.18** shows an image of this fire I was embodying. These above qualities are the elements that I focused on while applying the mindful meditation method. I found this was the easiest element to meditate on as the surrounding darkness and quiet stillness blocked out all outer distractions and I was able to see only the fire. I performed the automotive writing exercises while sitting closely to the flames, also grounded by the earth that holds me up, feeling the heat, hearing the crackles and watching the flame as it leaps and flickers in a fast moving dance. **Figures 3.19, 3.20 and 3.21**, show a series of photographs taken to show the process and random movements of an active flame as it rises and falls, affected by the slightest change in the wind that it thrives and breaths on. Reflection on these pictures, along with my word exercises, has enabled me to have a deeper understanding and connection with fire as a wild element of desperate, mesmerising strength. This connection and subjective concept will be unpacked in the following section.

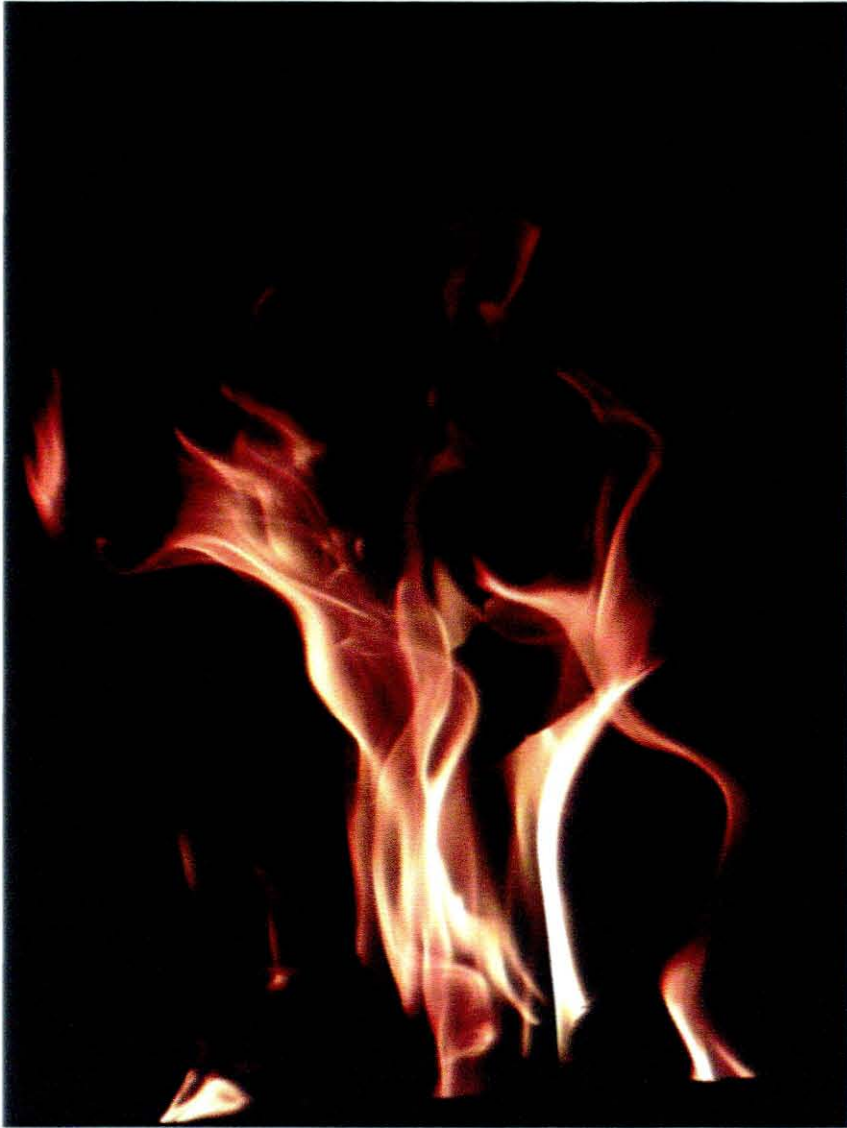


Figure 3.18

Ferguson, C, *Fire embodiment*, 20th September 2010, [photograph], Newlands nature reserve.



Figure 3.19

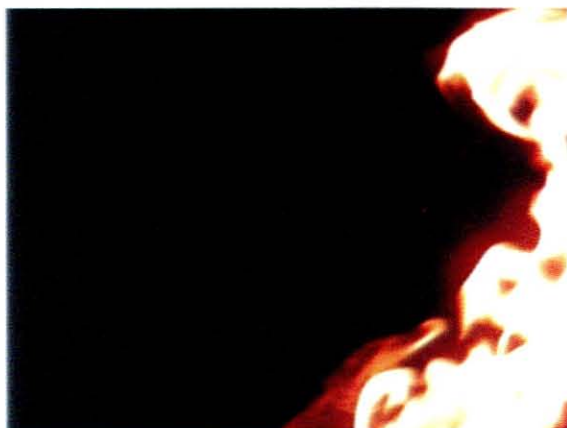


Figure 3.20



Figure 3.21

Ferguson, C, *Fire embodiment*, 20th September 2010, [photograph], Newlands nature reserve.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS: An assessment of my interpretation.

- **Water**

To me a waterfall is a continuous journey from an unknown beginning to an unknown end. It is a journey of obstacles and difficulties, which all culminates into a large pool of emergent understanding, knowledge and independence. This journey symbolizes the many obstacles and difficulties I have faced the last three years of study, supporting myself financially and finding out just what it's like in the big world. I am hoping that the end of this year will be a milestone where I will emerge prepared, independent and confident, everything I have experienced this year having contributed to that outcome. Mindfulness meditation is used as a tool to embodied understanding, one that I applied in my embodiment of the waterfall. This form of meditation is a way of filtering the outer information that your mind receives, gathering only that which is needed and storing it so as to recall it at a later stage.

- **Air**

Air to me symbolizes life in its simple stereotype of black and white, good and bad, young and old. This is a complicated situation leaving confusion, contradictions and emotions. In order to live happily and comfortably in this lifestyle we need to find a balance between the two. This is the overall concept behind my air sculptures. This idea was motivated from the two contrasting forms of air I experienced during my embodiment. The one being air as a still, quiet, constant presence and the other being the harsh strong powerful angry form of air- wind. While immersing myself within the environment of these two opposing forces, it gave me a feeling of support and warmth, I felt surrounded, enveloped, encompassed, held and secure. The air whispered to me as it warmed and held me within its presence. Yet at other moments it surrounded me with a hollow angry, empty fear. Unlike the other elements, air is not a visible element, only the effects it has on its environment are. To me this symbolizes the things in life that are real or those that have happened but cannot be seen, things that we both believe in and lead our life by. These are as such: faith, love, hope, belief, religion, creation, life.

This discovery for me highlighted a contrast and contradiction in every aspect of air as an element. My experience of air in the form of wind is the most evident force of air we know on a physical level. The stagnant air we breathe is a presence we know only in the mind, one we continually experience and take for granted. The lack of air is an experience in itself. Wind

however is the raw, natural, angry form of air we experience when exposed to the natural world, away from protected human environment. This is what I wanted to embody; the elements within their own environment. Wind has the following contrasting characteristics to me:

- Angry-calm.
- Empty-full.
- Flighty/wispy-strong and powerful.
- Questioning – hopeful and belief.
- Decreasing-increasing.
- Everything-nothing.
- Constant-seasonal.
- Loud-quiet.
- Warm-cold.
- Weak-strong.
- Moveable- stuck.

These contrasting characteristics, to me, indicate a “betweeness”, the space between struggle and understanding, life and death, perception and understanding. It is the moment between each breath, that is contained within a small bubble, floating, suspended in time, waiting to be caught by the tunnel of wind and carried into the distance.

- **Earth**

Earth to me involves my concern with the environment and a personal need for reconnection. The creeping, crawling, burrowing, grounded characteristics of earth symbolize my goal to connect, listen and consider every aspect around me, taking nothing for granted. I hope to learn a lesson or story from the wisdom in everything surrounding me. The earth is my life support and connection to the world, keeping me alive. My feet and toes are the veins, roots and tubes attaching me. This connection allows me to be in tune to the constant, increasing dialogue of wisdom and experience, hope and devastation. As I sat there I could feel the earth whispering and communicating to me. Just as a root sucks the water to the leaves, I am sucking and pulling information. It leaves me breathless, in tune, silent and thoughtful. This information appears symbolically as music notes, colours and shapes. There are no words, only age old connection and symbols, and I realize that everything on the earth IS the earth. The textures add variety and interest, the cracks are timelines that symbolize damage, experience, age, regrets and lessons overtime. The earth to me is like a history library where we plug our roots in to gain insight. I became aware of a cycle. For instance a tree is born, lives, reproduces, dies, falls, and becomes compost, feeds, re-germinates and the cycle starts again. The shadows cast on the earth are

reminders of history and the higher power that governs our existence, as we rely on the earth for survival. We are dependant and connected to the earth and its cycles in order to live. Once again I picture the earth as a cognitive system. All the components on the earth make up the earth, yet they can be broken apart into smaller components that are parts working separately from each other, each resulting in knowledge and information, separately or together.

- **Fire-**

Fire to me involves the many millions of tiny events that we as individual experience daily, weekly and in our entire life times and how every event, no matter how small and insignificant work together to form the people that we are. I have found that it is easy to get pulled in and contained within a demanding and desperate struggle of survival, grasping and pulling at our life's aspects that we thrive on for survival. However at a point I have realised that in order to overcome this grounding and restrictive existence, it is important to let go and float away from the situation and survival will always follow, like a tunnel of wind. Although we may not be the 'flame' anymore, only the 'smoke', it will be a lighter, more free existence. This is something I have learnt throughout the year and am still working on. This idea was motivated by the flickering flames that while remain bound by the wood that they cling to, they are jumping and reaching skywards in fast desperate movements as if struggling to breathe from the pressure and exertion of reaching for their life support, air. As the fire burns out it leaves behind glowing embers like the never forgotten emotions or stresses we carry with us, yet they are still in your past, left behind as the smoke from the distinguished fire lifts away free and exhilarated.

Fire, to me, stood out as different to the other elements. This is in its powerful and visual characteristics. Fire has a momentary life span, existing only for a certain period, yet making a huge impact on its surrounding area, leaving its mark, with only the glowing embers and smoke left behind as a reminder of what it once was. Fire also combines all the elements together as a whole unit; one cannot exist without the other. Fire clings to the earth as its base, it relies on air for its survival and water is its distinguisher. This cycle creates a connection of all the elements as working together as a cognitive, functioning whole, reliant and dependant on the existence of each other.

In the following chapter I will discuss what implications these characteristics have on the structure and design of my sculptures. I have summarized and condensed the above description of my experience into the following objective and subjective words. These words originate from

the exercises I performed after my embodiment of each element. They are used as reminders to help me recall and reflect on this experience. The following table is a qualitative form of data analysis that highlights the differences and similarities between each element, as well as contrasting my interpretation of each element against the traditional Western interpretations. These characteristics immediately relate to my own lived experience of each element.

3.5.1. Table 3.1. A comparison of the objective vs. subjective words against traditional, Western interpretations of the elements

	WATER	AIR	EARTH	FIRE
OBJECTIVE	Transparent	Interactive	Roots	Yellow
	Moving	Hazy	Cracks	disintegrate
	Shakes	Unclear		Glow
	Shimmers	Layers		Crackle
	Out-of-focus	Spontaneous		Smoke
SUBJECTIVE	Evolve	Mind	Draining	Mesmerizing
	Journey	Hope	Story	Life sustaining
	Hollow	Hollow	Wisdom	Process
	Crisp	Nurturing	Power	Cycle
	Thoughtful	Life	Intelligence	Breath
	Independent	Whisper	Cycle	Luring
		Encompassing	Connection	Deceiving
			Lifeline	Gravity defying
			Crawling	Desire
			Burrowing	Wind tunnel
			Dialogue	Dance
WESTERN SOCIETY INTERPRETATION	Phlegm/ Phlegmatic	Blood/ Sanguine	Black bile/Melancholic	Yellow bile/Choleric
	Liquid	Gas	Solid	Electricity
	Softness	Delight	Joy	Pleasure
	Repose	Liberty	Riches	Desire
	Emotions	Movement	Impediment	Love
	Imagination	The mind	The body	The spirit
	Nurturing	Intellectual	Practical	Inspired
	introverted	Ideas	Sensual	Energy
		Detached	grounded	Instinctual
		Social		Outgoing
		conceptual		active

By using the above table as a way of comparing the characteristics of each element, I came to the following conclusions:

- **Water**

Where Western interpretations of the element water speak about the characteristic of being introverted, my experience leads me to the contrasting characteristic of independence. Another difference evident is that the western interpretation views the water element as symbolic of emotions and imagination. I came to the understanding of water symbolizing thought, a more objective approach of actual change, steps and hollowness, as opposed to the deepness of emotions. This, more simply put, is the mind versus the heart.

- **Air**

In the analysis of the element air, there are great similarities between my interpretation of Water and the western interpretation of air. This is an important factor, only made evident through the use of the above comparative table. These similarities may have occurred due to my specific experience of air and water simultaneously. The main characteristic evident through my embodied experience of air was that of nurturing, however western society speaks of this when referring to water. Where western society defines air as liberty and movement, I relate the same characteristics to water as moving and liberated or independent. The above connection highlights my embodied experience of the cold elements working together, linking as a pair. However, there are also similarities of mine versus the western interpretation. Western interpretations state that air represents a social aspect, I agree in that I view air as something to do with or involve life, which could be understood as everyday social life. Where it mentions delight as a western definition, I understood it as hope, which relates to being delightful or hopeful. And finally western interpretation speaks of the mind, intellectual or conceptual. I too embodied the idea of the mind in my particular experience of air. Finally, my main experience of the element air is the characteristic of feeling encompassed, where the inner and outer, the visible and the invisible are both evident and interactive. Western interpretation speaks to the other end of the scale, mentioning the air element as detached.

- **Earth**

Western interpretations of the element earth against my own are so vastly differing that it was hard to analyse and interpret the different characteristics. Western society view earth as representing riches, joy and sensuality, whereas my experience dictated a feeling of wisdom, power and intelligence. To me these characteristics are more 'grounded' and realistic, than the materialistic characteristics stated as the western definitions. However another representation of earth as by western ideals is to be practical, as opposed to my interpretation of a story or a poem. Finally where western society speaks of the earth element representing the body as an object, I experienced the earth as a cycle, experience or dialogue.

- **Fire**

Western interpretations of the fire element speak of an active, outgoing, inspired characteristic, bringing to mind a form of energy or electricity. For me, fire has a calming, mesmerising quality. I was lured into the flame, forgetting everything around me and unable to pull myself away. Where Western ideals speak of fire as representing pleasure, desire and love in a positive and spiritual sense, my experience also dictated the idea of desire, yet in a more needing, clinging, jealous and ravenous manner. I saw the burning flames as hungry, burning with desire, as they cling and pull to the invisible air as their one and only life source, while being kept grounded to the earth by the wood that they hover over, attached by a seemingly invisible thread.

3.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter the following was done to answer Sub-Questions 2 and 3. I investigated three conceptual artists who are inspired by nature. This research was done as a way of indicating their inspiration to me on a practical level, as well as an analysis as to what extent embodiment is being used in current conceptual sculpture. As deduced earlier, these artists use embodiment in an implicit manner more to come to an understanding of their subject matter, than as a way of expressing a personal emotion. Embodied understanding is evident in the process of their artworks, yet not personally fundamental to the artists as a form of self-expression in their practical outcome. Therefore, my contribution to this field will be creating art where the process of embodiment, including the lived and experiential body in perception and understanding, is essential to my ultimate expression. Throughout the analysis of the above artist, we see a continuous link of Phenomenology of perception. The purpose of these artists' sculptures is to create a dialogue between the inner, introspective perception of their experiences and the outer, physical world. This is then represented in a realistic or metaphorical manner.

I also discussed the *four elements of nature in their Western interpretations* as a contrast to my own subjective interpretations. This contrast can be made evident in a conceptual manner through a narrative derived from my embodiment. Finally I discussed the process and experience of my embodiment of each element, as well as my interpretation of the elements derived from that particular experience. I then went on to analyse my interpretation against *Western interpretations by the use of a comparative table of subjective and objective words*, gained from the automotive writing exercises I performed. This enabled me to create a clear and logical delineation of my embodied understanding versus the traditional one. The writing exercises I performed during and after my embodiment enabled me to connect with the experience and understand it better. I have since reflected on it many times in order to deepen *that understanding and knowledge. This enabled me to see things I didn't see before, making my own solid idea of the experience as a self-expression.* I will discuss how I translated, reflected and manifested these characteristics into a concept, in the following chapter.

I will create a series of sculptures for each of the elements, outlining, representing and symbolising my steps, emotions, perceptions and interpretation of the elements of nature, as described in this chapter. This understanding will be a result of my in-depth personal connection and investigation of nature. My conceptual meaning will be evident through the use of space, structure, colour and textures. All these elements will combine to form an esoteric narrative. A

more detailed analysis of how I portrayed my conceptual basis on a tangible level will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: MY RANGE

The following chapter will outline how the theory threads into the practical component for each element. It will be a discussion of how I have manifested the theoretical backing, a data collection and an analysis into the practical component. I will define and discuss my reasons for fabric choice, size, shape, structure, methods, components and layout. I will refer back to the Phenomenology of perception and the theory of Embodiment, stating how I used these as design tools in order to make my subjective interpretation of the elements evident through conceptual sculpture. This chapter will be a final answer to Sub-Question 3, showing how a conceptual interpretation of the four elements can be demonstrated through embodied soft sculpture.

4.1. "Pleated Elements"

As discussed throughout the above chapters, there are a few common elements to each of the sculptures. These are the use of mainly white or neutral fabrics, the technique of permanent pleats, as well as the manipulation of fabric into three-dimensional structures. Finally, the purpose of each sculpture is to demonstrate a conceptual understanding of the elements of nature. This concept may not be immediately visible to the viewer, yet certain aspects within each series of sculptures acts as a reminder or hint to what the theme is. More importantly the final display of the sculptures will create an environment for the viewer to experience my interpretation, gaining insight into my concept.

In the above Chapter 3, I discussed the process of embodiment that I carried out for each element in great depth. I described the knowledge gained from that experience and how I came to my interpretation through constant reflection. Embodiment was the tool I applied in the data gathering stage of my design research, in order to do this. This enactive approach involved gathering information through the implication of my physical body into a situation of discourse with my subject matter. Through this approach I was able to see a link between embodiment and the phenomenology of perception, as both are a study that embraces the connection between body and mind. Phenomenology studies the structures of perception and the experience of the body as a form of gaining knowledge about an environment. Therefore my physical body or embodiment is the link between experience and understanding, enabling me to achieve embodied awareness. These two theories working together highlight the fundamental

importance embodiment plays in creating conceptual art. Without a method of interpreting embodied perception, such as mindful meditation and reflection, a concept representing the elements and portraying that into a tangible metaphorical artwork, would be superficial. However it is also true that a conceptual interpretation of the four elements is not immediately visible to the outside viewer alone, without a few hints and links to what the theme is.

I have finalised my decision to use only Organza and the manipulation technique of permanent pleating for all my sculptures, so as to keep a uniform appearance, where the only variety will be in colour, structure, shape and placement. lastly I have also decided that the use of a highlight colour for each element will act as too much of a realistic representation of the traditional interpretation of the elements, therefore distinguishing characteristics of the element each sculpture represents will be incorporated in the exhibition of my range, only via projections, placement, photographs and text. The next section will discuss the physical aspects I have incorporated into the structure and included in the display of the sculptures, in order to jump start the thinking process of the viewer in the right direction. After contemplating and maybe discussing each series of sculptures I am almost certain that they will come to an interpretation that is very close to my intended concept.

- **WATER: "Fluid Independence"**

ELEMENT: Water

MATERIALS: White, crystal organza

METHOD: Permanent Pleats and hand-sewn Pockets.

CONCEPT:

Water to me symbolises a personal journey to the discovery of independence...fluid, changing, adaptable and open-minded. In order to capture the idea of a journey, the structure of each sculpture in the series will be hanging from the sky, at different intervals, some of them eventually 'pooling' on the floor beneath in a bulging mass of emergent fabric, this is seen in **Figures 4.3 and 4.4**, where the fabric flows and decreases as it reaches the ground, gathering on the floor as emergent bubbles of understanding. This structure is also a representation of the waterfall itself. The obstacles and difficulties faced in one's journey to independence were inspired by the many natural objects blocking and creating a detour to the natural path of the water. These are objects such as: rocks, twigs, leaves and stones. Although the water is forced in another direction, it always finds a way to overcome, embrace and adapt to every obstacle, sometimes simply flowing straight over the problem and leaving it smoother in the process. This is something I strive to learn from and apply in my daily life. This fluid, adaptable characteristic of the water to overcome obstacles is seen in the first sculpture in the water series, **Figure 4.1 and 4.2**, where the ripple-like formation of the pockets weaves from the top to the bottom of its journey. The last sculpture within this series, seen in **Figures 4.5 and 4.6**, shows a free element of relief, as the final discovery of independence is achieved.

The most symbolic component of the water sculpture series is that of the pockets. These pockets each hold a lesson, idea, inspiration, thought, feeling, emotion, realisation, goal or memory that is filtered, gathered and stored within each fragile pocket. These pockets are, to me, a manifestation of the mindfulness meditation process, where the mind filters and stores every piece of information received from the outer environment. Varela speaks of a cognitive system being made up of parts that form the functioning whole and how knowledge is a product of this cognition (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 11). This is represented by each pocket, that are all smaller parts making up an independent whole. When working together as one they are parts of a functioning cognitive system, where the knowledge gained is a result of the journey and cognition. Embodiment is primarily concerned with the space between the physical body and the experiential one. This space is indicated in my sculpture by the hollow spaces within each

pocket. This is highlighted by the use of a transparent fabric, allowing interplay between the inner and outer surface, yet still unclear as to what is contained within that space. The use of crystal organza creates a luminous atmosphere within each sculpture, using the water's reflection and transparent nature as a recognisable characteristic within the series. The pockets as a whole are placed to form a ripple effect, representing the flow, change and movement of the water. I hoped to capture the transparent, shimmering, shaking, crisp and hollow characteristics of the water through the use of crystal organza.

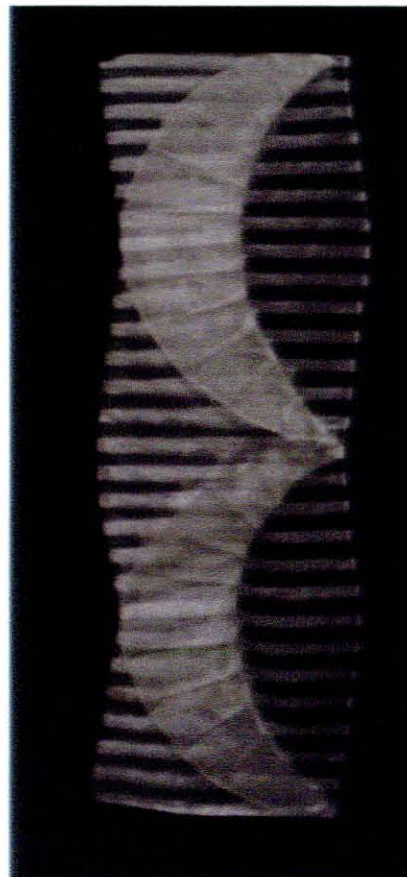


Figure 4.1. SCULPTURE 1: "Gather" (Frontal view). Figure 4.2. (Posterior view).

van Zyl, K., *Fluid Independence: Gather*, 2010, White crystal organza, 141cm X 42cm (Ferguson, 2010 a).

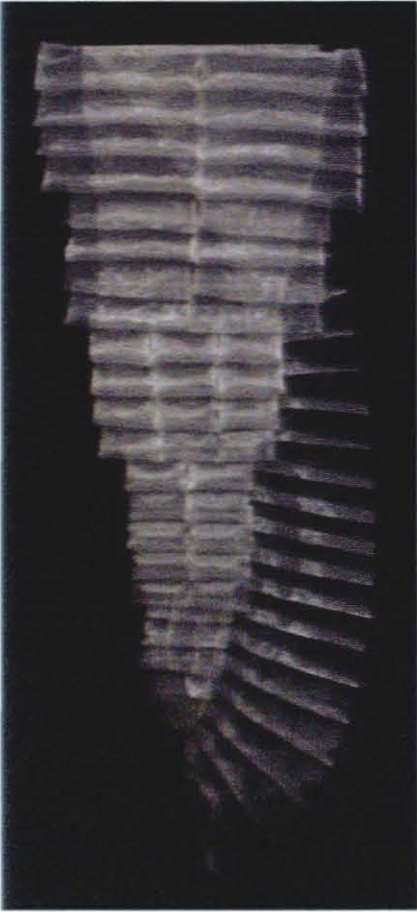


Figure 4.3. SCULPTURE 2: "Journey" (Frontal view).

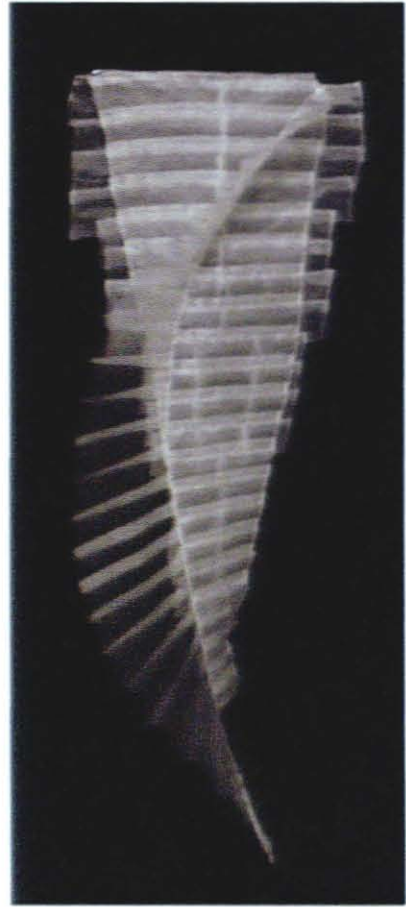


Figure 4.4. (Posterior view).

van Zyl, K., *Fluid Independence: Journey*, 2010, White crystal organza, 253cm x 48cm (Ferguson, 2010 b).



Figure 4.5. SCULPTURE 3: "Emerge" (Frontal view). Figure 4.6. (Close-up).

van Zyl, K., *Fluid Independence: Emerge*, 2010, White crystal organza, 81cm X 60cm (Ferguson, 2010 c).

- AIR: "Encompassed"

ELEMENT: Air

MATERIALS: White, matt organza

METHOD: Permanent pleats and fabric manipulation

CONCEPT:

The air sculptures will be displayed, suspended from the sky, each cocoon like structure hanging as if between two contradicting opposites, carefully suspended in a fragile existence. This placement will indicate the balance between the two extremes of air I experienced, as well as air being at the centre of our existence. This brings to mind the simple act of breathing, an important aspect not only for the proper functioning of our bodies, but one I used extensively in my embodiment of the elements, as a tool to achieving mindful meditation. I incorporated this idea into the shape and structure of the air series through a non-realistic imitation of a ribbed lung expanded and contracted, as if breathing. The shape of each sculpture in this series is also reminiscent of a cocoon or weaver's nest, symbolising nurturing or caring. It is also similar to the stork carrying the baby in a blanket, as seen in **Figure 4.7 and 4.8**. This imagery is inspired by the things that we believe but cannot see, such as creation, hope, belief and emotion. An interesting connotation of these attributes is the symbolic imagery of wings, in **Figure 4.9 and 4.10** you can see that my sculpture can be seen to represent a winged formation. This hollow, breathing "lung" created by my bag like sculptures is the vessel that holds these invisible aspects, related to the wings. Another aspect evident in the shape of the sculptures is that of security, warmth and being held. This is seen through the bubble like shape, its centre holds a calm, serene and warm atmosphere. An interesting image appeared to me after contemplating the three finished sculptures in this series. The third sculpture, seen in **Figures 4.11 to 4.14** is reminiscent of the bones of a body, a back bone and rib cage, the vessel that holds the lungs. *Therefore the series appears to show the lungs as having been set free from the restrictions of the encompassing body.*

The use of white, matt organza fabric highlighted a clean, transparent, breathing characteristic, where it seems that a pocket of air is contained within these hollow formations. Each, breathing bubble will be hung in a mobile-like formation to reinforce this quality of a weightless existence.

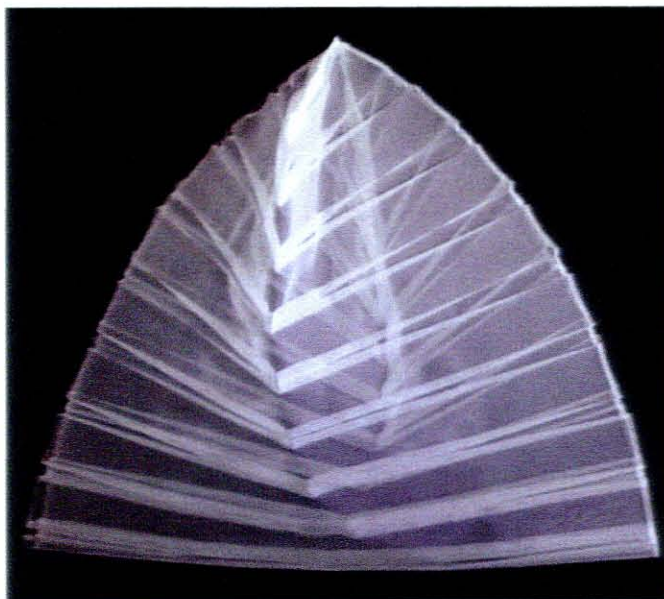


Figure 4.7. SCULPTURE 1: "Inhale" (Frontal view).

van Zyl, K., *Encompassed: "Inhale"*, 2010, White matt organza, 60cm X 50cm, width: 52cm (Ferguson, 2010 d).

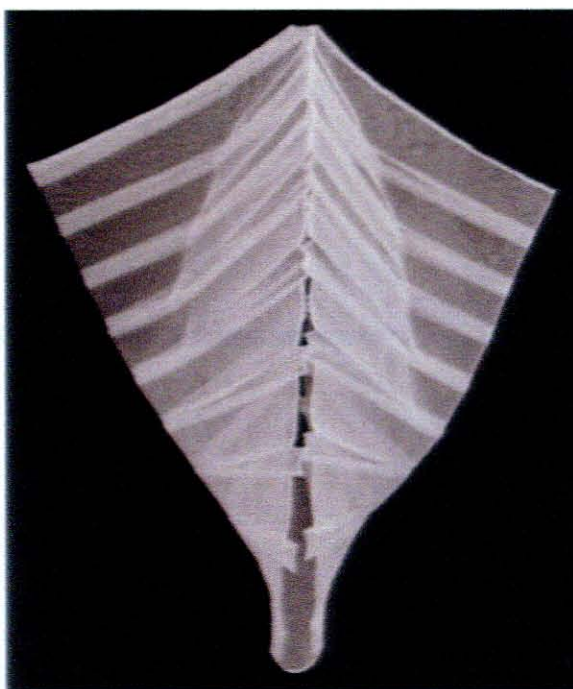


Figure 4.8. SCULPTURE 1: "Inhale" (Lateral view).

van Zyl, K., *Encompassed: "Inhale"*, 2010, White matt organza, 60cm X 50 cm, width: 52cm (Ferguson, 2010 d).

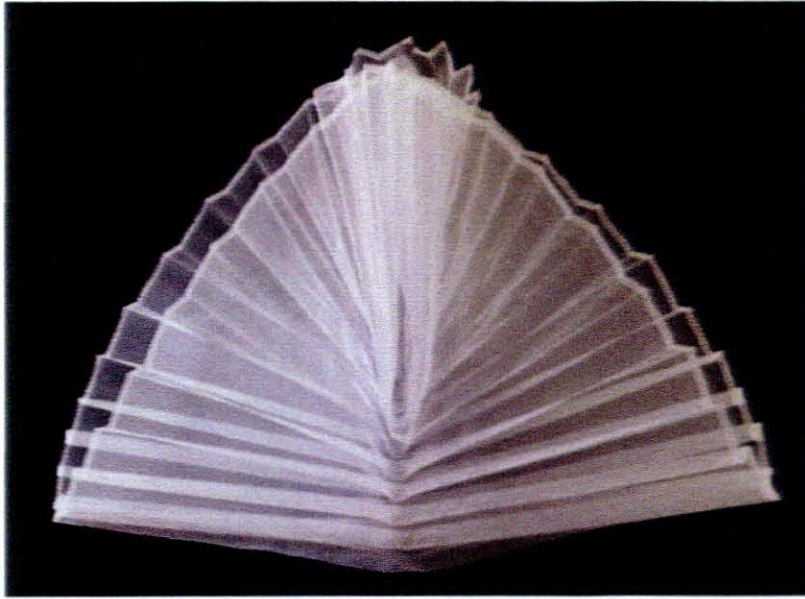


Figure 4.9. SCULPTURE 2: "Exhale" (Frontal view).

van Zyl, K., *Encompassed: "Exhale"*, 2010, White matt organza, 52cm X 42cm, width: 42cm (Ferguson, 2010 e).

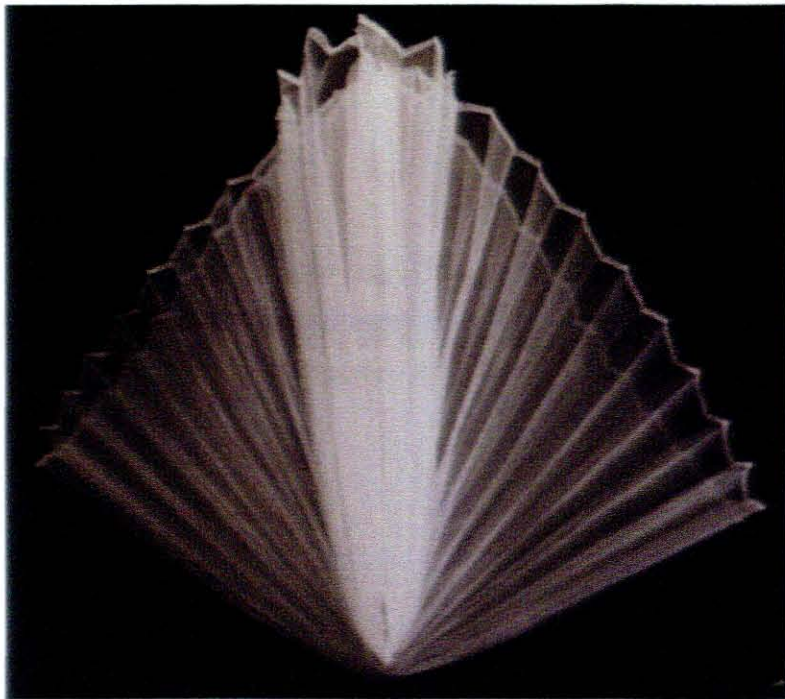


Figure 4.10. SCULPTURE 2: "Exhale" (Posterior view).

van Zyl, K., *Encompassed: "Exhale"*, 2010, White matt organza, 52cm X 42cm, width: 42cm (Ferguson, 2010 e).

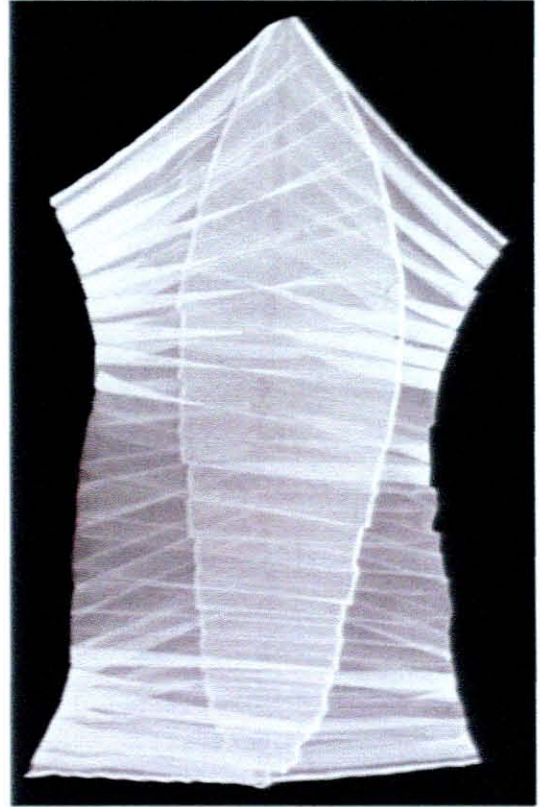


Figure 4.11. SCULPTURE 3: "Within" (Frontal view). Figure 4.12. (Posterior view)

van Zyl, K., *Encompassed: "Within"*, 2010, White matt organza, 86cm X 55cm, width: 55cm (Ferguson, 2010 f).

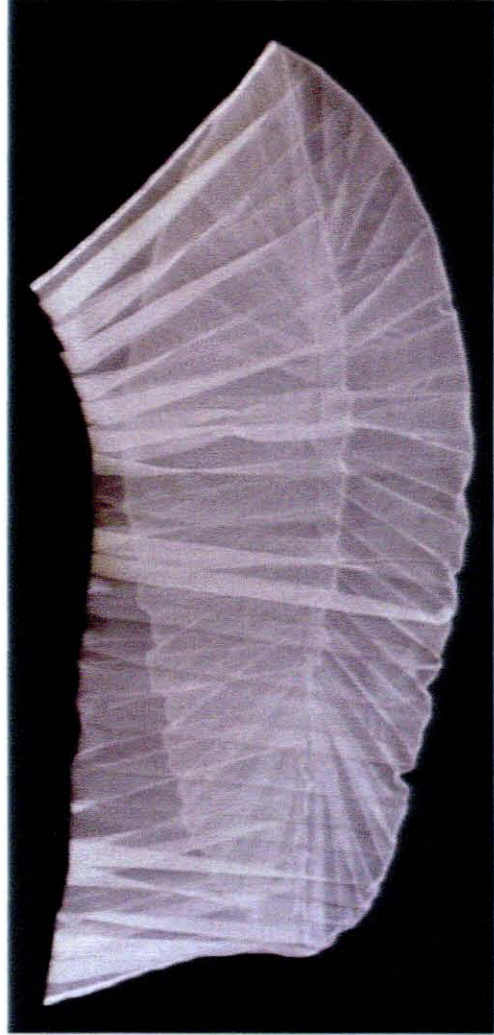
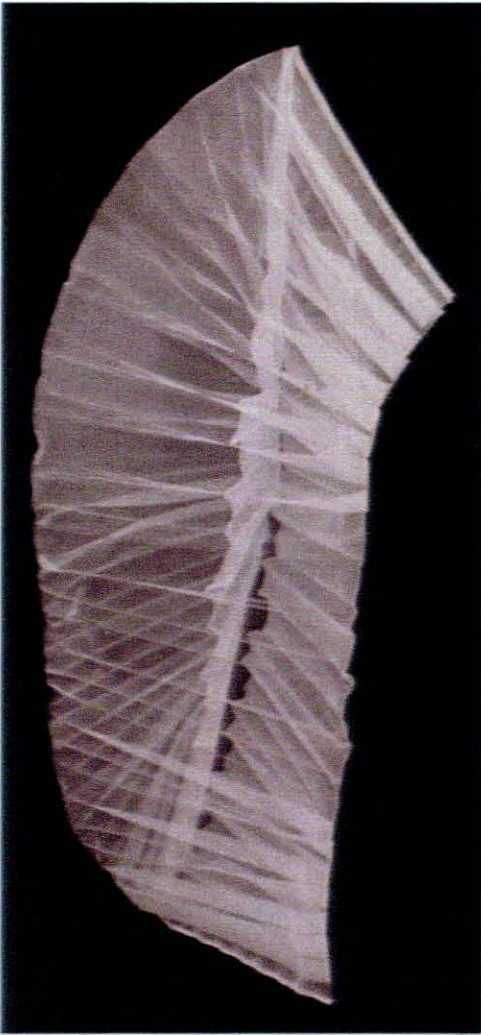


Figure 4.13. SCULPTURE 3: "Within" (Lateral view) Figure 4.14.

van Zyl, K., *Encompassed: "Within"*, 2010, White matt organza, 86cm X 55cm, width: 55cm (Ferguson, 2010 f).

- **EARTH:** *"Reconnection"*

ELEMENT: Earth

MATERIALS: Cream matt organza and brown matt organza

METHOD: Permanent pleats and ruched fabric

CONCEPT:

Earth to me represents a creeping, crawling, burrowing need for reconnection. I have created hollow structures to represent the tubes, roots and veins that are connected and rooted to receive constant dialogue and wisdom, from the earth. This creeping, burrowing characteristic is represented in the tubular formation in **Figures 4.21 to 4.23**, these structures are organic roots, emerging from the soil as rocklike formations and then burrowing deep below the surface. These structures are stemming from the earth as a lifeline of breathing apparatus, yet also reminiscent of the plant life that grows from the nurturing soil. **Figures 4.15 to Figure 4.20** are the first two sculptures of the series, they work together as a set, each reminiscent of a budding flower where the layers and petals are peeling away with each emergent thought, feeling or perception. These structures seem like solid tubes or veins that reach straight from the ground in a state of open-ended learning. Each sculpture will be placed on the ground, connected and immersed, the shadows they cast within and below symbolise reminders of the higher power, as does the trees' shadow. The texture of the sculptures highlight the treacherous existence of the earth, the damage and regret of mankind and lessons learnt along the way. This is seen within the pleated detail, as well as the gathered fabric crawling low to the ground that connects each sculpture. Lastly, the 3-D creeping structure of the sculpture indicates an attuned existence, to dig and burrow and to become part of the earth. As explained in Langer's view of the Phenomenology of Perception, when viewing an object in the external world, we can make the perception of the object conscious through a rediscovery of the dialogue between our experiential body and the external world (Langer, 1989: 17-18). This idea relates to the concept behind my earth sculpture, where I am fully aware and connected to the world I am standing on, all my perceptions, thoughts and feelings are conscious and I am within a mindful state of open-ended learning.

I used a combination of off-white and brown Organza for the earth series, as this realistically and directly relates to the raw, natural, dirty aspect one thinks of when pertaining to the earth. The combination of two tones of colour highlights the textured, movement of the tubular formation of the sculptures, almost reminiscent of earth worms as they dig through the layers of soil. I have also incorporated a more organic, unstructured form of fabric manipulation to the earth sculptures. This ruched fabric creates a hardy, earthy look, resembling the unearthed soil that is bunched up around the hole where the earth worm rises from the ground. This creates a heavier, more grounded element within this series, while acting as a connecting factor, running from sculpture to sculpture as the vein between the elements. Filling the empty spaces within each sculpture with free flowing fabric represents the acquiring of knowledge, specifically relating to my experience of earth as an element. The abstract arrangement or placement of the sculptures as segments, working together as a whole, also highlights my concept of reconnection. This is the only element within the series where the sculptures are connected and working together.

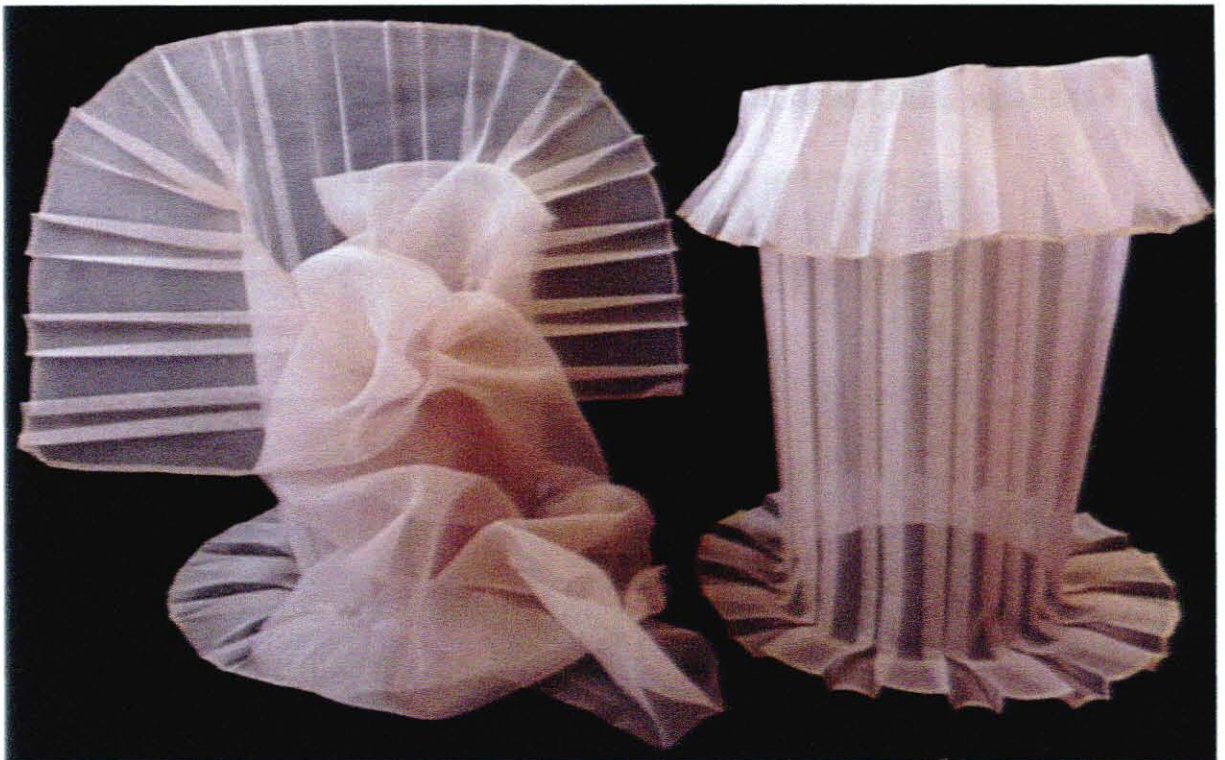


Figure 4.15 Sculpture 1 and 2 (frontal view)

van Zyl, K., *Reconnection: "Ascend and Descend"*, 2010, Beige matt organza, size (Ferguson, 2010 g).



Figure 4.16 SCULPTURE 1: "Ascend" (Frontal view)

van Zyl, K., *Reconnection: "Ascend"*, 2010, Beige matt organza, 48cm X 54cm, width: 55cm (Ferguson, 2010 h).

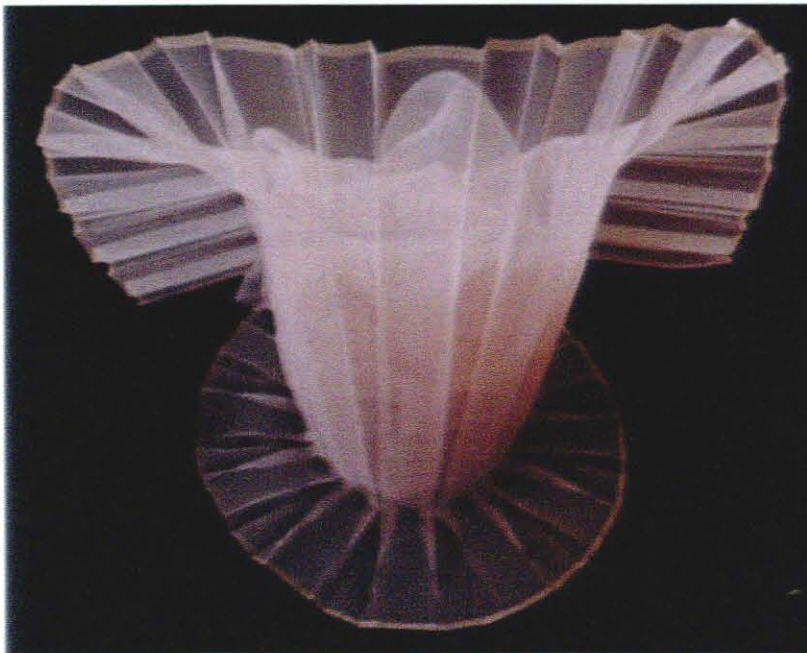


Figure 4.17 SCULPTURE 1: "Ascend" (Posterior view)

van Zyl, K., *Reconnection: "Ascend"*, 2010, Beige matt organza, 48cm X 54cm, width: 55cm (Ferguson, 2010 h).



Figure 4.18 SCULPTURE 1: "Ascend" (Aerial view)

van Zyl, K., *Reconnection: "Ascend"*, 2010, Beige matt organza, 48cm X 54cm, width: 55cm (Ferguson, 2010 h).



Figure 4.19 SCULPTURE 2: "Descend" (Frontal view)

van Zyl, K., *Reconnection: "Descend"*, 2010, Beige matt organza, 41 cm X 36cm, width: 37cm (Ferguson, 2010 i).



Figure 4.20 SCULPTURE 2: "Descend" (Aerial close-up)

van Zyl, K., *Reconnection: "Descend"*, 2010, Beige matt organza, 41 cm X 36cm, width: 37cm (Ferguson, 2010 i).

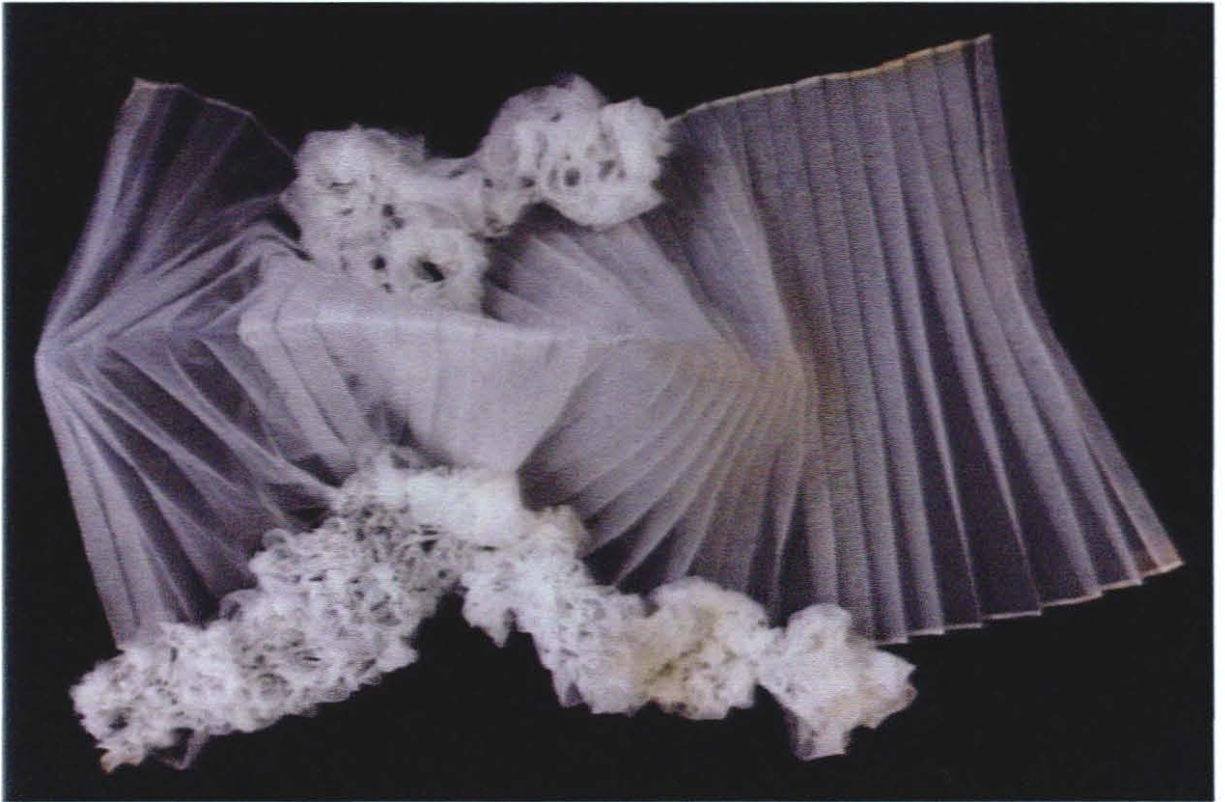


Figure 4.21 SCULPTURE 3: "Delve" (Aerial view)

van Zyl, K., *Reconnection: "Delve"*, 2010, Cream matt organza, 32cm X 1.14m, width: 58cm (Ferguson, 2010 i).



Figure 4.22 SCULPTURE 3: "Delve" (Posterior view)

van Zyl, K., *Reconnection: "Delve"*, 2010, Cream matt organza, 32cm X 1,14m, width: 58cm (Ferguson, 2010 j).



Figure 4.23 SCULPTURE 3: "Delve" (Aerial close-up)

van Zyl, K., *Reconnection: "Delve"*, 2010, Cream matt organza, 32cm X 1,14m, width: 58cm (Ferguson, 2010 j).

- FIRE: "Emergent"

ELEMENT: Fire

MATERIALS: Burnt orange, glass organza

METHOD: Permanent pleats and fabric manipulation

CONCEPT:

Fire to me represents a series of small and often insignificant happenings that merge and intertwine as we dance and hover over our own fragile existence. It is the twisting and turning of effort as we grasp onto these passing moments that give life to our existence. This aspect correlates to my chosen theory of Embodiment, where according to Hocking, the 'Enactive' approach of Embodiment is a constantly changing viewpoint that is seen alongside our own experience and interactions (Hocking, *et al.*, 2001: xxxi). I have embodied each element through the use of a fluid and changing process of understanding. According to Varela (1991: 9), we inhabit a world with particular properties of colour, sound, movement, etc...and we view these properties through a subjective, internal representation. This representation is not of a pre-given world or understanding, but is based on the actions performed by the physical being that inhabits the world. These actions are represented by the series of movements made by a single flame that merge and work together as a functioning component of understanding.

When meditating on the fire I was drawn into the flames, seeing myself as part of the flame, engulfed by the mass energy of these overpowering towers as I jump and grasp for the air above, the only thing keeping me alive. This is evident in the first sculpture of the fire series, **Figure 4.20**, the twirling, pleated panels emerge from the ground, grasping towards the sky, while remaining attached and dependant on the ground. These structures imitate an intertwining dance of life as mentioned earlier, the raw, unfinished edges of the fabric, illustrate the indistinct natural edge of a flickering flame. The reflective quality of the glass organza fabric represents me seeing myself within the flames, like looking into a mirror and seeing through the deception of the reflected image, and into the emotional reality within the soul. In **Figure 4.21**, an overpowering tower of flame is seen ending in a more organic formation, as the flames hover over and engulf the floor. This sculpture represents the wind tunnel that captures and channels the flame, and resulting smoke upwards, containing it within a centre point. In this particular sculpture, the organic, rippled fabric that ends the structured pleat above was a mistake that occurred during the pleating process. As with the water sculptures I have discovered that true

beauty and innovation often lie within the mistakes, and by embracing the fault as if it were meant to be, I was able to enlarge on my creative manipulation.

Fire is an element unlike any other, in that it exists only temporarily in time and cannot survive independently in space. I thought it necessary to demonstrate this fundamental difference through the use of colour. Fire is also completely destructive, feeding off earth and air, its only true weakness being water. This bold, destructive characteristic of fire, led me to an equally bold colour, burnt orange.



Figure 4.24 SCULPTURE 1: "Elevation" (Frontal view)

van Zyl, K., *Emergent: "Elevation"*, 2010, Burnt orange matt organza, 1,05m X 97cm, width: 37cm (Ferguson, 2010 k).



Figure 4.25 SCULPTURE 2: "Dance" (Frontal view)

van Zyl, K., *Emergent: "Dance"*, 2010, Burnt orange matt organza, 33cm X 77cm, width: 49cm (Ferguson, 2010 I).



Figure 4.26 SCULPTURE 2: "Dance" (Close-up)

van Zyl, K., *Emergent: "Dance"*, 2010, Burnt orange matt organza, 33cm X 77cm, width: 49cm (Ferguson, 2010 I).



Figure 4.27 SCULPTURE 2: "Dance" (Aerial view)

van Zyl, K., *Emergent: "Dance"*, 2010, Burnt orange matt organza, 33cm X 77cm, width: 49cm (Ferguson, 2010 I).

4.2. IMMERSED WITHIN THE ELEMENTS

As described earlier in the methodology review, Andy Goldsworthy was inspiration to me for the display and documentation of his work as a non-permanent artwork, made from a non-permanent material, in a non-permanent setting. My goal was to incorporate this idea into the final documentation of my work by immersing my sculptures within the elements that inspired them, recording the effects and results of this. This means that the sculptures aesthetic importance has less meaning than the process of its experience and decay within the harsh elements. However, I am more concerned with a final, tangible product so I decided not to go through with this. I did still record the sculptures within the environment that the elements exist. The following images are the documented sculptures recorded as they are meant to be understood.

- **Water**



Figure 4.28.



Figure 4.29.

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 1: Water*, May 2010, [photograph], Constantia neck (Ferguson, 2010 m).



Figure 4.30.

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 1: Water*, May 2010, [photograph], Constantia neck (Ferguson, 2010 m).



Figure 4.31.

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 1: Water*, May 2010, [photograph], Constantia neck (Ferguson, 2010 m).

- Air



Figure 4.32.

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 2: Air*, August 2010, [photograph], Rhodes Memorial (Ferguson, 2010 n).



Figure 4.33.

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 2: Air*, August 2010, [photograph], Rhodes Memorial (Ferguson, 2010 n).



Figure 4.34.

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 2: Air*, August 2010, [photograph], Rhodes Memorial (Ferguson, 2010 n).



Figure 4.35.

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 2: Air*, August 2010, [photograph], Rhodes Memorial (Ferguson, 2010 n).

- Earth



Figure 4.36

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 3: Earth*, October 2010, [photograph], Constantia neck (Ferguson, 2010 o).



Figure 4.37

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 3: Earth*, October 2010, [photograph], Constantia neck (Ferguson, 2010 o).



Figure 4.38

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 3: Earth*, October 2010, [photograph], Constantia neck (Ferguson, 2010 o).



Figure 4.39

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 3: Earth*, October 2010, [photograph], Constantia neck (Ferguson, 2010 o).

- Fire

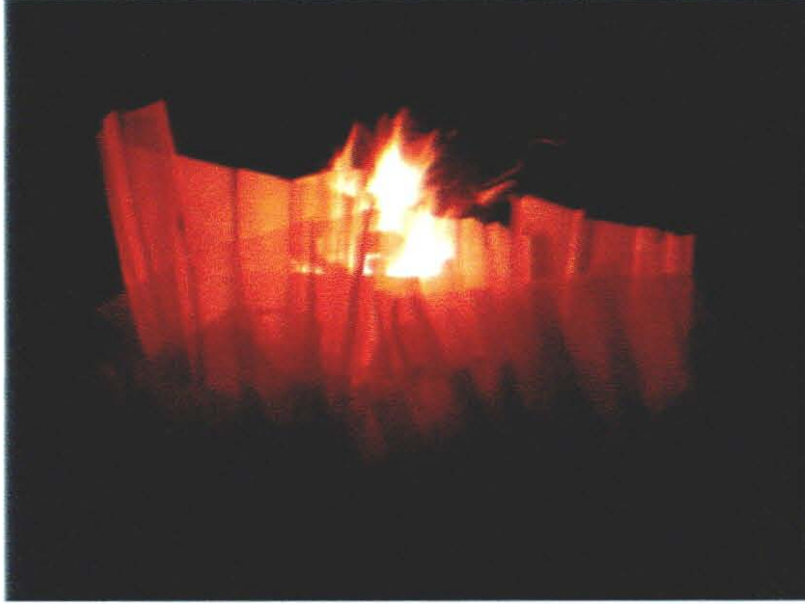


Figure 4.40

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 4: Fire*, October 2010, [photograph], Newlands nature reserve (Ferguson, 2010 p).



Figure 4.41

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 4: Fire*, October 2010, [photograph], Newlands nature reserve (Ferguson, 2010 p).



Figure 4.42

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 4: Fire*, October 2010, [photograph], Newlands nature reserve (Ferguson, 2010 p).

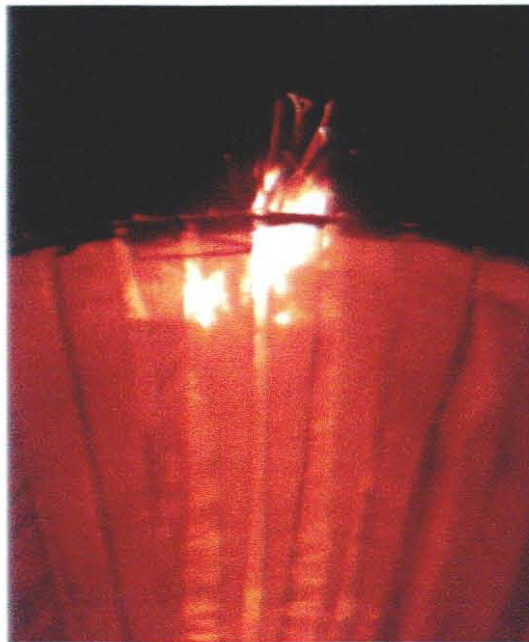


Figure 4.43

Van Zyl, K., *Pleated Elements, Series 4: Fire*, October 2010, [photograph], Newlands nature reserve (Ferguson, 2010 p).

CHAPTER 5: EXHIBITION

5.1. INSPIRATION

The inspiration, for how I intend to display my work in the end of the year exhibition, came from the following **Figure 5.1**. This image shows an installation designed by Vanessa Vobis, displayed at the “Nitpickers” exhibition in April 2008. I stumbled upon this image while researching my inspirational artist, Annalisa Vobis, and the impact it had on me has stayed with me throughout the year. Vanessa Vobis is an artist who creates sculptures, installations, videos, drawings and prints, all from mundane, collected objects, found either in domestic spaces or thrift shops. She adapts and displays these objects out of their context in order to change their meaning (Vanessa Vobis, n.d.).

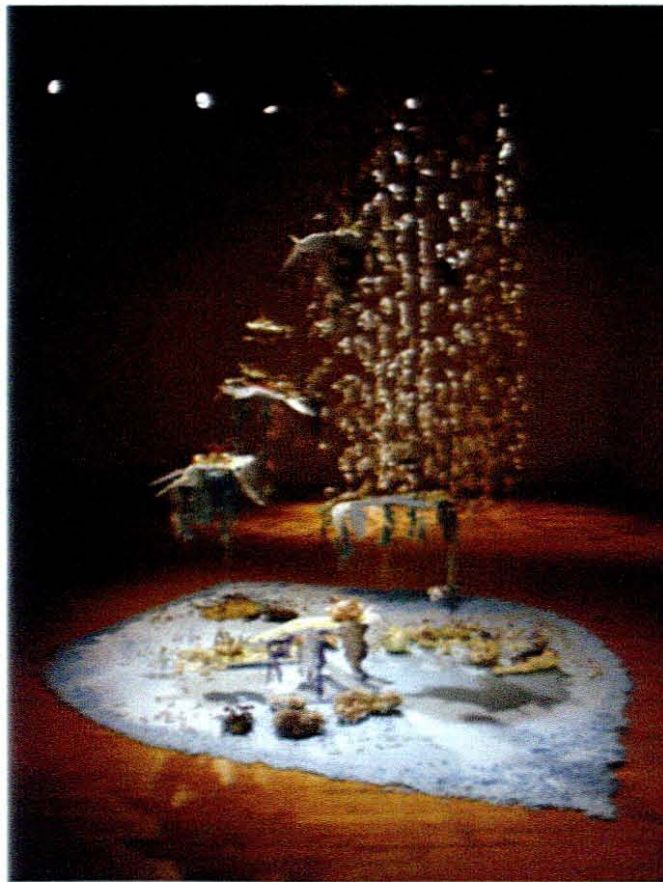


Figure 5.1.

Vanessa Vobis, *Crystal World*, 2008, water, sweaters, beads, styrofoam, flocking
(Vanessa Vobis, n.d.).

As mentioned earlier, Andy Goldsworthy is of great inspiration to me in terms of the documentation of his work. He exhibits and photographs his land art within the space it was created, allowing the natural elements to affect his artworks as non-permanent objects. By combining these two inspirations, the documentation and exhibition of my sculptures will create a nature-like environment within an urban space. This will bring the experience and feeling of the four natural elements into an interior space, through the use of photographic documentation and a conceptual reconstruction of my own embodied world.

5.2. MY CONCEPT

For my final year exhibition I intend to demarcate the floor below the arrangement of my sculptures, using white fabric. This fabric will be bunched up to form an uneven landscape within a circular shape. The goal of this is to create a feeling of a "world" or "environment", separate from the surrounding area, as if it is in an invisible bubble. Within this world, my sculptures will be suspended from above and creeping on the floor below. Each element will be displayed as a series, separate from the other element, yet working together as a whole. Together they will create an environment of elements, my own embodied world. Upon entering my environment, you will be directed around and through the sculptures via the path laid out on the floor, created by the fabric landscape. While experiencing my work, the viewer will notice hints and reminders of the elements within the exhibition, through the use of photographs, line drawings text and even video projections. Each sculpture is interactive as it allows movement and connection with the viewer as they move through the maze, brushing against the suspended sculptures. With this display I hope to create a calm, interactive and contemplative environment, where the viewer gets lost within the space, allowing them to concentrate and embody my topic of the four elements of nature.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 is the introduction to my thesis, briefly stating what is to be discussed within the body of my chapters. It outlines the purpose and aim of my research as well as mentioning my chosen theories and how I intend to incorporate them into my practical component. In chapter 1 I have also introduced the artists that serve as inspiration to me on a practical level.

Chapter 2 was a detailed investigation of my two chosen theories. These theories are defined, investigated and applied to the context of my topic. The first theory I researched was **Embodiment**, this theory was explained as a design tool that I would apply in order to come to a better understanding of my subject matter. To embody something, according to Hocking, is to gain knowledge through embracing our experiences and interactions with the environment or world (Hocking, *et al.* 2001: xviii). I also introduced the Buddhist form of **Mindfulness Meditation** as a tool I would use to come to an embodied state of learning. According to Varela, the goal of mindful meditation is to avoid distraction in the form of thoughts, emotions and outer interferences, and embrace the pure essence of experience itself (Varela, *et al.*, 1991: 22). The second theory I discussed was the theory of **Phenomenology of Perception**, referring to the book by Langer. Langer states that all our external and internal perceptions, feelings and thoughts are a product of a continuous dialogue between our lived body and the external world. We can make our perceptions of the outside world conscious through a rediscovery of this dialect (Langer, 1989: 17-18).

Chapter 3, the methodology review, is an introduction to the two conceptual designers and one land artist whom I drew inspiration from for my practical outcome. The first artist I discussed is Deepa Pancharia, a textile artist who specializes in creating sculptures and installations that experiment with space, scale, surface and structure. The second artist, Annalisa Vobis is a conceptual sculptor who explores cycles within nature through her art forms. The land artist who is mentioned as inspiration for the documentation of my work is Andy Goldsworthy. Andy creates installations from only the natural materials occurring within his environment. He leaves his works exposed to the elements and records the process of decay via photographs. Also discussed within Chapter 3 is a brief history of the four elements of nature and their significations through Western society and cultures. These interpretations are compared and contrasted with my own via the use of a comparative table. My understanding of these elements was acquired through an embodied process of understanding; this method and how I came to that outcome is also outlined within Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 was a discussion of how I translated these subjective interpretations into conceptually based, embodied, textile sculptures. I outlined and described my reasons for choice of fabric, structure, size, layout, colours and display, all relating to the four elements of nature. Each element is represented by a series of two to three pleated sculptures as a subjective form of discovery and expression.

The last section, Chapter 5, is an explanation of how I intend to display my sculptures within the final exhibition. The concept behind my exhibition was inspired by the work of both Vanessa Vobis and Andy Goldsworthy. The exhibition of my sculptures will be within a reconstructed world, the floor will be demarcated with an uneven fabric landscape in a circular formation. The sculptures will be suspended and laid over the fabric flooring, creating an embodied world/environment that the viewer can enter and interact with in order to understand my intended concept. The photos documenting my design process, as well as the process of embodiment I applied in order to interpret the four elements of nature will be displayed within this "world".

My sculptures have endless possibility as far as experimentation and market feasibility are concerned. These pleated structures can be applied to a variety of subject matter. I can use this technique to construct fashion garments, creating structured dresses, shirts, scarves, handbags and even pump shoes. My structures can be applied to an interior setting as curtains, blinds, wall hangings, cushions, table cloths, blankets and lamp shades. I have only covered a small area of the possibilities of these textile formations and will continue to experiment with this technique and material.

The essence of my learning experience this year is based on a self reflection and discovery. Through the constant practise at being in a mindful state, aware of every detail around me and reflecting on my experiences on an intuitive level of understanding, I have come to grasp processes and happenings from the interior and exterior of my experiential body on a much more in-tune and subconscious level. This journey has lead me to a place in my life where I feel I have the knowledge and experience needed to further design as my life career. Art and its many forms, throughout history, has been a crucial part of society in every culture, whether its purpose being for social commentary or subjective expression. The purpose of my research was to expand on the conceptual design discourse, while highlighting the value art has in contemporary society, as a form of expression.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annalisa Vobis. n.d. Home. *Annalisa Vobis*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.anneliesevoobis.com/index.htm> [10 March 2010].

Bai, H., 2001, Beyond the educated mind: towards a pedagogy of mindfulness, in: *Unfolding bodymind - exploring possibility through education*, Edited by: Hocking, B., Haskell, J., & Linds, W., Rutland, Vermont, USA: North Point Press. 86-99.

Cavendish, R. (ed.). 1985. Elements and elementals. *The illustrated Encyclopaedia of mythology, religion and the unknown*. 3: 801-803.

Deepa Panchamia. n.d. Philosophy. *Deepa Panchamia*. [Online]. Available: <http://www.deepapanchamia.com/> [10 march 2010].

Ferguson, C., 2010 a, *Fluid independence: gather*, [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 b, *Fluid independence: journey*, [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 c, *Fluid independence: emerge*, [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 d, *Encompassed: inhale*, [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 e, *Encompassed: exhale*, [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 f, *Encompassed: within*, [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 g, *Reconnection: ascend and Descend*, [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 h, *Reconnection: ascend*, [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 i, *Reconnection: descend*, [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 j, *Reconnection: delve*, [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 k, *Emergent: elevation*, [photograph], in possession of K. Van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 l, *Emergent: dance*, [photograph], in possession of K. Van Zyl, Cape Town.

Ferguson, C., 2010 m, *Pleated elements, series 1: Water* [photograph], in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town: Constantia neck.

- Ferguson, C., 2010 n, *Pleated elements, series 2: Air [photograph]*, in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town: Rhodes Memorial.
- Ferguson, C., 2010 o, *Pleated elements, series 3: Earth [photograph]*, in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town: Constantia neck.
- Ferguson, C., 2010 p, *Pleated elements, series 4: Fire [photograph]*, in possession of K. van Zyl, Cape Town: Newlands nature reserve.
- Goldsworthy, A., & Friedman, T. 2004. *Hand to earth*. London: Thames & London Ltd.
- Goldsworthy, A. 1990. *Andy Goldsworthy: A collaboration with nature*. Harry N. Abrams, incorporated: New York.
- Goldsworthy, A., & Friedman, T. 2000. *Time*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd.
- Hall, M. 2010. The four elements in astrology. *About.com* . [Online]. Available: <http://astrology.about.com/od/foundations/p/Elements.htm> [3 April 2010].
- Haskell, J. 2001. Experiencing unknown landscapes: Unfolding a path of embodied respect, in: *Unfolding bodymind - exploring possibility through education*, Edited by: Hocking, B., Haskell, J., & Linds, W. Rutland, Vermont, USA: North Point Press. 282-297.
- Hocking, B., Haskell, J., & Linds, W. (eds.). 2001. *Unfolding bodymind - exploring possibility through education*. Rutland, Vermont, USA: North Point Press.
- Kozik-Rosabel, G. S. 2001. How do they learn to be a whole? A strategy for helping preservice teachers develop dispositions, In: *Unfolding bodymind - exploring possibility through education*, Edited by: Hocking, B., Haskell, J., & Linds, W. Rutland, Vermont, USA: North Point Press. 100-116.
- Langer, M.M. 1989. *Merleau- Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception: A guide and commentary*. London: Macmillan Press LTD.
- Stanford University. 2008. Phenomenology. *Stanford encyclopaedia of philosophy*. [Online]. Available: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/merleau-ponty/> [27 February 2010].
- Vobis, V. n.d. Nitpickers. *Vanessa Vobis*. [Online]. Available: <http://vanessavobis.com/2008/03/nitpickers/> [02 August 2010].
- Varela, F.J., Thompson, E., & Rosh, E. 1991. *The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience*. London: MIT press.