



Reflecting on Ripple: Iterative Installation Work as a Research Creation Methodology

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This paper reflects on a textile-based installation project, Ripple: A Wearable Environment, that engages with research-creation as an iterative and emergent methodology. While the textile work itself theoretically draws on queer temporality, kink embodiment, and the liminal state of Subspace, the focus of the paper is reflecting on meaning-making through iterative installation processes as a research-creation methodology. Ripple was exhibited in three distinct contexts—a solo gallery show, a public-facing window display, and a co-curated group exhibition—each iteration generating new knowledge about the material, spatial, and affective dimensions of the work. Through these shifting installations, Ripple became a responsive, reconfigurable environment shaped by curatorial decisions, architectural constraints, and audience engagement. This paper posits that installation, rather than being the endpoint of artistic production, operates as an ongoing phase of research-creation: a mode of inquiry that privileges process, material agency, and relationality. Drawing on feminist autotheory and material thinking, this case study positions iterative installation as a fluid, multi-modal method through which practice-based research is continuously transformed, co-authored, and re-situated across time and space.

Float: An Introduction

My practice as a Queer Faegender poet, zine creator, and textile researcher converges through the iterative process of research-creation (Loveless 2020). Through the exploration of accessible material installations as an embodied practice my work invites folks to engage with Queer and Trans identities. Drawing on autotheoretical methods (Fournier 2021), my practice focuses on queer temporalities, seeking liminal spaces and “slices in time” (Walker 2022) as a means of conveying the non-linear spectrum of queerness. These material explorations dive into the Queer community’s use of signaling as semiotics, investigating alternate forms of communication such as sign-based discourse (Porselvi 2023).

The project outlined below is a brief description of a larger thesis project, *Ripple: A Wearable Environment*, which I completed through the Fashion MA program at Toronto Metropolitan University. This is then followed by a discussion surrounding the multiple installations of *Ripple*, querying how the research-creation process continues throughout iterative installation work and is, therefore, not solely limited to the making process.

Ripple: Transformative Textiles

There has been a widespread stigmatization and pathologization of kink in general as well as in queer context. From medical fields to psychology to mass media, the misrepresentation of the



kink community by (usually) vanilla folks is unfortunately extremely prevalent. My textile piece, *Ripple*, delves into the fluidity and transformative properties of water, drawing a parallel to the internal state known as Subspace—an experience often felt during BDSM scenes. Subspace is a meditative and transformative liminal space, where one can experience a profound sense of connection and altered consciousness. The feeling of Subspace has often been explained by kinksters (people who engage in BDSM) as similar to the feeling of floating in water.

Ripple is a large-scale, wearable textile that conveys the feeling of Subspace through the use of natural fibres as well as hand-knit and crocheted fabrication techniques. The piece includes talismans, sacred objects designed to evoke the many different shapes of water, which add a visual representation of the meditative qualities of Subspace. The garment defies conventional fetish fashion—which usually embraces tight fitted garments and a dark colour palette such as black leatherwork or latex suits—by embracing an anti-aesthetic approach which prioritizes comfort, introspection, and the internal experiences of kink, rather than external appearances.

By challenging the misconceptions held by medical professionals and broader society, who frequently misinterpret BDSM as abusive, *Ripple* foregrounds the critical roles of consent, safety, and mutual respect within these practices. This practice-based research project illuminates the deeply personal and often spiritual dimensions of the kink community, countering reductive and harmful narratives.

In critiquing the commodification of kink aesthetics by the “post-fetish fashion” movement, my work seeks to reclaim and authentically represent the emotional and spiritual depth of BDSM practices. *Ripple* is not just an art piece; it is a wearable environment that invites the participant to reflect on the liminal, non-linear nature of Subspace, much like the various states of flowing water—still, running, and contained. This metaphor, which I entitled *The Flow of Subspace*, connects the different states of flowing water to the experience of Subspace.

This artwork invites viewers to experience Subspace as a queer heterotopia (Walker 2022)—a temporal and spatial disruption that offers a transformative and ephemeral experience. *Ripple* is a meditation on the journey kinksters experience between their physical and internal worlds. A journey that, like water, is ever-changing, flowing between different states of being.



Figure 1: Final images of *Ripple*. Image Description: A collage of four images. The top half of the page includes an image of the author wearing the textile piece, *Ripple*. The bottom half of the page consists of three images—the first an image that encompasses the entire circular textile piece. The second, a close up of the hand-sewn batting, 3D crochet, and loose knit with the author's hand. The third image is a macro photo of the 3D crochet and the hand-sewn batting.



Reflecting on *Ripple*: An Iterative Installation Process

Ripple was showcased in three different galleries: a solo exhibition at the Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) Creative Enterprise Hub gallery space, a window display at Stackt Market for DesignTO 2024, and installed as a part of a group show at Abbozzo Gallery in 401 Richmond for the OCAD University's CADN Graduate conference. The differing nature of these three spaces, as well as the type of exhibition, allowed *Ripple* to take on a multitude of unique shapes throughout the iterations of these various installations.

Although TMU's Creative Enterprise Hub's gallery space has a stone wall and a wall-sized window, it is overall very similar to a traditional white-cube gallery setting. While this solo show was the culmination of my Fashion MA thesis, it was only the first of three *Ripple* installations (Fig. 2). Since this iteration was in the context of a solo exhibition, I was completely in control of curation and installation. I decided to activate the gallery floor using the main piece, *Ripple* itself, without a plinth or any traditional gallery structures to hold it or shape it—instead the piece is held up by 3D printed “ice” blocks. This was my way of subverting traditional gallery installation techniques as a way to speak to *Ripple*'s subversion of mainstream depictions of the kink community.

I also included textile pieces created throughout my Fashion MA as a way to center the making process in the installation itself. Pieces such as hand-woven tapestries, a vest combining handwoven textiles and Italian heirloom linen, 3D resin printed “talismans,” 3D printed “ice” blocks, and laser cut wooden ripple flooring which all visually spoke to the material process I journeyed through to arrive at the final iteration of *Ripple*.

The second installation of *Ripple* was for a window display at DesignTO 2024, housed in an untraditional gallery space—a shipping container (!)—at STACKT Market (Fig. 3–6). Two walls of the shipping container were completely windows, so there was more than enough space to visually work with. But again, since I was the artist/curator for this installation, it was up to me how to install the work in a way that best represented the textile work and themes of the project. All of the same pieces from the Creative Enterprise Hub gallery installation were included in the DesignTO installation. The process of curating which pieces were paired with one another as well as the design of each window generated new knowledge about the work itself. In the first installation *Ripple* activated the floor of the gallery, however working within the confines of window display changed the effectiveness of using the floor.

Thus, this new installation environment allowed me to explore a compelling way to hang *Ripple* and become more familiar with the materiality of the piece itself. Thinking about the amount of foot traffic a festival like DesignTO gets yearly also influenced my curation of the work. Taking into consideration the most accessible viewing angles for the public became entangled with the artistic presentation, all of which could influence how the themes of the piece were perceived.



Figure 2: *Ripple* at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) Creative Enterprise Hub gallery space. Image Description: *Ripple* along with the rest of the collection installed in Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) Creative Enterprise Hub gallery. The collection is backed by the stone wall in the gallery space. The main circular textile piece, *Ripple*, is sitting on the clear 3D printed ice blocks and the laser cut wooden ripple flooring in the centre of the gallery space. Two other ice blocks are to the right of this with two tapestries hanging above them. The handwoven vest is to the left of *Ripple*, hanging from a branch. In the centre are images of the author wearing *Ripple* printed on a piece of rectangular cotton fabric.



Figure 3: *Ripple* at STACKT Market for DesignTO 2024 Image Description: *Ripple* hangs in the centre of the window display at STACKT Market, with the two tapestries hanging on either side. The wooden ripple flooring is on the floor below *Ripple* surrounded by three of the ice blocks.



Figure 4: *Ripple* at STACKT Market for DesignTO 2024. Image Description: The hand-woven vest is hanging in one windowpane on the other side of the shipping container at STACKT Market. The rectangular cotton fabric with images of the author wearing *Ripple* hangs in the windowpane beside the vest. An ice block is set up on the floor in front of the rectangular fabric.

Figure 5: Close up of vest at STACKT Market for DesignTO 2024. Image Description: A close up of the hand-woven vest at STACKT Market. This is taken from inside the shipping container. Various drawings—such as candles, rabbits, chain, leaves—are seen on the heirloom linen hood.





Figure 6: Close up of *Ripple* at STACKT Market for DesignTO 2024. Image Description: A close up of *Ripple* at STACKT Market. This is taken from inside the shipping container. Details of the textile—the hand-sewn batting, 3D crochet, and loose knit—are once again highlighted.

Finally, *Ripple* was a part of a group show at Abbozzo Gallery in 401 Richmond for the OCAD University's CADN Graduate conference (Fig. 7–9). This group show was co-curated and installed by Hannah Scott, Madeline Collins, and Madalyn Shaw who were OCAD graduate students at the time. This was the first, and so far only, time *Ripple* had been handed off to others for curation and installation. Letting go of how *Ripple* was perceived was easier than I initially thought it would be—I was intrigued by how the work would be interpreted by the curation team as well as the public who viewed it based on their curatorial perspective. When I arrived at the opening reception, I absolutely loved their interpretation of the work.

The curatorial team installed *Ripple* itself, as well as some of the additional process pieces. They thought of unique ways to display the work that I would not have thought of, once again expanding what *Ripple* was as an installation collection. For example, they displayed the back of the vest, instead of the front. Additionally, some of their installation choices were simplistic in ways that made the work itself shine, like placing the 3D resin printed talismans on one long shelf.



Figure 7: *Ripple* at Abbozzo Gallery in 401 Richmond. Image Description: *Ripple* hangs in the centre of a white wall at Abbozzo Gallery. Two ice blocks are placed on white plinths in front of *Ripple*.



Figure 8: Tapestries, ice block, and talismans at Abbozzo Gallery. Image Description: Two tapestries hang side by side on a white wall at Abbozzo Gallery. A white shelf is attached to the wall below them. One ice block and five talismans are displayed on the shelf.

Figure 9: Hand woven vest at Abbozzo Gallery. Image Description: The hand-woven vest with heirloom linen hood hangs in the middle of a brick wall at Abbozzo Gallery. The back of the vest is shown, highlighting the embroidered patch work on the shoulders of the vest.





The above iterative installation process was unplanned, and I engaged with the needs of each installation as they arose, which aligns with the emergent nature of research-creation as a methodology (Loveless 2020). New knowledge about the materiality of each individual piece and how they fit together was garnered. The collection of work entangled and re-entangled itself in new ways during each installation. This re-entanglement was dependent on the environment/space and curatorial lens. Iterative installation work allows further exploration into the Research Creation process past the making phase, offering a fluid and multi-modal way of engaging with the same collection of artwork over time which creates a call and response (Bolt 2007) between the artist and the material, encouraging material agency to flourish.

Works Cited

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