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Towards a New Domestic Culture

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Maternal Structures in Creative Work' 2015*

If we learn through our bodies, and as Varela asserts, our *'cognitive capacities are inextricably bound to histories that are lived, much like paths that exist only as they are laid down by walking'*¹, then motherhood can be understood as changing our landscape and our means of navigation.

This is my experience at least. I found that I could not learn and practice as I had before.

I appreciate that knowledge is never a fixed thing, 'out there' waiting to be grasped, but after Alfie, it seemed to move more quickly, become awkward, more evasive, kept just out of reach. The dance that I had obsessively embroiled my self within, had validated my art practice, research and sense of identity, quite literally changed its rhythm.

Time of course was the greatest obstacle and energy levels but more than that, I could no longer bend and flex in the same way in order to gather thoughts, nurture and react to potential, because I was not the same.

It took a long while, and another two children, to recognize, that a different kind of knowledge had itself evolved through my new choreography. I ignored it of course, thinking it just a mum-thing and so instantly trite and coo-coo – just a distraction from more important things. And then increasingly, with each physical and spatial interaction, there appeared stronger correlation between thinking patterns, thematic concerns and my historical self.

What had once intrigued me about identifying creative strategies in idea development, I now saw manifest in my children's enquiring minds, and my persistent need to understand the activity of perception and the relationship between subject and object, was humorously evidenced in their absorption of cultural reference and iconography.

My habitual modes of knowing had not only been radically contorted by motherhood but their reconfiguration forged routes between my theoretical interests and the anthropological context of my 'home'.

This paper will discuss two projects that attempt to find out ways in which new rhythms

¹ Varela, Rosch and Thompson 1993: 205, original emphasis.

and patterns in creative practices can be found within the domestic sphere. Specifically, it will examine how artists who are parents find new choreography in collaboration with their children.

- 1) 'Parental Conversations' is an international project exploring ways in which the activity of drawing can be used to create dynamic space and time, to share and discuss familial interactions and explorations of the world.
- 2) 'Sensorial Anthropology' explores the relationship between the spaces and material evidence of creativity and children's gradual compilation of an 'idea' of 'home'.